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## STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**File:** Periodic Update: MLMC Specialized Housing

**Date of Staff Report:** May 21, 2026

**Date of Hearing:** May 28, 2026

**Staff Planner:** Elisa Rodriguez 509-565-5019 or [erodriguez@medical-lake.org](mailto:erodriguez@medical-lake.org)

**SEPA:** Determination of Non-Significance was made on Mar 25, 2026

**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 amend the municipal code to add provisions for:

1. Transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, and emergency shelters pursuant to RCW 35.21.683.
2. Safe parking, encampments, temporary small houses, and emergency shelters that are provided by religious organizations pursuant to RCW 35.21.915.
3. Affordable Housing provided by religious organizations pursuant to RCW 36.70A.545.

### PROCEDURAL HISTORY

SEPA DNS Issued – March 25, 2026

Notice of a Public Hearing Published in Cheney Free Press – March 19, 2026

Public Comment Period Closed – April 8, 2026

**PROPOSED LANGUAGE**

**Terms Added to Definitions Chapter.**

**Transitional Housing.** Housing and supportive services to homeless persons as defined in RCW 84.36.043.

**Permanent Supportive Housing.** Housing and supportive services for persons experiencing homelessness or have imminent risk of homelessness as defined in RCW 36.70A.030.

**Emergency Shelter.** Facilities that provide a temporary shelter for individuals or families who are currently homeless as defined in RCW 36.70A.030.

**Emergency Housing.** Temporary accommodations for individuals or families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless as defined in RCW 36.70A.030.

**Addition to Use Chapter**

**Group Living.** (Add permanent supportive housing and transitional housing to group living use category)

**Emergency Housing and Shelters.** Emergency Housing and Shelters are facilities that provide temporary housing for individuals or families experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Accessory uses include supportive services. Emergency Housing and Shelters do not include outdoor encampments or vehicle resident safe parking as provided for in RCW 35.21.915.

| <b>Use Categories</b>          | <b>Low-Density Residential</b> | <b>Medium-Density Residential</b> | <b>Central Business District</b> | <b>Mixed Use</b> | <b>Public Facilities</b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Emergency Housing and Shelters | CU                             | CU                                | Y                                | Y                | Y                        |

Y = Yes, allowed

CU = Allowed only if approved by a Conditional Use Review MLMC Chapter 19.790 – Conditional Use Review.

**Chapter – Religious Organizations and Temporary Housing**

**Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to comply with the requirements of RCW 35.21.915, pertaining to religious organizations hosting the homeless.

**Applicability.** This chapter applies to outdoor encampments, temporary small houses on-site, indoor overnight shelters, or vehicle resident safe parking hosted by a religious organization, as provided for in RCW 35.21.915.

**Duration.** A religious organization may host outdoor encampments, temporary small houses on-site, indoor overnight shelters, or vehicle resident safe parking for no more than four (4) consecutive months. There shall be a minimum of three (3) consecutive months between hosting periods.

**Requirements.** A religious organization that wishes to host an outdoor encampment, temporary small houses on-site, indoor overnight shelter, or vehicle resident safe parking shall complete the following:

- A. A memorandum of understanding with the City that contains, at a minimum, those criteria or items set forth in RCW 35.21.915.
- B. Host a community meeting pursuant to RCW 35.21.915.
- C. Complete sex offender checks of all the adult residents and guests.

**Temporary Small Houses.** Temporary Small Houses hosted by a religious organization shall meet the following requirements:

- A. The memorandum of understanding shall be renewed annually.
- B. Each small house shall be no larger than one hundred twenty (120) square feet.

- C. There shall be at least six (6) feet between small houses.
- D. Electricity shall be inspected by the Washington State Labor and Industries.
- E. Heating systems shall be inspected by the City of Medical Lake Building Official.
- F. Space heaters shall be inspected by the Fire Official.
- G. Doors and windows shall be lockable.
- H. Each small house shall have a fire extinguisher.
- I. Adequate restrooms shall be provided, including handwashing.
- J. Potable running water shall be provided.

**Safe Parking.** Safe Parking hosted by a religious organization shall meet the following requirements:

- A. The minimum parking spaces required for the primary use shall be retained for the primary use.
- B. Restroom access shall be provided.
- C. If recreational vehicles are hosted, proper disposal of waste shall be provided.

**Indoor Overnight Shelter.** The memorandum of understanding for an Indoor Overnight Shelter hosted by a religious organization shall contain provisions for fire safety pursuant to RCW 35.21.915.

### **Chapter – Religious Organizations and Affordable Housing Developments**

**Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to comply with the requirements of RCW 36.70A.545, pertaining to bonus densities for affordable housing on properties owned or controlled by religious organizations.

**Applicability.** Any Affordable Housing Development, as defined by RCW 36.70A.545, that is proposed on real property owned or controlled by a religious organization shall receive a twenty (20) percent density bonus provided that:

- A. At least fifty (50) percent of the Affordable Housing Development is set aside for or occupied exclusively by low-income households, as defined by RCW 36.70A.545; or
- B. At least twenty (20) percent of the Affordable Housing Development is set aside for or occupied exclusively by very low-income households, as defined by RCW 36.70A.545.

