

MINUTES
Planning Commission
May 12, 2025

The City of Wyoming Planning Commission met in regular session on Monday, May 12, 2025, in the Council Chambers at the City Building. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Jon B. Boss, Chair. Attendance was as follows:

MEMBERS:

Jon B. Boss, Chair
Phyllis Bossin
Dan Driehaus
Dan Johnson
Ethan Pagliaro
Matthew Erickson, Wyoming High School Student
Arwin Xu, Wyoming High School Student

STAFF:

Megan Statt Blake, Community Development Director
Tana Bere, Community Development Specialist
Rusty Herzog, City Manager

OTHERS:

Mike Ruetschle, Ruetschle Architects

Mr. Boss acknowledged Arwin Xu and Matthew Erickson, who are Wyoming High School sophomores that have been appointed to be part of the Planning Commission for the school year. The Commission is delighted to have the students participate and be part of discussions and to learn how the Planning Commission operates.

Approval of February 24, 2025 Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Bossin moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Driehaus seconded the motion. By voice vote, all voted yes, the motion carried.

Business:

Review of a Request to Operate a Bed & Breakfast Establishment at 544 Tohatchi Drive, under a Special Use Permit, Pursuant to Chapter 1197 of the Planning and Zoning Code:

At the scheduled Planning Commission meeting, Ms. Bere opened the discussion by providing background information regarding an application submitted for the operation of a Bed and Breakfast Establishment at 544 Tohatchi Drive. In accordance with Section 1197.03(a) of the City of Wyoming Zoning Code, the application was submitted by the resident owner through the City's permitting software, Cloudpermit. The submission totaled eight pages and included the required special use application, a statement of operation, a site plan derived from a previous fence permit, a photograph of the home's front exterior, and floor plans (not drawn to

scale). The application meets the requirements of Section 1197.04 and further addresses the approval criteria under Section 1197.06.

As required by Section 1197.03(b), Community Development Director Megan Statt Blake, Fire Chief Dennis Brown, and Ms. Bere conducted a site visit on behalf of the City Manager. During this inspection, no violations of building, sanitation, or fire codes enforced by the City or Hamilton County were observed. The property appeared suitable for the proposed use; however, the house is not compliant with accessibility standards due to its split-level design. Additionally, the Non-Resident Bedroom does not currently meet modern egress standards because the sill height exceeds the allowable distance from the floor. It was noted that compliance with these updated standards is not mandatory for approval.

Notices regarding the application and the date, time, and location of this Planning Commission meeting were sent to property owners within 300 feet of 544 Tohatchi Drive, fulfilling the notification requirements of Section 1197.03(b)(1).

Ms. Bere elaborated on the application, noting that the home has a dedicated guest bathroom, located across the hall from the guest bedroom. This bathroom would be one of two designated for use by residents and guests. The applicant has stated that no more than two non-resident guests would be accommodated at any time. The lack of handicap accessibility was again noted, as it is inherent to the home's split-level configuration.

Parking arrangements were clarified, with Ms. Bere showing that guests would either park in the driveway or along the street. No meals, including breakfast, would be provided for guests, although the applicant does intend to make a Keurig coffee machine available. The application proposes a maximum guest occupancy of 12 nights per month, in line with the Code, which permits a limit of 28 consecutive days per year per guest.

The Planning Commission was reminded of its role to review the application and recommend approval or disapproval to City Council based on compliance with the criteria outlined in Section 1197.06(A-S). The Commission is also empowered, under Section 1197.03(c), to recommend waivers or modifications and may impose specific conditions to ensure compliance.

Applicant Ms. Eller then addressed the Commission, candidly expressing that she did not initially realize that her intended short-term hosting arrangement would qualify as a formal Bed and Breakfast under the Code. She emphasized her community-oriented mindset, explaining that her primary motivation is to support community events such as weddings and high school reunions by providing guests a place to stay, not for profit. She reiterated that she does not plan to serve breakfast but will provide basic amenities such as a coffee maker. Ms. Eller humorously described herself as a quiet, older woman who does not host parties and assured the Commission that her property would remain calm and respectful of neighbors.

In response to the questions, Ms. Eller clarified that although the application permits up to two guests, she prefers hosting just one individual. Exceptions would be made for a couple attending a local event, but she stated explicitly that babies and children are not permitted due to the home's setup. She confirmed that only one bedroom would be used for guest accommodations and that there is only one bed, sufficient for a couple or close friends.

Regarding fire safety, Ms. Eller addressed a note in the Fire Chief's inspection report indicating boxes near the water heater. She stated that although removing them was not mandated, she followed the Fire Chief's suggestion and relocated the boxes. The Commission confirmed that other items in the report did not require formal waivers.

