

**CITY OF SHORELINE**  
**PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF REPORT**

**PROJECT NAME:** Fircrest Special Use Permit Application

**PROJECT FILE:** SPL22-0191

**REQUEST:** The applicant, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), requests application approval for a Special Use Permit to allow the siting of a 48-bed behavioral health facility on the Fircrest Campus.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

Applicant: Washington State Department of Social and Health Sciences

Representative: Wayne Carlson  
AHBL, Inc.  
1200 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Ste 1620  
Seattle, WA 98101

Property Owner: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Property Location: 15230 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Shoreline, WA 98155

Tax Parcel Number: 7769700010

Legal Description: SHORELINE BSP #PSS 23-0112 (REC #20240805000331 VOL 305 PGS 22-25)

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The Fircrest Master Development Plan (MDP) (**Exhibit 2**) was Approved on May 3, 2024, to guide and plan for future development of the Fircrest School campus. The purpose of the Fircrest School MDP is to provide detailed descriptions of the current uses of the campus and describe a comprehensive plan for future growth and improvements.

The MDP is a blueprint to improve campus operations, aesthetics, meet current and future needs, and coherently plan development of future projects that support the intended uses of the campus while minimizing impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

This MDP covers development for a 20-year period from 2023 through 2043 on the approximately 65-acre project site.

One of the proposed projects in the approved MDP is a new 48-bed behavioral health facility.  
**Exhibit 3 – Site Plan.**

**Behavioral Health Facility** – In 2019, the Washington State Legislature supported the vision to provide mental health services in local communities for people with acute mental illness. The Legislature enacted a budget and provided direction to DSHS to begin development of three community-based behavioral health residential treatment facilities. Construction of these facilities would give the state a unique opportunity to improve access to behavioral health services by providing more capacity and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness by creating a more effective treatment model.

DSHS identified the Fircrest School campus as a potential site for a 48-bed behavioral health center, as part of a state-wide effort to provide better access to mental health services for those suffering from acute mental illness.

The proposed 48-bed Behavioral Health Facility will consist of three single-story buildings, each approximately 17,000 square feet, and each containing 16-beds for the care of patients. The buildings are proposed to be in the northeast corner of the campus in place of the current Adult Training Program Building, which is proposed to be demolished as the Adult Training Program has been relocated elsewhere on campus.



**PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:**

The Fircrest Campus is located adjacent to 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, generally between NE 150<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 160<sup>th</sup> Street (entrance to the City of Shoreline Hamlin Park Maintenance Facility) (**Exhibit 4 – Vicinity Map**). The developed portion of the Property contains areas of flat, medium, and steep slopes.

The Fircrest School campus previously covered an approximately 88-acre state-owned property located on the corner of 15th Ave NE and NE 150th Street in the City of Shoreline, Washington. In 2010, the parcel was short-platted (King County record #20100803900004) and a smaller 12.6-acre parcel was created on the portion of the site that is owned and managed by the Department of Health (DOH) (King County parcel number 1626049111). Again, in 2023, a DNR owned portion of the campus was short-platted (King County record #20240805000331 VOL 305 PGS 22-25) and a smaller 10-acre parcel was created. The larger remaining portion of the parcel is approximately 65 acres and continues to be used as the Fircrest School campus.

The Fircrest School campus is currently made up of two Washington State landowners: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Health and Social Services. DSHS currently leases a portion of the land from DNR to operate Fircrest School.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE and ZONING:**

The Fircrest Campus has a Comprehensive Plan Land Use designation of Campus (**Exhibit 5 – Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map**). As provided in Comprehensive Plan Policy LU 9.2:

*The Campus land use designation applies to four institutions within the community that serve a regional clientele on a large campus. Existing uses in these areas constitute allowed uses in the City's Development Code. All development within the Campus land use designations shall be governed by a Master Development Plan Permit.*

The surrounding parcels to the north and east have a Comprehensive Plan Land Use designation of Public Open Space and Public Facilities. As provided in Comprehensive Plan Policy LU 9.10 and LU 9.11:

*The Public Facilities land use designation applies to a number of current or proposed facilities within the community. If the use becomes discontinued, underlying zoning shall remain unless adjusted by a formal amendment.*

*The Public and Private Open Space land use designation applies to public and privately owned open space. This designation typically contains parks, tracts dedicated for purposes of protecting environmentally critical areas, wildlife, and open space areas, and uses such as cemeteries and golf courses. The implementing zones for this designation will be determined through a study and creation of an appropriate zoning designation. Until such time, the underlying zoning for this designation would remain.*

The Fircrest Campus currently maintains a zoning of Fircrest Campus Zone (FCZ) (**Exhibit 6 – Zoning Map**). Adjacent parcels to the north and east are zoned Neighborhood Residential 3 (NR-3). The parcel to the north is Hamlin Park which contains the City of Shoreline Maintenance Yard, walking trails, and recreational facilities.