**Requirements.** The Affordable Housing Development shall:

- A. Execute a lease or other binding obligation that requires the affordability requirements and other conditions contained in RCW 36.70A.545 to be maintained for at least fifty (50) years, even if the religious organization no longer owns the property.
- B. Meet all development standards of the zone.

### **Chapter – Emergency Housing and Shelters**

**Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to comply with the requirements of RCW 35.21.683, pertaining to permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, indoor emergency housing, or indoor emergency shelters.

**Applicability.** This chapter applies to permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, indoor emergency housing, or indoor emergency shelters.

**Requirements.** Any proposed indoor emergency housing or indoor emergency shelter shall require a written certification with all of the information described in RCW 35.21.683(5)(a) from the sponsor or managing agency prior to a certificate of occupancy.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No comments were received from agencies or the public.

## ZONING CODE APPROVAL CRITERIA

Amendments to development regulations are subject to MLMC Section 19.143.050 – Approval Criteria.

- A. The proposed amendment(s) implements the goals, policies, and objectives of the Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan.

**Findings:** The proposal adds provisions for transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses. Goal #20 of the Comprehensive Plan states, “Meet a variety of needs including a broad range of health, social and affordable housing issues paying particular attention to senior citizens, low-income families, persons with disabilities and other special need populations.” Even though this goal does not speak directly to the proposed uses, it acknowledges that our community members have a wide variety of needs for both housing and services. Therefore, the proposal implements the goals, policies, and objectives of the Comprehensive plan by providing the opportunity to serve those community members most in need. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- B. The proposed amendment(s) complies with all requirements of the state's Growth Management Act (GMA), including growth boundaries, critical areas, and future housing needs.

**Findings:** State law requires jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act to accommodate housing at all income levels, including emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing. RCW 35.21.683, RCW 35.21.915, and RCW 36.70A.545 mandate that local governments allow these uses and limit the extent of local regulation.

The proposed amendments update the Medical Lake Municipal Code to ensure compliance with these statutory requirements by identifying applicable zoning classifications and adopting development standards within the scope permitted by State law. Where State law limits the City’s ability to impose prescriptive regulations, the proposal relies on memoranda of understanding or written certification to support coordination related to public safety, service access, and operational impacts.

Although some of the mandates originate outside the Growth Management Act, they directly affect land use regulation and must be implemented through development regulations subject to the GMA. The proposal therefore complies with applicable state law.

**For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- C. The proposed amendment(s) does not conflict with the Shoreline Master Program.

**Findings:** Any development must conform with the Shoreline Master Program. All applicable shoreline and critical area regulations remain in effect and will govern siting and development. Therefore, these uses will not cause an inherent conflict. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- 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.

**Findings:** The proposal provides standards for uses that are mandated by State law. Due to the wide variety of variables associated with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses, the proposal is requiring a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written certification to address the possible externalities created by one of these uses. Therefore, the required MOU or written certification will ensure consistency with other adopted City Plans. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- E. The proposed amendment(s) will not adversely affect the ability to provide City services in a cost-effective manner.

**Findings:** The proposal provides standards for uses that are mandated by State law. Due to the wide variety of variables associated with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses, the proposal is requiring a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written certification to address the possible City services needed by these uses. Because these uses are mandated and the State is limiting the restrictions that can be placed on them, the City will use the MOU or written certification as a mechanism to address any issues. Therefore, the proposal has an unknown effect on City services, yet an MOU or written certification will be implemented to help the City provide services in a cost-effective manner. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- F. The proposed amendment(s) will not be detrimental to and will result in long-term benefits to the community as a whole and is in the public interest.

**Findings:** The proposal provides standards for uses that are mandated by State law. Due to the wide variety of variables associated with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses, the proposal is requiring a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written certification to address the possible impacts on the community. Because these uses are mandated and the State is limiting the restrictions that can be placed on them, the City will use the MOU or written certification as a mechanism to address any issues. It is also recognized that our community members have a wide variety of needs for both housing and services that can be served by these uses. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

- G. The proposed amendment(s) will not result in adverse impacts to public infrastructure, wetlands, lakes, businesses, or residents.

**Findings:** The proposal provides standards for uses that are mandated by State law. Due to the wide variety of variables associated with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses, the proposal is requiring a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written certification to address the possible impacts on the community. Because these uses are mandated and the State is limiting the restrictions that can be placed on them, the City will use the MOU or written certification as a mechanism to address any issues. All of these uses will be subject to critical area and shoreline regulations, protecting wetlands and lakes. **For these reasons, the criterion is met.**

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposal provides standards for uses that are mandated to be allowed by State law. Due to the wide variety of variables associated with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency housing, emergency shelters, safe parking, temporary small houses, encampments, and affordable housing density bonuses, the proposal requires a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written certification to address the possible impacts on the community. The proposal is consistent with all other adopted City plans, will provide a benefit to the City, and any detrimental impacts will be addressed through the required MOU or written certification. 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 – March 24, 2026
- B. SEPA DNS – March 25, 2026