

ZONING VERIFICATIONS, EXEMPTION LETTERS, CODE INTERPRETATIONS



Permit Type: Zoning Code Letter
Permit Subtypes: Zoning Verification
SEPA Exemption Letter
Shoreline Exemptions
Code Interpretation

ABOUT ZONING VERIFICATIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

Zoning verification letters provide formal confirmation of a property's zoning classification and applicable regulations. These letters help property owners, developers, and prospective buyers understand what types of uses and development standards apply to a specific parcel. They also highlight any special overlays, restrictions, or conditions that may affect future development, ensuring compliance with local land use codes.

Exemption letters for SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) and shoreline substantial development permits, issued by the City of Tukwila, is a formal document that grants an exemption from certain permitting requirements. This letter is provided when a proposed project meets specific criteria, such as being small-scale or falling under defined exclusions, and does not require a full environmental review or shoreline development permit. By issuing this exemption, the City helps expedite the permitting process while ensuring compliance with local and state regulations for environmental protection and shoreline management.

A Code Interpretation with the City of Tukwila is a formal request for clarification on how specific provisions of the city's zoning, building, or other development codes should be applied to a particular project or situation. This application allows property owners, developers, or other stakeholders to seek guidance on the interpretation of code requirements when the application or meaning of the code is unclear. The City reviews the request and provides an official interpretation to ensure that the project aligns with Tukwila's regulations and standards.

Applicable Regulations:

- [Tukwila Title 18 – Zoning](#)

Resources:

- [City Maps](#)
- [Land Use Permit Portal](#)
- [Permit Fees](#)

SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST – REQUIRED FOR ALL PERMITS

A PDF of each document is required at time of submittal. Please label files as listed below:

CHECKLIST	FILE NAME	DESCRIPTION
DOCUMENTS		
	Cover Letter	A cover letter outlining the request.

ZONING VERIFICATIONS

ZONING VERIFICATION LETTERS

If you are purchasing or refinancing property, your lender may require a "rebuild" letter identifying the zoning and use of the property. We can provide you a letter documenting the following:

- Zoning and any overlays for the subject site and adjacent properties, with a link to applicable development regulations in Tukwila Municipal Code Title 18 – Zoning.
- Critical areas and/or Shoreline Jurisdiction on the subject site.
- An overview of development history/permits on the site: – variances, design review, demolition, etc.
- Certificates of Occupancy for the structures onsite.
- Any outstanding code enforcement cases.
- General code information on parking, non-conforming uses, fire prevention, and rebuilding after destruction.
- A determination if a proposed use is allowed on site, often to determine if a proposed use is considered a continuation of a non-conforming use.

You must complete the zoning verification request through the Land Use Portal. Please include the following information:

- The assessor parcel number (APN) and legal description of the property or properties are required, which you can find it on the King County Assessor's site.
- Your contact information (name, phone, address, and email).
- To whom the letter should be addressed, if not the primary contact.

SEPA EXEMPTION LETTER

- A. When the City receives an application for a license or, in the case of governmental proposals, a department initiates a proposal, the responsible official shall determine whether the license and/or the proposal is exempt. The determination that a proposal is exempt shall be final and not subject to administrative review. If a proposal is exempt, none of the procedural requirements of this chapter shall apply to the proposal.
- B. In determining whether or not a proposal is exempt, the responsible official shall make certain the proposal is properly defined and shall identify the governmental license required. If a proposal includes exempt and nonexempt actions, the responsible official shall determine the lead agency, even if the license application that triggers the consideration is exempt.
- C. If a proposal includes both exempt and nonexempt actions, the City may authorize exempt actions prior to compliance with the procedural requirements of this chapter, except that:
 1. The City shall not give authorization for:
 - a. Any nonexempt action;
 - b. Any action that would have an adverse environmental impact; or
 - c. Any action that would limit the choice of reasonable alternatives.

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2. The responsible official may withhold approval of an exempt action that would lead to modification of the physical environment, when such modification would serve no purpose if the nonexempt actions were not approved; and
3. The responsible official may withhold approval of exempt actions that would lead to substantial financial expenditures by a private applicant when the expenditures would serve no purpose if the nonexempt actions were not approved.

SHORELINE SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT EXEMPTION LETTER

- A. To qualify for an exemption, the proposed use, activity or development must meet the requirements for an exemption as described in WAC 173-27-040, except for properties that meet the requirements of the Shoreline Restoration Section, TMC Section 18.44.100. The purpose of a shoreline exemption is to provide a process for uses and activities which do not trigger the need for a Substantial Development Permit, but require compliance with all provisions of the City's SMP and overlay district.
- B. The Director may impose conditions to the approval of exempted developments and/or uses as necessary to assure compliance of the project with the SMA and the Tukwila SMP, per WAC 173-27-040(e). For example, in the case of development subject to a building permit but exempt from the shoreline permit process, the Building Official or other permit authorizing official, through consultation with the Director, may attach shoreline management terms and conditions to building permits and other permit approvals pursuant to RCW 90.58.140.

CODE INTERPRETATION

Code interpretations are formal decisions on the meaning, application, or intent of any development regulation in the City's zoning code. Interpretations are site-specific. They do not address how a standard applies in general, but rather how it applies to a specific site or development proposal. They do not address procedural provisions or statements of policy in the code.

You can request an interpretation:

- That is not related to a pending project
- That is related to a pending project
- That is related to a pending project that is subject to appeal

Examples of code interpretations include:

- How structure height or setback is properly measured
- How a proposed use should be categorized
- Verification of an environmentally critical area on a site

If you do not request an interpretation, you may not be able to raise the issue on an appeal of the project. Code interpretations are Type 3 processes that are ultimately determined by a Hearing Examiner at a public hearing, additional fees apply.