



CITY OF SUMAS

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Memo

To: Members of the Sumas City Council Public Works Committee

From: Carson Cortez, City Planner, City of Sumas

Date: April 10, 2026

Re: Gertrude James Conditional Use Permit Requirement

On February 18, 2026, the City of Sumas received a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application from Gertrude James, who owns 540 Second Street, Building A. The purpose of the CUP is to allow conversion of Units 1 and 2 of Building A to short-term rentals. Chapter 20.52 of the Sumas Municipal Code (SMC) provides development regulations allowing for the construction of new short-term rentals and the conversion of existing housing units into short-term rentals.

Section 20.52.040 SMC provides guidance for how short-term rentals should be classified in terms of use. Subsection C of this Section says that any “[S]hort term rental of any portion of a structure containing three or more dwelling units shall require approval of a conditional use permit.” In the case of 540 Second Street, Building A, the structure contains four dwelling units, meaning that the project required a Conditional Use Permit.

Section 20.52.060 SMC lists a set of criteria that shall be met in order for the city to approve a short-term rental use. The listed criteria are as follows:

- *Occupancy.* Maximum occupancy of the rental shall be based on the International Code Council Building Code Standards. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring that the dwelling unit is used in conformance with its maximum occupancy.
- *Parking.* At least one additional off-street parking space shall be provided for the short-term rental use, in addition to all other parking required for the dwelling. Parking on site along the front property line shall not exceed sixty percent of the front-yard frontage. The number of vehicles parked at a short-term rental

residence shall not at any time exceed the number of available parking spaces on the subject property; provided, that the city may reduce the off-street parking requirement if it is determined that sufficient on-street parking is available in close proximity to the subject property.

- *Signage.* No outdoor advertising signs related to the short-term rental use shall be allowed on site.
- *Solid Waste Collection.* Solid waste collection is required at all short-term rentals consistent with city solid waste collection requirements.
- *Local Property Representative.* Where the applicant does not reside full-time on the subject property or within ten miles driving distance of Sumas, a local property manager shall be designated. The local property manager shall reside full-time within ten miles driving distance from Sumas. The applicant or, where applicable, the local representative shall be responsible for responding to complaints about the rental. The name, address, and telephone contact number of the property owner, applicant and local representative shall be kept on file at the city. Additionally, the applicant shall mail a notice to all property owners within one hundred fifty feet of the short-term rental property that states the name, address, and telephone number of the applicant and local representative. If the local representative changes, the applicant shall be required to send out new notices to all property owners within one hundred fifty feet of the subject property.
- *Informational Sign.* A sign shall be posted conspicuously inside the dwelling to provide information on maximum occupancy, location of off-street parking, contact information for the applicant or local representative, evacuation routes, and the short-term renter's responsibility not to trespass on private property or to create disturbances.
- *Annual Fire Safety Inspection.* All short-term rental uses shall require annual fire safety inspections to ensure public safety. Required inspections shall be completed prior to approval of the initial permit and each year within one month following the anniversary date of the initial permit approval. All costs for such inspections shall be borne solely by the applicant.
- *Other Standards.* The short-term rental dwelling shall meet all applicable requirements of the zone in which it is located, including but not limited to setbacks, maximum height, and lot coverage standards.

In a letter received on April 10, 2026, the Applicant provided responses to each of the above-listed criteria, outlining how the project will meet the requirements of Section 20.52.060 SMC. The Applicant's criteria responses are as follows:

- *Occupancy.* Occupancy will comply with applicable building code standards and will not exceed safe or lawful limits based on bedrooms, square footage, and egress capacity. Occupancy will be actively monitored.
- *Parking.* The property provides approximately eight on-site parking spaces serving the four-unit structure. One designated space is allocated for short-term rental use.

Guest parking will be limited to available on-site spaces only. No overflow or street parking will be limited to available on-site parking spaces only. No overflow or street parking will be permitted.

- *Signage.* No exterior signage or advertising will be displayed.
- *Solid Waste.* Standard residential garbage and recycling service will be maintained in compliance with City requirements.
- *Local Property Representative.* The applicant resides within approximately ten miles of the property and will serve as the local contact and property manager.

The applicant will respond promptly to any complaints or issues and will provide required contact information to the City and adjacent property owners.

- *Interior Information Posting.* Each will include a posted notice containing:
 - Occupancy limits
 - Parking instructions
 - Emergency evacuation routes
 - Local contact information
 - Guest rules and expectations
- *Fire Safety.* The property meets residential fire safety standards, including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and safe egress points. Annual fire inspections will be completed as required by the city.
- *Other Standards.* The property complies with zoning requirements including setbacks, height, and lot coverage. No structural expansion is proposed.
 - *Ongoing Compliance Commitment.* The applicant commits to full compliance with all City of Sumas regulations, including licensing, taxes, safety requirements, and complaint response procedures.