The parcels to the east contain Shorecrest High School and Kellogg Middle School, both owned by the Shoreline School District.

The adjacent parcel to the south is zoned Public Health Laboratory Zone (PHZ) and is developed with the Washington State Department of Health Public Health Lab and warehouse buildings.

Parcels to the west are a mix of parcels zoned Neighborhood Residential 1, 2, 3 (NR1, 2, and 3), and Neighborhood Business (NB) and are developed with single-family homes, multifamily homes, and the North City Water District Maintenance facility.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENT FOR THE SUP:**

Staff analysis of the proposed SUP considered information gathered from neighborhood meetings, public comments, site visits, the Shoreline Comprehensive Plan, the Shoreline Municipal Code, Title 20 Unified Development Code, and materials provided by the Applicant, including critical area report (**Exhibit 7**) and transportation impact analysis (**Exhibit 8**).

Per SMC 20.30.085, the Applicant held an early community input meeting via Zoom on March 8, 2022. Comments raised at this meeting pertained to the residents of Fircrest, the historic Naval Chapel, impacts to trees, and impacts to Hamlin Creek. (**Exhibit 9 – Early Community Input Meeting Summary**)

Per SMC 20.30.060 and 20.30.090, the Applicant held a neighborhood meeting via Zoom on May 4, 2022. There were 37 attendees at the meeting including the applicant team and city staff. Comments raised at the neighborhood meeting pertained to compatible uses, loss of significant trees, and reduction of building footprint. (**Exhibit 10 – Neighborhood Meeting Summary**)

As required by SMC 20.30.120 and 20.30.180, a clarified notice of application was sent to residents within 1,000 feet of the campus. This notice of application is intended to clarify the size, location, security measures, and population of the proposed BHF. The public notice of the application and public hearing for the proposal was posted on site, mailed to all residents within 1,000 feet, advertised in the *Seattle Times*, and posted on the City's website. The Notice of Application was issued on April 3, 2025 (**Exhibit 11 – Notice of Application**) and the Notice of Public Hearing was issued on May 8, 2025 (**Exhibit 12 – Notice of Public Hearing**).

The City received two (2) public comment letters regarding the proposal. The public comment letters are included as **Exhibit 13 – Public Comment Letters**.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Pursuant to WAC 197-11, DSHS is acting as Lead Agency for the SEPA review and environmental determination. Notice of SEPA Consultation was issued to solicit review and public comment on the proposal between December 8, 2022, and January 9, 2023. A Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) and a revised SEPA Environmental Checklist were

published and opened for review and public comment between November 22, 2023, and December 8, 2023. Notice of Action was signed by the DSHS Responsible Official on December 19, 2023 (See **Exhibit 14 – SEPA Determination**). The SEPA DNS had a 14-day public comment period. No appeal was filed.

### **DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS:**

Pursuant to SMC 20.30.060, a Special Use Permit is a Type C quasi-judicial decision. The Hearing Examiner, after holding an open record public hearing and preparing findings and conclusions, is the final decision maker.

The process to review a Special Use Permit is defined in SMC 20.30.330. The purpose of a special use permit is to allow a permit granted by the City to locate regional land uses that provide a benefit to the community and is compatible with other uses in the zone in which it is proposed. This includes essential public facilities when not specifically allowed by the zoning.

The decision criteria set forth in SMC 20.30.330(B) and (D) address these general rules as well as other considerations the City has established for determining whether a Special Use Permit should be granted.

#### **Decision Criteria – SMC 20.30.353(C)**

Decision criteria that the Hearing Examiner must examine for a Special Use Permit are set forth in SMC 20.30.330(B). City staff has analyzed each of the criteria below.

The following is the staff's analysis of how the behavioral health component of the proposal at 15230 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE meets, or does not meet, the criteria and is consistent with the goals and policies of the Shoreline Comprehensive Plan.

#### **1. The special use will provide a public benefit or satisfy a public need of the neighborhood in which it is located, district, City, or region.**

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature supported the vision to provide mental health services in local communities for people with acute mental illness. The use of a small portion of the Fircrest Campus as a community-based treatment facility would give the state a unique opportunity to improve access to behavioral health services by providing more capacity to serve people within the communities that they live and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness by creating a more effective treatment model.