Mr. Johnson raised a broader question about the Commission's discretion in approving the application. It was clarified that while the application must comply with the outlined criteria, the Commission also retains judgment in determining whether the proposed use aligns with the intended spirit of the bed and breakfast regulations. The group acknowledged that previous discussions about short-term rentals, including Airbnb's, had not resulted in regulatory prohibitions. The Commission discussed the difference between Bed and Breakfasts, which require the owner to reside on the property, and Airbnb's, which often involve absentee owners.

It was reiterated that although the City does not currently regulate Airbnb's as a distinct category, this application is being reviewed under the Bed and Breakfast provisions. Ms. Eller confirmed her intent to continue residing at the property.

The Commission also reviewed newly submitted photographs of the guest accommodations, which included views of the bedroom, a workspace, and finishes in the guest bathroom.

Further discussion centered on the purpose and responsibilities of the Commission, with members considering whether they are bound to recommend approval if an application meets all criteria, or whether they may also consider broader implications. It was affirmed that the Commission does have discretion and must weigh both compliance and potential impact on surrounding property use and values.

One Commission member expressed philosophical concerns about permitting commercial uses in residential zones but acknowledged that this specific proposal posed minimal impact and was managed appropriately by the applicant. The low-impact nature of the application, limited to a single room and infrequent use, was emphasized.

Lastly, it was confirmed that neighbors had been notified of the application and hearing schedule. No comments or objections were received, either in writing or in person, and Ms. Eller stated that her neighbors had expressed support during casual conversations. The Commission concluded with a discussion about its twofold responsibility: to recommend approval or disapproval to City Council, and to assess whether the application complies with

Section 1197.06. Ms. Bossin moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. By voice vote, all voted yes, the motion carried.

During the continued discussion on the application for a bed and breakfast at 544 Tohatchi Drive, members of the Commission and staff reflected on the broader context of short-term rental operations within the City of Wyoming. It was noted that there are currently two other known properties operating in a similar fashion. These properties, which are not officially permitted bed and breakfasts, have been identified by Code Enforcement as operating short-term rentals and have been issued notices accordingly.

A distinction was made in the conversation regarding terminology and classification. The term "Airbnb" was acknowledged as commonly used in public discourse, but from a zoning and regulatory standpoint, the terminology can be misleading. While a property may be listed on a platform such as Airbnb, its use may still fall under the regulatory framework of a traditional bed and breakfast. Short-term rentals, as discussed, exist in a sort of definitional gray area, falling between bed and breakfast establishments and hotels. This lack of clarity contributes to ongoing confusion regarding enforcement and regulation.

One Commission member expressed concern and confusion about why the City has not moved to clarify or update the regulations more definitively, especially considering the increasing prevalence of short-term rentals. Staff responded that while this issue was brought forward for consideration nearly five years ago, specifically around September 2020, the City Council chose not to advance the proposed legislative changes. It was further explained that unless this becomes a recurring issue or pain point for the community, there may not be a legislative push to revisit or update the relevant ordinances. At the time, the issue had risen due to reports of parties being hosted at one of the properties, prompting community concern and initial discussions on the matter. However, the momentum behind potential regulation has since dissipated.

Returning to the matter at hand, staff reiterated that the two other currently operating short-term rentals in Wyoming are expected either to apply for a special use permit under the existing bed and breakfast code or to cease operations altogether. This reflects the City's stance on ensuring all such properties are brought into compliance with the applicable zoning code.

There was a brief exchange to clarify whether one of the properties in question was the Stearns mansion, which had previously been discussed and generated community interest. Staff clarified that the Stearns property had been involved in past deliberations, but there had been no recent discussions or formal action taken either by the Planning Commission or by City Council beyond that earlier case. Therefore, under the current framework, such uses continue to be evaluated through the special use permit process, as is being done with the 544 Tohatchi Drive application.

In conclusion, the applicant acknowledged her understanding that, if approved, the special use permit for her operation would require annual renewal in accordance with the City's ordinances. Staff confirmed this requirement, and the meeting proceeded with the next agenda item.

Wyoming Primary Schools Redevelopment Project: Presentation and Overview of the Project by the Architect for Wyoming City Schools: Mr. Mike Ruetschle of Ruetschle Architects addressed the Planning Commission to present a comprehensive update on the master planning efforts for Wyoming City Schools' elementary buildings. He began by expressing appreciation for the Commission's attention during the February meeting, especially regarding the Friendship Church matter, which required prompt action to ensure modular classroom units could be secured for students over the summer. At that meeting, Mr. Ruetschle had committed to returning with a broader presentation of the district's master planning timeline, scope, and progress—and he honored that commitment during this session.

The purpose of Mr. Ruetschle's presentation was to provide a full overview of the three-phase construction strategy across two swing sites. He aimed to answer any questions from the Commission and offered updates on the master plan, swing space developments, project schedules, schematic site plans, floor plans, and a 3D SketchUp model for the Hilltop Elementary School project.

The overall plan involves the replacement of the three elementary buildings—Hilltop, Vermont, and Elm—each in their existing locations. The phasing of construction and temporary relocation is carefully orchestrated. Phase one will see Hilltop Elementary students relocated to the Friendship United Methodist Church. During this time, the existing Hilltop building will be abated and demolished, followed by the construction of a new facility on the same site.

