



City of Medical Lake Planning Department
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STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

File: Periodic Update: MLMC Amendment Criteria

Date of Staff Report: December 11, 2025

Date of Hearing: December 18, 2025

Staff Planner: Elisa Rodriguez 509-565-5019 or erodriguez@medical-lake.org

SEPA: Determination of Non-Significance was made on November 20, 2025

Procedure: This request requires a legislative review, therefore, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will hold a public hearing to consider an ordinance to adopt the amendments to the Medical Lake Municipal Code. The complete process can be found in the Medical Lake Municipal Code (MLMC), Section 19.270.050 – Type IV Reviews.

Proposal: It is proposed to replace MLMC Chapter 17.42 – Amendments, Section 17.12.030 – Official Zoning Map, and 17.12.040 – Interpretation of District Boundaries, with Chapter 19.137 – Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 19.140 Zoning Map Administration, and Chapter 19.143 – Amendments. These proposed amendments are for the purpose of clarifying the process and criteria for amendments to the comprehensive plan, the zoning map, and development regulations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

SEPA DNS Issued – November 20, 2025

Notice of a Public Hearing Published in Cheney Free Press – November 20, 2025

Public Comment Period Closed – December 4, 2025

PROPOSED LANGUAGE

19.137 – Comprehensive Plan

19.137.010 Purpose. The purpose of this Chapter is to establish a procedure pursuant to the requirements of RCW 36.70A of the Growth Management Act (GMA) for the amendment or revision of the City Comprehensive Plan.

19.137.020 Applicability. The provisions of this chapter apply to all private or city-initiated requests to amend the text or maps that comprise the Comprehensive Plan.

19.137.030 Ten-Year Periodic Updates. Pursuant to the requirements of RCW 36.70A, the Comprehensive Plan must, at a minimum, be reviewed for any relevant changes in the GMA, recent case law, and to respond to changes in land use and population growth every ten (10) years. RCW 36.70A.130 stipulates the review schedule.

19.137.040 Annual Updates. Pursuant to the requirements of RCW 36.70A, the Comprehensive Plan shall not be updated more frequently than once every year, except for those occasions listed in RCW 36.70A.130. All proposals shall be considered concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained.

19.137.050 Applications. In addition to City-initiated amendments, any interested person may submit an application for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. An application that is related to a site-specific proposal must be filed by the property owner or authorized representative. The annual deadline for submitting an application(s) shall be June 30th of each year, except for years a Periodic Update is due when no applications are accepted. The following must be submitted to the City for an application to be deemed complete:

- A. An appropriate City application form;
- B. A written description of the amendment being requested;
- C. Any studies, reports, or documentation to support the request;
- D. A written response to the approval criteria in MLMC 19.137.070, Approval Criteria;
- E. A SEPA checklist; and
- F. The application fee.

19.137.060 Process. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, including associated maps, are processed through a Type IV review with the Medical Lake Planning Commission holding a public hearing and making a recommendation to the City Council, which shall make the final decision. The Type IV review process is found in MLMC Section 19.270.050, Type IV reviews.

19.137.070 Approval Criteria. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan text, goals, or policies shall be subject to the following criteria:

- A. The proposed amendment shall be consistent with the provisions of the Growth Management Act, Chapter 36.70A RCW, or any amendment thereto.

- B. The proposed amendment shall be consistent with the provisions of the Spokane Countywide Planning Policies.
- C. The proposed amendment shall be consistent with other sections of the Comprehensive Plan, the Strategic Plan and the Capital Facility Plan.

19.140 – Zoning Map Administration

19.140.010 Purpose. The purpose of this Chapter is to recognize the Official Zoning Map and establish standards for administration, interpretation, and maintenance. Additionally, it establishes a procedure pursuant to the requirements of RCW 36.70A of the Growth Management Act (GMA) for the amendment or revision of the Official Zoning Map.

19.140.020 Applicability. All lots, tracts, and parcels within the City of Medical Lake have a designated zone. Public right-of-way and lakes do not have a designated zone.

19.140.030 Urban Growth Area. All lots, tracts, and parcels within the Urban Growth Area, which are adjacent to the City corporate boundaries, shall have a future zoning designation contained in the Comprehensive Plan. When such areas are annexed into the City corporate boundaries, they will receive the listed zoning designations.

19.140.040 Maintenance. The signed copy of the Official Zoning Map containing the zoning districts designated by this Title shall be filed with the City Clerk and a duplicate copy shall be filed in the Planning Department. Copies of all Official Zoning Maps shall be dated with the effective date and number of the ordinance adopting the map.

