

City of Kenmore
STEP Housing Committee Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2025 @ 5:00 PM

STEP Housing Committee Members – In Attendance

Timothy Marchello
Caitlin Sullivan
Juliana Pooley
Josh Kurcinka
Jennifer Alderman
Corina Pfeil

Staff

Nick Chen, Kimley-Horn (Consultant/facilitator)
Sam Matterazzo, Kimley-Horn (Consultant)
Debbie Bent, Community Development Director

Open House

- Nick Chen: 40-50 attendance, variety of opinions, balanced discussion. What are the Committee's thoughts on the Open House and broader outreach in advance of project?
- Josh Kurcinka: There is a lack of clarity on the different types of STEP housing. Most of the negative feedback was related to PSH, not the other types, especially the Plymouth Housing project. People pointed out the other models that operated successfully: Lake City Partners, Mary's Place, and Imagine Housing. Recommends first three models initially with more debate on PSH.
- Nick Chen: We cannot exclude PSH but let's discuss.
- Juliana Pooley: Reached out to residents who have lived in PSH or Mary's Place and they did not feel comfortable coming to the Open House due to what they have heard from neighbors about STEP, so there is selection bias for attendees at the Open House.
- Nick Chen: Good feedback to have on controversial topics. We need opportunity to provide feedback in different ways, what are the opportunities for in person and virtual discussions for a broader representation.
- Jennifer Alderman: Spent time providing general education about STEP and what the purpose was. The purpose was not to re-visit Plymouth, conspiracy that City is talking to Plymouth, rumors that City was going to put a shelter on Kenmore Air property and cynical opinions. Spoke with someone interested in opening an adult family home but the public interaction/notification were different, the amount of interaction for the largest project and smallest project should be the same. Heard this from

two people. How to explain to folks who were still angry about Plymouth that it might not be the best to have the same requirements for smaller projects.

- Josh Kurcinka: Transparency about the different types of approval process, and types of notice with Type I compared to Type II.
- Nick Chen: This is related to one of the questions from today. We will circle back on that.
- Juliana Pooley: Heard concern that this is just not an informational meeting but there could be a project attached.
- Nick Chen: Unfortunately, there is still distrust and it will take time to work through. More transparency is needed for development standards and requirements for projects.

Survey Responses

- Nick Chen: There was support for simplifying process for developments. Resources for community and resident safety was a big thing. Learn lessons from Plymouth. People wanted to see STEP distributed throughout the City in all different zones instead of concentrated downtown. People were concerned about safety, especially drug use, and enforceability of good neighbor agreements. Respondents were also concerned about the negative impacts of property values. Make sure all community voices are heard even if in opposition.
 - People supported agreements to keep parties safe, but there was also concern agreements seem overly restrictive. Support for community engagement and outreach. Comments that agreements don't work because of lack of accountability and enforcement.

Council Recommendation

- Nick Chen: The purpose of this meeting is to have clear direction from the Committee to take to City Council. Will ask Committee for written comments so we can have feedback from everyone.
- Nick Chen: Code changes follow state guidance. Projects are Type 2 but can fall under Type 1. Incentive to simplify process. Coordinating the updates on cold weather shelter. Are there any additional changes?
- Josh Kurcinka: Concerned over broad interpretation of criminal history that would qualify under the PSH definition. Could modify definition to make it less broad and exclude certain types of crime. Should some of the carve outs fit more into the operator agreement?

- Jennifer Alderman: Changing the definition could make it exclusionary e.g. homicide convicted as a young adult may preclude senior housing. Arson, sex crimes, and meth manufacturing have always been excluded. Concern about legal issues and unintended consequences. Different needs for different populations. Could include elsewhere?
- Juliana Pooley: Developers often have language about crimes committed in the last 20 years. These are criteria for developers.
- Josh Kurcinka: Should we add the 20-year language in the code? To address people's safety concerns.
- Jennifer Alderman: Concerns about legal restrictions with HUD in specifying language.
- Juliana Pooley: Different developers have different metrics for risk levels of clients. If city has different criteria for senior housing, how do we write language for that?
- Josh Kurcinka: Do these carve-outs fit in the operator agreement?
- Jennifer Alderman: That makes sense. This is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all, where we could allow the broadest fit possible. If there is a way to put in elsewhere where it could be more adaptable, that would work.
- Nick Chen: PSH is meant to provide a housing option for people who need supportive housing. The language on criminal history could be removed and added it elsewhere in the operator agreement. Will need to research how far it can be defined without it becoming restrictive.
- Corina Pfeil: Supports changes in operator agreements, regarding sex offenders etc. The level of crime could be a status barrier. Bellevue and Shoreline operator agreements include this language.
- Juliana Pooley: HUD doesn't give vouchers to sex offenders.

