



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Ben Shumaker
DATE: September 8th, 2025
SUBJECT: Zoning Interpretation – Public, Private or Parochial School in the PR Public Use & Recreation District

Introduction

The Stevenson Planning Commission is asked to interpret the Zoning Code based on the request in Attachment 1. In conducting this interpretation, the Planning Commission is constrained by the process and standards of [SMC 17.12.020](#). The Planning Commission's interpretation can a) prohibit, b) allow staff review/approval as an accessory use, or c) allow Planning Commission review/approval via a conditional use permit.

This memo addresses Public, Private or Parochial School as an unlisted use in the PR Public Use & Recreation District.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission should evaluate this proposal based on its understanding of a) whether the Public, Private or Parochial School use is consistent with the purpose of the PR District and b) and whether the use is expressly permitted in less restrictive districts. A draft interpretation is attached based on the assumption that the Public, Private or Parochial School use could be conditionally allowed in the PR District. A second draft interpretation is provided if the Planning Commission believes it can be allowed as an A – Accessory Use to instant principal uses in the district.

Approval Standards

Affirmative findings shall be made on the following criteria before any unlisted use is allowed in a zoning district.

1. The use (Public, Private or Parochial School) is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district (PR Public Use & Recreation);

GUIDANCE: Staff sees nothing to prevent an affirmative finding by the Planning Commission.

Use: The City lists Public, Private or Parochial School in its use descriptions at SMC 17.13.060:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The City has stated the purpose of the district is as follows:

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

AND

2. The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED, CR, C1, and M1 Districts);

GUIDANCE: An affirmative finding is appropriate for this criterion.

District Allowances: The Public, Private, or Parochial School use is expressly allowed as a P – Permitted use in the ED District.

OR

3. The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district.

GUIDANCE: The Planning Commission needn't consider this criterion as a result of the analysis above.

Accessory Use, Supplemental Standard

In limited circumstances, an unlisted use which satisfies the approval standards above may be interpreted as an accessory use in the district under consideration. Such circumstances require an additional affirmative finding that:

1. The proposed use (Public, Private, or Parochial School) serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use (see below) on the property under consideration.

GUIDANCE: Staff is hard-pressed to recommend an affirmative finding for this criterion.

Instant Principal Use: Staff will caution (repeatedly) to avoid discussion of a specific site and/or property while making a decision on this interpretation which must be viewed through a district-wide lens. The instant principal uses on the property involve Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P).

Prepared by,

Ben Shumaker
Community Development Director

Attachment

- Request for Interpretation
- Draft Interpretations (ZON2025-01A, ZON2025-01B)



Ben Shumaker <ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

School at the Fairgrounds

Alex Hays <hays@co.skamania.wa.us>
To: Ben Shumaker <ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 3:27 PM

Hey Ben, Thank you for talking to me and such a quick response as I know you're a busy guy. You are correct. She is looking to provide a private school setting for K-2nd grade kids. They will be using a portion (Dance Studio) of the Exhibit Hall for arts and crafts and general learning. We intend, if approved to lease the space to her. I have the link to her website. She unfortunately has jumped the gun a bit and thought that she could begin September 4th. I have informed her of our conversation. When will the planning commission meet and can she attend to answer any questions?

All the best,

Alex Hays

Community Events Program Manager

Skamania County Community Events & Recreation

[710 SW Rock Creek Drive](#)

PO BOX 369

Stevenson, WA 98648

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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 7:30am - 5:30pm

From: Ben Shumaker <ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Sent: Monday, August 25, 2025 2:20 PM

To: Alex Hays <hays@co.skamania.wa.us>

Subject: School at the Fairgrounds

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Planning Department

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7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
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Planning Commission Interpretation

Public Use & Recreation District—Public, Private or Parochial School (ZON2025-01A)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.35.040 did not contemplate whether Public, Private or Parochial School uses would be compatible in the PR Public Use & Recreation District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND

- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
- OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND

- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Public, Private or Parochial School use has the following description in SMC Chapter 17.13:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District is listed at SMC 17.35.020(A):

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate

existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

District Allowances: This use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED Education).

Character of Uses: [Analysis unnecessary.]

Instant Principal Use: The suite of uses allowed in the PR District (including Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P)) does not involve uses to which a Public, Private or Parochial School is customarily incidental.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are made:

- 1) The Professional Services use is consistent with the purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District.
- 2) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district than the PR District.
- 3) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is not customarily incidental to permitted instant principal uses in the PR District.

Interpretation:

In the PR Public Use & Recreation District, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1 & 2). As a result, the use may be allowed anywhere in the district upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

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Planning Commission Interpretation

Public Use & Recreation District—Public, Private or Parochial School (ZON2025-01B)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.35.040 did not contemplate whether Public, Private or Parochial School uses would be compatible in the PR Public Use & Recreation District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND

- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND

- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Public, Private or Parochial School use has the following description in SMC Chapter 17.13:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District is listed at SMC 17.35.020(A):

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate

existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

District Allowances: This use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED Education).

Character of Uses: [Analysis unnecessary.]

Instant Principal Use: The suite of uses allowed in the PR District includes Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P). A Public, Private or Parochial School is customarily incidental to such uses.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are made:

- 1) The Professional Services use is consistent with the purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District.
- 2) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district than the PR District.
- 3) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is customarily incidental to permitted instant principal uses in the PR District.

Interpretation:

In the PR Public Use & Recreation District, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1 & 2). As a result, the use may be allowed anywhere in the district upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit. Furthermore, when proposed on property where the instant principal use is Campground, Utility or Communication Facility, County Fairgrounds, Government Administration Building, or Community Service Building, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criterion of SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) and may be allowed by the Zoning Administrator as an Accessory Use.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date