19.140.050 Boundaries. Zoning district boundary lines are intended to follow lot lines. Whenever any street, alley, or other public way is vacated in the manner authorized by law, the zoning district adjoining each side of such street, alley, or public way shall extend to the center of the former street, alley, or public way.

19.140.060 Zoning Districts. The City of Medical Lake is divided into zoning districts, as named and described in this Title. Each lot, tract, and parcel of land or portion thereof designated on the zoning map is limited to the uses and regulations as specified and defined for the applicable zoning district. Zoning districts are specified in Chapter 17.12 – Zone Designation.

19.140.070 Interpretation. Where, due to the scale, lack of detail, or illegibility of the zoning map, there is uncertainty, contradiction, or conflict as to the intended location of any zoning district boundary as shown thereon, the planning official shall make an interpretation in writing of said map upon request of any person. Any person or entity may appeal an interpretation of the planning official by submitting a petition to the City of Medical Lake (City) and paying the appropriate fee. Appeals are heard by the hearing examiner and the process is found in Medical Lake Municipal Code (MLMC) 19.270.080, Appeals.

19.140.080 Amendments.

- A. Applications. In addition to City-initiated amendments, a property owner or authorized representative may submit an application for an amendment to the Official Zoning Map. The following must be submitted for an application to be deemed complete:

1. An appropriate City application form;
 2. A written description of the amendment being requested;
 3. Any studies, reports, or documentation to support the request;
 4. A written response to the approval criteria in MLMC 19.140.080(C), Approval Criteria;
 5. A SEPA checklist; and
 6. The application fee.
- B. Process. Amendments to the Official Zoning Map, are processed through a Type IV review with the Planning Commission holding a public hearing and making a recommendation to the City Council, which shall make the final decision. The Type IV review process is found in MLMC Section 19.270.050, Type IV reviews.
- C. Approval Criteria. Amendments to the Official Zoning Map shall be subject to the following approval criteria:
1. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and objectives.
 2. The proposed amendment does not reduce the housing capacity or income stratification needs of the City.
 3. The proposed amendment(s) will not adversely affect the ability to provide City services in a cost-effective manner.
 4. The proposed amendment will result in long-term benefits to the community as a whole and is in the public interest.

19.143 – Amendments

19.143.010 Purpose. The purpose of this Chapter is to establish a procedure pursuant to the requirements of RCW 36.70A of the Growth Management Act (GMA) for the amendment of Title 15 – Subdivisions, Title 16 – Planning, Title 17 – Zoning, Title 18 – Manufactured Home Community, and Title 19 – Land Use and Development, as currently adopted or hereafter amended.

19.143.020 Applicability. The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to all private or City-initiated requests to amend any portion of Titles 15 through 19.

19.143.030 Applications. In addition to City-initiated amendments, any interested person or entity may submit an application for an amendment to Titles 15 through 19. The following must be submitted for an application to be deemed complete:

- A. An appropriate City application form;
- B. A written description of the amendment being requested and a response to the following:
 1. Describe how the proposed amendment will be consistent with the City of Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan. Please cite specific goals, objectives, and policies.
 2. Describe how the proposed amendment is in the best interest of citizens and property owners in Medical Lake.
 3. Describe how the proposed amendment enhances public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare.
- C. Any studies, reports, or documentation to support the request;
- D. A written response to the approval criteria in MLMC 19.143.050, Approval Criteria;

- E. A SEPA checklist: and
- F. The application fee.

19.143.040 Process. Amendments to Titles 15 through 19 are processed through a Type IV review with the Planning Commission holding a public hearing and making a recommendation to the City Council, which shall make the final decision. The Type IV review process is found in MLMC Section 19.270.050, Type IV reviews.

19.143.050 Approval Criteria. Amendments to Titles 15 through 19 shall be subject to the following criteria:

- A. The proposed amendment(s) implements the goals, policies, and objectives of the Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan.
- B. The proposed amendment(s) complies with all requirements of the state's Growth Management Act, including growth boundaries, critical areas, and future housing needs.
- C. The proposed amendment(s) does not conflict with the Shoreline Master Program.
- D. The proposed amendment(s) is consistent with other adopted City plans, including, but not limited to, the Strategic Plan, Capital Facilities Plan, Parks Master Plan, Water Plan, Sewer Plan, Stormwater Plan, and Transportation Plan.
- E. The proposed amendment(s) will not adversely affect the ability to provide City services in a cost-effective manner.
- F. The proposed amendment(s) will result in long-term benefits to the community as a whole and is in the public interest.
- G. The proposed amendment(s) will not result in adverse impacts to public infrastructure, wetlands, lakes, businesses, or residents.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were received from agencies or the public.

