

# CRITICAL AREA DESIGNATION

City of Tukwila - Permit Center  
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Type: Critical Area

Subtype: CAD – Critical Area Designation

## CRITICAL AREA DESIGNATION

A **Critical Area Designation (CAD)** determines whether critical areas or their buffers are present on or near a property in Tukwila. For properties with 100-150' of a confirmed or potential critical area as identified on the City's critical area map as denoted on the City's [Critical Area Designation map](#). A determination must be completed before any other development permit can be accepted or issued.

The CAD establishes the limits of any wetlands, streams, or other critical areas on a property and identifies the applicable buffer standards. The CAD review may apply to the entire property or to a specific portion of it.

## WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS AND BUFFERS?

**Environmentally critical areas (ECAs)** are environmentally sensitive lands that require special protection under the Tukwila Municipal Code (TMC 18.45). They include:

- Wetlands
- Streams and associated riparian areas
- Flood hazard areas
- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Critical aquifer recharge areas

**Buffers** are the protected areas directly adjacent to a critical area that help preserve its ecological functions and reduce impacts from development.

## WHEN IS A CAD REQUIRED?

A CAD is required for any property that:

- Contains a confirmed or potential ECA; or
- Is located within 150 feet of a confirmed or potential wetland; or
- Is located within 100 feet of a confirmed or potential watercourse.

To determine whether your property meets these criteria, please use the [Critical Area Designation map](#).

For impacted properties, **no other development permits** (such as building, grading, or subdivision permits) **may be accepted or reviewed** until a CAD determination has been made.

A CAD may also be voluntarily applied for at any time by a property owner or their agent. Doing so provides assurance that the site's critical areas and buffers have been officially delineated and documented for a five-year period, unless physical site conditions or regulatory maps change.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

A **property owner** or their **authorized agent** may apply for a CAD at any time. The application may cover an entire property or a specific area, as long as a site map is provided identifying the review area.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### 1. Confirm whether a Critical Area Designation (CAD) is required.

Per [TMC 18.45.050](#), a CAD must be obtained for any property that contains, or is located within 100-150 feet of, a confirmed or potential ECA before any other development permit can be accepted or issued.

Tukwila's confirmed and potential ECAs are mapped on the [Critical Area Designation map](#). Use this tool to determine if your subject property falls within 150' of a wetland, or 100' of a watercourse.

Some buffers may be interrupted by a paved public or private road, legally constructed buildings, or parking lots. If so, an Interrupted Buffer waiver may be requested as outlined in TMC 18.45.100, which may relieve a property owner of the requirement to obtain a CAD.

If you need assistance identifying whether your property would be subject to a CAD, please contact the Planning division at [Planning@TukwilaWA.gov](mailto:Planning@TukwilaWA.gov).

### 2. Choose one of two review options for site review:

#### a. Option 1 - City peer review of applicant-provided critical area report:

- i. The applicant may hire a qualified professional to prepare the Critical Area Report for their property per standards set forth in [TMC 18.45.040: Critical Area Special Studies](#).
- ii. The City will require an **applicant-funded peer review** by the City's consultant to verify findings and ensure compliance with Tukwila Municipal Code standards.

#### b. Option 2 - Use City's consultant to develop Critical Area Report:

The applicant may elect to have the City's environmental consultant conduct the reconnaissance.

- i. If **no critical areas are found**, the CAD will be finalized, and the applicant will receive written confirmation that no further review is required.
- ii. If **the presence of critical areas is suspected**, the City's consultant will provide an **invoice for additional work** needed to prepare a full Critical Area Report. The applicant may then choose whether to proceed or not.
  1. If the applicant proceeds, the City's consultant will develop the critical area report.
  2. If the applicant chooses not to proceed, the CAD will not be finalized, and a new CAD application would be required in the future if development is pursued on the site.

### 3. Payment:

- a. **Pay the CAD fee** as outlined in the [Land Use Fee schedule](#). This initial fee covers intake, City staff time to coordinate with the City consultant, invoice preparation, initial review, and site visit prep. An invoice for services to be rendered will be provided by the City's consultant.
- b. **Pay the invoice** as provided by the City's consultant for either peer review of the applicant-provided critical area report, or for the preparation of a Critical Area Report by the City's consultant.

### 4. Department review and official determination: Based on the consultant's findings and any required report, the Department will issue a written determination and official site map identifying critical area boundaries and applicable buffers. This documentation can be used for future development planning, real estate transactions, or permit submittals.

## APPLICABILITY

A Critical Area Designation will only be deemed final by the Permit Center if the consultant determines there are no critical areas on or near the site that require compilation into a full critical area report.

Alternatively, the applicant may choose not to move forward with the full Critical Area Report. In that case, the CAD will not be finalized, and the applicant would need to submit a new CAD application if they choose to pursue development on the site at a later date.

## TIMELINE

- The Department will issue a written determination **within 120 days** of receiving a complete CAD application (unless an extension is authorized under the Tukwila Municipal Code).
- The CAD is **valid for five (5) years**, unless:
  - Site conditions within 300 feet of the property have substantially changed due to natural processes or human activity; **or**
  - A regulatory agency adopts updated maps or designations that conflict with the original determination.

## FEES

Fees for CAD applications are listed in the [City of Tukwila's Land Use Permit Fee Schedule](#).