



Zoning Amendments

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What is the Whatcom County Zoning Ordinance?

The Whatcom County Zoning Ordinance (WCC Title 20) is the local land use law that governs the types of allowable land uses within each zoning designation; provides specific standards and requirements including maximum development density, minimum lot size, building height and setbacks; and outlines administrative procedures for implementation.

The Whatcom County zoning map identifies where each zoning designation is applied within the County.

What types of zoning amendments may be requested?

Standard Zoning Map Amendment - a proposed change or revision to the official zoning map.

Zoning Text Amendment - a proposed change or revision to the WCC Title 20 zoning text.

Site-Specific Rezone - a proposed change or revision to the official zoning map associated with a request for a specific project proposal.

What are the procedures for amending the Whatcom County zoning text and map?

The procedure and schedule for processing proposed zoning amendments varies depending on the type of amendment requested. The zoning amendment process is

outlined in Chapter 20.90 of the Whatcom County Zoning Ordinance:

- The person requesting an amendment completes an application form and environmental checklist. Application forms can be obtained from Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (PDS) - Planning Division or on the County website: http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/planning/comp_plan/rezones.jsp
- The applicant submits a completed application form and environmental checklist to PDS by:
 - Zoning Map Amendments - June 30
 - Zoning Text Amendments - Anytime
 - Site Specific Rezones - Anytime

Note: Zoning amendments that also require a Comprehensive Plan amendment are subject to a different procedure and schedule. (See Handout I.)

- The applicant pays the associated fees at the time of application. Please refer to the current Whatcom County Fee Schedule for the current fees. Amendment fees may include:
 - Zoning Map Amendment to:
 - Commercial or industrial zone;
 - Residential zone; or
 - Any other zone designation
 - Zoning Text Amendment
 - Environmental Checklist

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES HANDOUT SERIES

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- Initiated amendments are placed on either the *annual* (standard zoning map amendments) or the *regular* (zoning text amendments and site-specific rezones) zoning amendment docket.
 - PDS evaluates the proposed amendments and issues a staff report.
 - The Planning Commission or Hearing Examiner (site-specific rezones only) conduct public hearings on the proposed amendments.

*Note: site-specific rezones are processed as a development application per WCC Chapter 2.33 and are reviewed by the Hearing Examiner in accordance with WCC 20.92.205 instead of the Planning Commission.

- The County Council reviews the Planning Commission's or Hearing Examiner's findings and recommendations and makes a final decision on the proposal. The County Council, if it chooses, may hold a public hearing before making a decision.

Evaluation Criteria

The amendment must meet the following criteria:

- The proposed amendment is consistent with the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.
- The public health, safety and general welfare will be served by the proposed amendment.
- There are changed conditions since the previous zoning became effective to warrant the proposed amendment.

Site specific rezones must meet the following additional criteria:

- The proposed amendment will not adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood.
- The proposed amendment is consistent with the current uses and zoning of the surrounding land. Proposed uses shall:
 - Be adequately serviced by necessary public facilities, or adequate services will be provided by the persons or agencies responsible for the proposed use;
 - Not create excessive requirements at public cost for public facilities and services, and will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community; or
 - If located within a non-industrial urban growth area (UGA), the site shall:
 - Be serviced by full urban services or be capable of receiving urban services to serve the development;
 - Not preclude development at urban levels of density; and
 - The proposed rezone area must be 5 acres or larger.

Information

Due to the administrative complexity of this process, it is best to talk with a Planner to answer any questions prior to submittal.

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