ZONING CODE APPROVAL CRITERIA

Amendments to development regulations are subject to MLMC Section 17.56.100 – Criteria for evaluation of plan amendments.

1. The amendment is necessary to resolve inconsistencies between the comprehensive plan and implementing ordinances, or inconsistencies between the plan or ordinances and local, state, or federal mandates.

Findings: The proposed amendments are to create a clearer process and criteria for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Map, and the development code (MLMC Titles 15-19). There are no inconsistencies currently, however, the current code is written poorly and difficult to implement. By adopting the proposed amendments, no inconsistencies will be created. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

2. The amendment of the plan and/or the development regulations will further the implementation of the comprehensive plan and resolve inconsistency between the two in a manner that will not adversely impact the general public health, safety, and/or welfare.

Findings: The proposed amendments to the approval criteria for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Map, and the development regulations will make the process and criteria clearer. By updating the approval criteria, it will streamline the evaluation of the comprehensive plan and all the development regulations that will be amended as part of the Periodic Update. By adopting the proposed amendments, the comprehensive plan will be further implemented, and no inconsistencies will be created. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

3. Conditions have changed so much since the adoption of the comprehensive plan on factors such as, but not limited to population, employment, housing, transportation, capital facilities, or economic conditions that the existing goals, policies, objectives and/or map classifications of the comprehensive plan or development regulations are inappropriate.

Findings: The proposed amendments are to update the criteria for which the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Map, and development regulations are evaluated. The existing criteria were adopted in 1999 and have not been revisited since. At this point in time, the City is making an effort to make the Municipal Code clearer and more user-friendly. These amendments will be a step in a positive direction. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

4. Substantial conditions exist where the available supply of forecasted lands for residential, commercial, industrial, recreation or agriculture have been absorbed and there is insufficient land available for a twenty-year supply.

Findings: The proposed amendments are about process and do not affect the available supply of forecasted lands. **For this reason, the criterion is not applicable.**

5. If the comprehensive plan amendment proposal involves extension of water and/or sewer services outside of the urban growth boundary, the following additional criteria must be met:

- A. The proposal must be in response to an immediate threat to public health or safety;
- B. The proposal is necessary for the protection of the aquifer(s) designated pursuant to RCW 36.70.A170;
- C. The proposal is necessary to maintain existing levels of service in existing urban or suburban developments.

Findings: The proposal does not involve the extension of water or sewer services. **Therefore, this criterion is not applicable.**

6. The proposed amendment is consistent with the overall intent of the goals of the comprehensive plan.

Findings: The Comprehensive Plan does not directly address amendments. However, it is the intent of the Growth Management Act to have jurisdictions periodically review the plan and development regulations for compliance with State regulations and changed conditions. The proposed amendments to the process and

criteria for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Map, and development regulations are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

7. The proposed amendment is consistent with RCW 36.70A, the Growth Management Act, the county-wide planning policies, and applicable multicounty planning policies.

Findings: The Spokane Countywide Planning Policies carry out the Growth Management Act which expects amendments of the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Map, and development regulations to take place. The proposed amendments are consistent the Countywide Planning Policies. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

8. Where an amendment to the comprehensive plan map is proposed, the proposed designation is adjacent to property having a similar and compatible designation.

Findings: An amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Map is not proposed, therefore, **this criterion is not applicable.**

9. Public facilities, infrastructure, and transportation systems are present to serve the intended amendment or provisions have been made in accordance with the comprehensive plan to provide the necessary facilities.

Findings: The proposed amendment to change the approval criteria of the amendment process does not affect public facilities, infrastructure, and transportation systems. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

10. The proposed amendment is complimentary and compatible with adjacent land uses and the surrounding environment.

Findings: The proposed amendment to change the approval criteria of the amendment process is not site specific, therefore, does not affect adjacent land uses. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

11. The proposed amendment does not adversely affect lands designated as agricultural and/or resource lands of long-term commercial significance or critical areas.

Findings: The proposed amendment to change the approval criteria of the amendment process does not adversely affect lands designated as agriculture, resource lands, or critical areas. **For this reason, the criterion is met.**

CONCLUSION

The proposed amendment to the Medical Lake Municipal Code is for the purpose of replacing approval criteria used to evaluate future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Map, and development regulations. The proposed amendments are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the Growth Management Act. The amendments do not adversely affect land, uses, or services within the City. All of the applicable approval criteria have been met, therefore, the proposal should be approved.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION

1. Recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the City Council.
2. Recommend approval of modified amendments to the City Council.
3. Request City Staff to address concerns and return with modified language.

EXHIBITS

- A. SEPA Checklist – October 29, 2025
- B. SEPA DNS – November 20, 2025
- C. Public Notice – November 20, 2025