Staff finds the proposed use will satisfy a regional public need and meets the intent of criteria #1.

#### **2. The characteristics of the special use will be compatible with the types of uses permitted in surrounding areas.**

The applicant states that the community-based treatment facility is compatible with existing uses on the project site that provide individualized health care and activities to persons who have

unique medical needs as well as individualized habilitative services that support and enhance individual skills and strengths. The facility will also be compatible with proposed uses outlined in the MDP.

While the area surrounding the campus is primarily developed with residential uses, schools, and parks, the existing and proposed uses of the campus have had minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed use is compatible with existing and proposed uses on the Fircrest Campus.

Staff finds the characteristics of the special use will be compatible with the types of uses permitted on the Campus and in the surrounding area and complies with criteria #2.

**3. The special use will not materially endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the community.**

The community-based treatment facility is an in-patient facility for individuals who have been civilly committed to receiving mental health treatment. The facility is operated by DSHS and is a secure acute care environment intended to provide treatment that will improve the health and welfare of Shoreline-area patients that need behavioral health support. The facility is a secure environment that will not materially endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

The facility is a secure facility with security and mental health professionals. The facility will be fenced and will be located away from streets and residential uses outside of the Campus.

The applicant has reached out to the Shoreline Police, Shoreline Fire, and the Shoreline School District to inform the parties about the proposed placement and use of the BHF. The applicant has agreed to conditions that mitigate the concerns of the Shoreline School District and are included at the end of this staff report.

Staff finds the special use will not materially endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community and complies with criteria #3.

**4. The proposed location of the special use shall not result in either the detrimental over-concentration of uses within the City or within the immediate area of the proposed special use, unless the proposed special use is deemed a public necessity.**

The proposed location of the community-based treatment facility will not result in either the detrimental over-concentration of this particular use within the City, or within the immediate area of the proposed use. The community-based treatment that will occur with the development of the behavioral health facility will fill serve a geographic area currently not addressed by DSHS's facilities located in Lakewood, Rochester, Tukwila, Vancouver, and Spokane.

Staff finds the proposed location of the special use complies with criteria #4 and shall not result in either the detrimental over-concentration of uses within the City or within the immediate area of the proposed special use, unless the proposed special use is deemed a public necessity.

**5. The special use is such that pedestrian and vehicular traffic associated with the use will not be hazardous or conflict with existing and anticipated traffic in the neighborhood.**

Access to the community-based behavioral health treatment facility is designed to be shared with the Department of Health Fircrest school site to the west and along Southeast 150th Street to the south. The facility will contribute approximately 114 PM peak hour trips to the road network. Mitigation for traffic impacts has been reviewed by City of Shoreline Public Works staff and will occur through the payment of applicable transportation impact fees.

The traffic report shows no significant impacts from trips to and from the community-based treatment facility.

Staff finds criteria #5 is met since the special use will not be hazardous or conflict with existing and anticipated traffic in the neighborhood.

**6. The special use will be supported by adequate public facilities and services and will not adversely affect public facilities and services to the surrounding area or conditions can be established to mitigate adverse impacts.**

The community-based behavioral health treatment facility will be supported by adequate public facilities or services and will not adversely affect public services to the surrounding area. The MDP has identified upgrades to the water, sewer, stormwater, sidewalks and trails, and onsite circulation. These improvements to the Campus will fully support the development of this proposed community-based treatment facility.

Staff finds the special use will be supported by adequate public facilities and services consistent with criteria #6 and will not adversely affect public facilities and services to the surrounding area or conditions can be established to mitigate adverse impacts.

**7. The location, size and height of buildings, structures, walls and fences, and screening vegetation for the special use shall not hinder or discourage the development or use of neighboring properties.**

The community-based behavioral health treatment facility is proposed to be sited in the far northeast corner of the property and will not be visible from any public rights-of-way or residential uses. Properties immediately adjacent to the proposed facility include Shorecrest High School, Kellogg Middle School, and Hamlin Park.

The Campus zone allows buildings up to 65-feet high. The proposed MDP indicates that most of the future buildings on campus will be single-story except for the new Nursing Facility at three-stories and the future commercial development in the southeast portion of the campus.

The behavioral health facility will not hinder, discourage, or impact the development or use of the adjacent properties.

Staff finds the location, size and height of buildings, structures, walls and fences, and screening vegetation for the special use shall not hinder or discourage the development or use of neighboring properties.