Once complete, Hilltop students will move into the new building, allowing phase three to begin—Vermont students will then transition into the swing space at Friendship Church. Simultaneously, Elm School, constituting phase two, will be temporarily relocated to the Wyoming Presbyterian Church. This relocation is contingent on City approvals, a traffic study, and Planning Commission review.

Mr. Ruetschle emphasized that Elm's transition to the Presbyterian Church is promising due to its smaller size (approximately 200 students) and the existing space available at the church, potentially eliminating the need for modular units. However, the arrangement remains in negotiation pending traffic study results. He noted that the existing churches being used as swing space are in better physical condition than the previously considered St. James School, which was ultimately disqualified due to contractual constraints imposed by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati that the public school district could not legally accept.

A detailed project schedule was shared, outlining overlapping timelines. Hilltop will begin its transition in August 2025, with abatement and demolition occurring later that fall and full construction commencing in early 2026. Students are expected to return to a completed

Hilltop building by December 2026. Elm's design work begins in July 2025 with construction projected through 2027, while Vermont's project is planned to begin at the end of 2026 and conclude by spring break of 2028. Mr. Ruetschle stressed the importance of early feedback from the Commission, particularly as the architectural and engineering teams begin securing construction estimates and move toward design development phases.

During the discussion, it was confirmed that previous plans had placed Elm's work at the end, but new developments and the availability of the Presbyterian Church allowed the district to expedite Elm's project. Mr. Ruetschle noted that this reordering would not only minimize costs due to faster construction timelines but also streamline contractor engagement by allowing the same teams to transition from one site to the next efficiently.

In response to questions about historic preservation, Mr. Ruetschle clarified that Elm School—located in the historic district—would be subject to review by both the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and Architectural Review Board (ARB). Planning staff explained that these reviews will draw upon both the City's historic design guidelines and national standards, which discourage faux historic architecture and instead encourage contemporary design that harmonizes with surrounding historic character.

Mr. Ruetschle described community engagement efforts, including listening sessions with staff, parents, and students. A particularly notable session involved third graders, who offered spirited feedback—including the imaginative suggestion of a 300-foot roller coaster. More constructively, students emphasized their love of nature, outdoor spaces, and daylight. These sentiments shaped key design goals: incorporating nature, promoting curiosity, ensuring transparency and safety, and creating flexible learning environments. Student feedback led to the inclusion of features such as an accessible outdoor restroom, visible community gardens, and a more integrated drop-off experience. One workshop highlighted the community's strong interest in public access to gym and recreation spaces, prompting redesigns to allow for controlled public access to the gym and cafeteria areas.

Site plan updates for Hilltop featured a two-story academic core, single-story gymnasium and cafeteria wing, and extensive natural play areas that leverage the sloped site's topography. Drop-off circulation has been revised to limit traffic cut-through and ensure safety, particularly by avoiding problematic traffic flows around the building's perimeter. Bus access was adjusted to maintain traffic flow and ensure safe boarding zones. In response to Planning Commission concerns, the architectural team agreed to evaluate the feasibility of future access connectivity to Reily Road, acknowledging both public safety considerations and community concerns.

Further discussion addressed design themes such as red brick exteriors and pedestrian access from Reily Road. Staff and commissioners emphasized the importance of flexibility in the site's layout for long-term emergency access, as well as attention to ADA compliance and user comfort, particularly during drop-off and inclement weather.

Suggestions included extending sidewalks, reconsidering canopy dimensions, and ensuring logical pedestrian access routes from adjacent neighborhoods.

The presentation concluded with a 3D virtual tour of the proposed Hilltop facility. The model showed the updated massing, material palette, site circulation, and recreational areas. Commissioners praised the thoughtful incorporation of student and community input and expressed enthusiasm for the progress. However, they reiterated key points for ongoing consideration: ensuring adequate weather protection at the drop-off canopy, maintaining future access flexibility, and balancing design cohesion across all three new school facilities.

Mr. Ruetschle thanked the Commission for their attention, insights, and collaboration. He reaffirmed the commitment to a transparent, community-centered process and welcomed any further questions as the planning process advances. Commissioners commended the work presented and expressed support for the design direction, while offering feedback on technical and community concerns to guide the next phases of development. The meeting concluded on a positive note with shared enthusiasm for the future of Wyoming's elementary schools.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Statt Blake reported that at this time, there are no pending agenda items for a June meeting; however, the month is still young, so please stay tuned for updates. Should a meeting be scheduled, we will inform you in advance and distribute the agenda one week prior to the meeting date.

Excusal of Absent Members

All members are present, there are none to excuse.

Adjourn

With no further business before the Members, Ms. Bossin moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. All voted yes, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Martin, Executive Assistant

Jon B. Boss, Chair