Permit Process

- Nick Chen: Type 1 does not have public notice. Typical multi-family housing is Type 2 with exceptions, such as the affordable housing provision.
- Debbie Bent: A Type 1 permit does not trigger noticing requirements to neighbors. A Type 2 permit does trigger noticing requirements. Environmental review also provides an opportunity for public comment. Type 3 involves staff making a presentation to a hearing examiner. A hearing examiner makes the decision and there is public noticing about the project. There is a general comment period and a SEPA (environmental) comment period.
- Nick Chen: The current language has STEP housing in Type 1. Do we want to change anything on that?

- Josh Kurcinka: Not in support of Type 1 given history and lack of transparency. Would like to have public notice and awareness of the projects. PSH will be the most debated, the others may not be as debated. No notice would not be acceptable to the community.
- Juliana Pooley: What level of notice are you looking for?
- Josh Kurcinka: Residents feel the city is trying to slip projects through. If permits are issued without any public notice, it would re-confirm sentiments of community members. We have to acknowledge people want to know about this.
- Caitlin Sullivan: If required to provide STEP public notice, there is a lot of resistance to STEP housing. State law says we have to allow STEP housing where hotels are, so the city would be receiving feedback, but it does not affect the outcome of the project since it has to be permitted. Look at ways where community input is meaningful.
- Josh Kurcinka: This would be a good opportunity to provide community education. Not everyone in the community understands the permitting process.
- Caitlin Sullivan: It would be good to make changes to the operator agreement to assure the community we are being responsive to what they said.
- Juliana Pooley: Other voices have said we do need PSH. The public feedback should happen if there are things the community can change. Supports community engagement.
- Nick Chen: Projects allowed by right where there is no discretion for public comment: sometimes developers address public comments even when it is not required. Need to be clear on parameters.
- Juliana Pooley: With the Imagine habitat project, people were discussing sidewalks, tree preservation, the feedback was about the urban design engagement to find the best fit.
- Corina Pfeil: Operators are pre-engaging the community through their best practices, such as providing Open Houses. Comfortable with code and permit process as long as council receives updates.
- Nick Chen: The Type I process would not go to Council.
- Josh Kurcinka: Are you proposing that in the operator agreement we would include community engagement? Would that be a minimum requirement of an operator agreement to do education and outreach?
- Corina Pfeil: The operators themselves usually do this without prompting from the city. We could add it in to the operator agreement to help the community be informed about the process. Development is a long process. An elevated plateau would be a major change in the code for building, safety, emergency, or fire code standards. Elevated plateau for deviation should go to the Council.

- Nick Chen: Engagement ahead of project approval is not part of the Good Neighbor or Operator Agreement. Engagement ahead of a decision would need to be in the code.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Community engagement for the benefit of the provider. During the Open House, saw community confusion. If a project is outright permitted, the information can be included on the website and there will be outreach within a certain area by provider, consistent with other types of permits/housing.
- Nick Chen: Somewhere include language requirement or highly recommended that applicants proposing PSH do outreach up front to gather feedback that could not be used for denial of a project.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Is there a license required on the city-level?
- Debbie Bent: We do not require a license for projects, but if it is a business, there is a business license.
- Nick Chen: Depends if it meets the definition of a business, will follow up with Sam.
- Timothy Marchello: Given the lack of public understanding, there should be some opportunity for public feedback.
- Nick Chen: Include options for community engagement as part of recommendation. Project applicant should/shall hold a community meeting, will draft language for code.
- Corina Pfeil: Adapting project to fit local community. Updates from operator.
- Nick Chen: Setting the baseline for what operators would need to do.
- Jennifer Alderman: No suggestions on specific changes to code and agreements.
- Corina Pfeil: Portland requires license for businesses, gives opportunity to repeal permit.
- Nick Chen: We will take a look to see how the language reads.