**8. The special use is not in conflict with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.**

The proposed community-based treatment facility meets several goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan:

Goal LU 6 - Establish a process, consistent with the Growth Management Act, to identify and equitably site essential public facilities within the City of Shoreline.

Land Use policies LU 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 stipulate the importance of locating Essential Public Facilities equitably across the region:

Policy LU 6.1 – Site or expand essential public facilities identified in the Growth Management or by the City of Shoreline using a permitting process that incorporates broad public involvement, especially from historically marginalized and disproportionately burdened communities; that reduces and provides for mitigation of adverse social, environmental, and economic impacts on the City and its residents; and that equitably disperses impacts and benefits while supporting the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy LU 6.2 – Consider climate change, economic, equity, and health impacts when siting, expanding, and building essential public services and facilities.

Policy LU 6.3 – Work to establish a cooperative interjurisdictional approach to the siting or expansion of essential public facilities with state, county, and local governmental agencies in alignment with the multi-county and county-wide planning policies. Such approach should allow for public involvement in the site selection process and review of the impacts and benefits of essential public facility.

Staff finds the special use is not in conflict with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

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**Decision Criteria – SMC 20.30.330(D)**

In addition to the criteria in subsection B of this section, a special use permit for an essential public facility (EPF) may be granted by the City only if the applicant demonstrates the following standards. Decision criteria that the Hearing Examiner must examine for a Special Use Permit for an EPF are set forth in SMC 20.30.330(D). City staff has analyzed each of the criteria below.

The following is the staff's analysis of how the proposal at 15230 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE meets, or does not meet, the criteria and is consistent with the goals and policies of the Shoreline Comprehensive Plan.

**1. The facility meets one of the following:**



- a. **The Growth Management Act definition of an essential public facility pursuant to RCW 36.70A.200(1), as amended; or**
- b. **Is on the statewide list of essential public facilities maintained by the Office of Financial Management pursuant to RCW 36.70A.200(4), as amended; or**
- c. **Is on the King County countywide list of essential public facilities.**

The proposed community-based treatment facility meets SMC 20.30.330.D.1a, above, as an inpatient facility providing substance abuse and mental health services (RCW 36.71A.200(1)(a)).

**2. The applicant has investigated and considered alternative sites and provided documentation of the site selection methodology. That methodology, which shall include public outreach, shall include an analysis of whether siting of the proposed EPF would have a disproportionate impact on any one racial, cultural, or socioeconomic group within the City.**

In December 2019, DSHS completed an evaluation of six areas for the siting of behavioral health facilities throughout Western Washington. Evaluation and planning for sites in Shoreline (Fircrest Campus), Lakewood (Western State Hospital), Snoqualmie (Echo Glen), Thurston County (Maple Lane Campus), Clark County, and Snohomish County.

The evaluation involved examining possible sites for the new facilities that would provide three types of program offerings:

- Evaluation and Treatment Facilities
- 90- to 180-Day Facilities
- Step Down Facilities.

DSHS has demonstrated that it evaluated alternative sites as part of its siting of this facility as shown in **Exhibit 15 – Fircrest Behavioral Health Facility Report**.

**3. The proposed EPF is consistent with the plan under which the applicant operates, if any such plan exists.**

The proposed essential public facility will be operated consistent with published DSHS guidelines associated with community-based treatment facilities.

**4. The proposed EPF, if to be sited on a property subject to a master development plan, is consistent with the master development plan.**

The proposed community-based treatment facility is depicted within the northeast portion of the approved Fircrest Campus Master Development Plan (Exhibit 2 – Master Development Plan).

**5. Local police, fire and emergency responders have reviewed the EPF and have determined it can be adequately served by local emergency services.**

Emergency service providers have reviewed the proposed EPF and will also review again during the building permit process. Emergency service providers will have the opportunity to impose additional conditions as needed during building permit review based on public safety and design. Also, the proposed EPF will mitigate impacts to emergency services through the payment of impact fees as authorized under Chapter 3.75 SMC.

**6. The proposed EPF and its location, design, use, and operation must follow any state, county, or local guidelines, regulations, rules, or statutes governing the proposed EPF for the life of the proposed EPF.**

The community-based treatment facility will be designed and located consistent with the requirements of the approved SUP and the Master Development Plan (Exhibit 2 – Master Development Plan) and will be operated by DSHS in accordance with applicable state, county, and local guidelines, regulations, rules, and statutes associated with behavioral health facilities.

**7. To the greatest extent reasonably feasible, the proposed EPF has incorporated mitigation measures developed during a public outreach effort.**

On March 8, 2022, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and its consulting team hosted an “early community input meeting” consistent with the requirements of SMC 20.30.085. Notice of the meeting was sent to property owners and residents of properties within 1,000 feet of the site. Through public comment from this meeting and previous in-person meetings at the project site, DSHS has sited the community-based treatment facility on the northeastern portion of the site away from adjacent residential land uses. DSHS also worked directly with the Shoreline Police, Shoreline Fire, the North City Water District, Friends of Fircrest, and the Shoreline School District to discuss the proposal and develop conditions.

**CONCLUSION**

Staff has reviewed the proposed SUP for compliance with applicable decision criteria and the applicable standards in SMC Title 20. Staff finds the proposed SUP meets the decision criteria and complies with the goals and policies of the Shoreline Comprehensive Plan, the Shoreline Development Code and with the applicable standards in SMC Title 20.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the above Special Use Permit criteria, the Planning & Community Development Department recommends **APPROVAL** of the Special Use Permit for file SPL22-0191 based on the following conditions.

**CONDITIONS:**

1. The BHF may serve up to 48 patients at a time in three 16-bed facilities located on the Fircrest School campus as shown on the MDP site plan.
2. Programs offered in the BHF shall be limited to:
  - a. Medical screening, psychiatric screening, and risk screening
  - b. Psychological, biological, and social evaluation
  - c. Medication management and stabilization
  - d. Individual and group therapy
  - e. Evidence-based treatments
  - f. Peer supports
  - g. Mental health education
3. DSHS shall share its discharge practices and protocols with the City of Shoreline, Shoreline Police, Shoreline Fire Department, and Shoreline School District 412.
4. The facility is comprised of three separate, one-story facilities on the northeastern portion of the Fircrest Campus. Each facility will serve up to 16 patients. The facility shall include the following elements that will be verified during building permit application review to ensure a healthy environment for patients and staff while keeping the community safe:
  - a. The exterior facing windows shall be obscured by either natural plants or obscured glass surfaces.
  - b. Interior patient areas shall include security cameras that will be monitored by staff.
  - c. Exterior security cameras shall be installed and monitored by staff.
  - d. Secured exterior spaces shall be constructed using non-climbable fencing and shall be observed by staff while patients are outside.
  - e. Access to patient areas shall be secured by a sallyport/entry with interlocked doors that can only be unlocked one door at a time.
5. Prior to Certificate of Occupancy, the applicant shall have a Community Safety Management Plan with operating procedures of the BHF including, but not limited to;
  - a. The exterior doors shall remain locked.
  - b. All entry and exit points shall be secured by a combination of an electronic card reader and a physical key. Entrances and exits shall be controlled by staff.
  - c. Outdoor time and recreational activities shall occur in a secured and fenced courtyard enclosed by a no-climb fence.
  - d. No patient shall have access outside the facility except for scheduled appointments where two security staff will escort each patient.
  - e. Patients shall be monitored by staff and video cameras at all times.

- f. The buildings shall not be accessible to the public. Visits shall only occur within areas of the building supervised by staff.
- g. Staff shall be trained in de-escalation strategies and emergency management processes to minimize calls to law enforcement and the fire department.
- h. DSHS shall enter into agreements with Shoreline Police and Shoreline Fire for mutual aid as needed before Certificate of Occupancy.

The applicant shall provide an affidavit of assurance with the building permit submittal package that these procedures will be met for the duration of the BHF. Any changes to the Community Safety Management Plan shall be submitted to the City.

- 6. Good Neighbor Agreement. Prior to Certificate of Occupancy, DSHS shall provide a notification plan to the Shoreline Police Department and the Shoreline School District 412. DSHS shall place the elopement notification plan on the DSHS/BHA/BHTC website. Neighbors, and others interested in the plan, may review the elopement plan and sign up for notifications. Community members who sign up for notifications shall be alerted through email or text in the event of an elopement.



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Steve Szafran, AICP, Senior Planner

May 19, 2025

**Attachments:**

- Exhibit 2 – Master Development Plan
- Exhibit 3 – Site Plan
- Exhibit 4 – Vicinity Map
- Exhibit 5 – Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map
- Exhibit 6 – Zoning Map
- Exhibit 7 – Critical Area Report
- Exhibit 8 – Traffic Study
- Exhibit 9 – Early Community Input Meeting Summary
- Exhibit 10 – Neighborhood Meeting Summary
- Exhibit 11 – Notice of Application
- Exhibit 12 – Notice of Public Hearing
- Exhibit 13 – Public Comment Letters
- Exhibit 14 – SEPA Determination
- Exhibit 15 – Fircrest Behavioral Health Facility Report