Safety and Security Plan

- Nick Chen: Good Neighbor Agreement does not require safety and security plan as part of the permitting process. Would like to know committee's thoughts on that.
- Caitlin Sullivan: License to operate the business should be contingent on maintaining agreement policies. There should be recourse and consequences to enforce agreements. The current agreement has no consequences.
- Nick Chen: Will talk to development services about if the city could enforce the business license with development and state code.
- Josh Kurcinka: Critical to have this included in our final recommendation.

- Corina Pfeil: Important to look at best policies and code. Shoreline and Bellevue include safety and security plans in good neighbor agreements with transportation maps; police chief checks on it and having onsite staffing. Supports everyone in a healthy, sustainable way.
- Nick Chen: Expansion of good neighbor agreement by including more safety and security details.

Good Neighbor Agreement

- Nick Chen: Language is a placeholder, the agreement is amended based on specific developments.
- Josh Kurcinka: Should onsite services be required, that was the concern with Plymouth.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Residential areas are not zoned for businesses in many areas of Kenmore. We should allow for corner stores to provide more services throughout the city. Services onsite or within ¼ mile need to allow for corner stores.
- Debbie Bent: This is not on the docket for Planning Commission but it is a future work item. It has been in front of legislature a couple times. If there was a PSH with services, the services would be an accessory to the primary use of PSH.
- Nick Chen: Would have to clarify if this is permitted only on-site or if it is off-site as well. Cleaner code to require it on site, but could allow offsite then.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Home businesses are limited to one employee and that could be an issue. Could allow offsite services if they are smaller providers. How can other uses be integrated into residential zones? We do not want to box services to only the downtown area. We need the code to work for all levels of PSH scale.
- Nick Chen: Desire to disperse STEP housing throughout the City, meaning smaller projects.
- Josh Kurcinka: I like the idea of requiring it for 30 plus residents. Lake City Partners serves 28, it seems like a very workable model.
- Corina Pfeil: Agree with amending zoning regs. Need to update mixed-use business code and zoning. Allowing for only 1 employee is a discriminatory practice. Having a business operating agreement seems practical.
- Nick Chen: We will talk to development services about that.

Good Neighbor Agreements

- Nick Chen: Does the group want to see content change or more related to enforcement? Language currently says strongly recommended, could change but stop short of requiring.
- Corina Pfeil: Could require trackable notice to surrounding properties/businesses.
- Nick Chen: We would need to define where parameters are, within property lines or for a certain distance. Where potentially, businesses within 500 ft.?
- Corina Pfeil: Bellevue, Redmond, and Shoreline used identified map area for safety and security plan.
- Josh Kurcinka: What if they don't sign the Good Neighbor Agreement?
- Caitlin: The facility has to agree to Good Neighbor agreement.
- Nick Chen: Business license tied to Operator Agreement. The operator would go through process with clients if they violate agreement.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Violation and ability to operate. There would have to be a code enforcement process. If the agreements are needed to operate, then it should be tied to the permit process.
- Debbie Bent: The business license process operates locally but there is also a state business license process. The city may have a different process for revocation than the state.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Tying the neighborhood and operator agreements tied to permit process, is a change of use needed?
- Nick Chen: Would still need a change of use. The venue, whether it is a business license, business agreement or part of code but need to have the agreements be enforceable.
- Corina Pfeil: Agrees with a business-residential mixed-use. A good neighbor agreement are only enforceable when it is an addendum signed by the city and the development or future residents. MRSC guidance to municipalities has verified this. Supports language for violations using fees and laws.
- Nick Chen: The good neighbor agreement is provided to surrounding properties. For it to be binding, the neighbors would also have to sign on to the process. To what level surrounding properties should do that, we need to confirm that.
- Corina Pfeil: Important to have it codified.

Proposed Resident – Operator Agreement

- Nick Chen: Operators can use their own as well.
- Corina Pfeil: Panhandler regulations – policy offer resources but Kenmore does not have a panhandling ordinance.

- Caitlin Sullivan: Could provide minimal operator agreement requirements in the municipal code. Are some of the requirements elsewhere in the KMC or are these only specific requirements for STEP?
- Juliana Pooley: Do we have guidelines for other large developments that are built? Would prefer to have this as streamlined as possible.
- Nick Chen: Most leases have some requirements. It is not a city requirement.
- Caitlin Sullivan: A lot of what is included in the operator agreement is similar to standard lease language for other large developments. This agreement can help build trust by codifying it and making it enforceable.
- Corina Pfeil: City of Shoreline and City of Bellevue agreements have enforceability. Code has to comply with county to seek grants.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Do not want to create a financial burden on the provider. Do not want to treat STEP housing differently. Would like to see STEP being built with guidelines that work for the community.
- Nick Chen: There are differences between residential and STEP housing but these guidelines would help to gather community support.
- Corina Pfeil: Shoreline and Bellevue have college campus housing. We also have a university in our borders. We should also consider that area for STEP housing.
- Juliana Pooley: Shoreline college is piloting their support program with the city. The campus is involved as a resource, great partnership model.
- Corina Pfeil: Bastyr University, desire to expand housing. Would recommend STEP housing in that area.
- Caitlin Sullivan: The zoning for Bastyr is public or semi-public, so there is a narrow area. Bastyr could have accessory housing, such as low-income student housing but would have to go through master plan update.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Are there churches in Kenmore that are in the R zone? Churches in the residential zone can add shelters as allowed use.
- Corina Pfeil: There are churches that operate in the R zone. For example, Northlake Lutheran Church has been working to amend their land covenant to make it easier to have affordable housing on their property.
- Debbie Bent: For churches, is this type of housing allowed?
- Nick Chen: Should be a fairly straight forward thing to do to allow emergency housing, we can take a look at that. Churches operate in any zone because of religious freedom. We could add churches to emergency housing.
- Juliana Pooley: Some churches operate shelters as part of the church ministry, which can have different standards to comply with ADA code. Wants it to be easy for places of worship to provide shelters by allowing it in the code.

- Corina Pfeil: There are different Supreme Court rulings that have protected churches offering ministries, zoning is separate from church and state. Within our borders, we have great religious partners that work with the city to ensure they provide healthy, safe places.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Parking reduction tools for STEP Housing. A lot of people who utilize STEP do not have cars. Why do we have the same parking standards for STEP as other developments?
- Nick Chen: Could add reduction requirements for STEP or for example within certain distance of major transit stop.
- Josh Kurcinka: Plymouth Housing did not have enough parking. The parking restrictions will come down organically with new code updates.
- Caitlin Sullivan: What is the level of parking needed? A 50% reduction or 25% or something similar could be appropriate. Environmental benefits with parking reduction.
- Juliana Pooley: Parking spaces are tens of thousands of dollars per space.
- Nick Chen: Some types of STEP will require cars, others may not. Exception for reducing parking could be added based on certain findings.
- Corina Pfeil: Supports reduction in parking spaces. Bellevue has a couple large STEP housing locations with 100 plus housing units that has 10 parking spots. The Plymouth location has about 20 parking spots. Would like to see developments provide community transit assistance, similar to Bellevue and Shoreline. Include no abandoned or junk vehicles in the good neighbor agreement.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Exemption for fee in lieu requirement for affordable housing fee that it would not apply to STEP housing.
- Nick Chen: Does not believe fee in lieu would be applicable for affordable units.

Next Steps

- Nick Chen: Will provide updated draft for review before the November 17th, 2025 City Council meeting.
- Debbie Bent: The ordinance is scheduled for adoption in early 2026 to include time for the public hearing.
- Caitlin Sullivan: Does the model ordinance get applied on January 1st if we do not pass this?
- Debbie Bent: No. Will have time to provide comments on drafts.
- Nick Chen: Do the Committee members attend on Nov. 17th or is it only staff to present?
- Debbie Bent: Staff will give an overview of the process and then will turn it to the Committee to speak to certain aspects of that, so that they can

- each speak to something. Staff presentation in 10 minutes and another 10-15 minutes of Committee providing their input.
- Nick Chen: Will send out an email to the Committee.
 - Corina Pfeil: Shoreline adopted a proactive code compliance policy, including violations and reporting to support STEP housing. The Open House occurred on the same night as Northshore school district open house orientation, which makes it hard to participate to provide community feedback. To provide equitable community feedback, we need to provide several opportunities with dates and times for the community to participate and provide feedback. I recommend having another community meeting on the weekend. There were not enough comparable documents provided, had to do individual research. Was great working with the Committee.
 - Nick Chen: Thank you all. Will provide drafts to staff and Committee.