

Shoreline Development



Planning and Public Works

6000 Main St SW
Lakewood, WA 98499
(253) 512-2261

Visit our office:
Tues. – Thurs. 9am – 12pm

Contact us:
Permit Center
permits@cityoflakewood.us

Rental Housing Safety
Program
rentals@cityoflakewood.us

Business Licensing
businesslicensing@cityoflakewood.us

Engineering
publicworksenineering@cityoflakewood.us

Planning
planning@cityoflakewood.us

Revised:
December 31, 2024

Code References:

- [Shoreline Management Act \(SMA\)](#)
- [City of Lakewood Shoreline Master Plan](#)
- [Lakewood Municipal Code \(LMC\) Title 14](#)

What is the Shoreline Master Program?

In the 1970s, the [Washington State Shoreline Management Act \(SMA\)](#) was passed into law. The SMA is intended to manage, ensure access and protect Washington's marine and freshwater shorelines. This law requires cities and counties to adopt, implement and enforce local Shoreline Master Programs (SMP).

The City of Lakewood's [SMP](#) is Lakewood Municipal Code (LMC) Title 16 but is interconnected with critical area protections in Title 14. Any amendment to the SMP must be approved by the Washington State Department of Ecology after final action is taken by Lakewood's City Council.

SMP Jurisdiction

The SMA protects and designates shorelines of state which include both marine and freshwater. Lakewood only has freshwater shorelines that are both considered Shorelines of the State and Shorelines of Statewide Significance. Our local SMP regulates:

- Lakes that are 1,000 acres or greater in size such as American Lake
- Lakes that are 20 acres or greater in size such as Gravelly Lake, Lake Lousie, Steilacoom Lake and Waughop Lake
- Streams with a mean annual flow of 1,000 cubic feet per second or more such as Clover Creek
- Streams with a mean annual flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second such as Chambers Creek
- Upland areas called "shorelands" that are 200 feet landward from the Ordinary High-Water Mark (OHWM) of all regulated shorelines

The SMP jurisdiction also regulates allowed uses, bulk and dimensional standards. If critical areas such as fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, wetlands, geological hazard areas and flood hazard areas are found within the SMP jurisdiction, which includes the 200' of shorelands that buffer each shoreline's OHWM, the SMP regulates the protection of those ecosystem services. See Critical Area Designation & Protection Pro-Tip for more information.

Additionally, shorelines play a large part in enhancing the quality of life for City residents, provide valuable ecosystem services, as well as economic and recreational opportunities. Activities and development within the SMP jurisdiction must be conducted to minimize the environmental impacts to ensure no net loss, achieve the goals of the SMA and, where appropriate, consider the cumulative ecological impacts of proposed development.

Shoreline Environmental Designations

Within the SMP there are classifications of shoreline areas that reflect local conditions, including ecological function and existing development. These designations provide the framework for implementing shoreline policies and development requirements specific to a shoreline designation. Lakewood’s Shoreline Environmental Designations include:

Shoreline Environmental Designation	Purpose	Areas Designated
Shoreline Residential Environment	Intended for residential uses and structures where the necessary facilities for development can be provided. Encourages public access and recreational uses.	Shorelands adjacent to American Lake, Gravelly Lake, Lake Louise, and Lake Steilacoom that are primarily developed and/or platted and zoned for residential uses, and where that use is anticipated to continue in the future.
Urban-Stream Protection	Protect the ecological functions of Clover Creek and associated wetlands while recognizing limited demand for water dependent uses.	Include Clover Creek between Lake Steilacoom and the City of Lakewood city limits, except for the shorelands in Springbrook Park adjacent to Clover Creek.
Urban Park	Protect and restore ecological functions of open space in urban and developed settings while allowing compatible uses such as water-oriented recreation.	Shorelands in all public parks and public street ends located on lakes within the shoreline jurisdiction; Eagle Point (a private subdivision open space tract on American Lake, Parcel # 4001800540); and Lakewold Gardens (a private facility with public access on Gravelly Lake). Also, shorelands adjacent to Waughop Lake; and Shorelands in Springbrook Park adjacent to Clover Creek.

Shoreline Environmental Designation	Purpose	Areas Designated
Conservancy Environment	Protect and restore ecological functions of open space, floodplains and other sensitive lands while allow compatible uses such as passive recreation like trails and wildlife viewing.	Shorelands of Chambers Creek between Lake Steilacoom and the confluence of Leach Creek; and portions of the Oakbrook 4th Addition subdivision that fall within the shoreline jurisdiction.
Natural Environment	Protect shoreline areas that are relative free of human influence or include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions.	Portion of Chambers Creek that includes the south bank between the confluence of Leach Creek and where Chambers Creek crosses the western City boundary. Parcels within the Oakbrook 4th Addition subdivision are specifically excluded from the natural environment designation.

Types of Shoreline Permits

There are several types of shoreline permits regulated by state law and further guided in Lakewood’s SMP. It is important to remember one or more shoreline permits may be required, depending on a project’s scale, types of uses and proposed scope. For example, a project may need both a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit and a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit. Or, in another example, a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit and Shoreline Variance Permit. Additionally, state rulemaking defines requirements for what is considered a complete application. For more information on required application and submittal requirements on the Department’s website.

The types of shoreline applications and permit approvals include:

Shoreline Substantial Development Permit:

Unless explicitly exempted, Shoreline Substantial Development Permits are the most common shoreline permit and required for all developments if 1) the projects total cost or fair market value exceeds \$8,504¹ or \$13,900 for docks constructed in fresh waters² or 2) the proposed development materially interferes with the normal public uses of the

¹ Effective July 1, 2022 [WSR-22-11-036](#). Next adjustment is due July 1, 2027.

² Effective August 5, 2023 [WSR 23-12-012](#). Next adjustment is due July 1, 2028.

shoreline of the state. Typical development and activities requiring a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit (SSDP) include:

- Removal of any sand, gravel or minerals,
- Drilling, dumping, dredging

- Bulkheads,
- Driving of pilings
- Placing of obstructions
- New recreation, water dependent or non-water oriented
- New parking lots

SSDP review criteria for approval are found in [WAC 173-27-150](#) and related SMP requirements. Once the City of Lakewood acts to either approve, approve with conditions or deny, SSDPs do not require additional review and approval by the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Shoreline Conditional Use:

Shoreline Conditional Use Permits (SCUP) are a discretionary permit pathway for proposals that must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure they are suitable for development. Lakewood's SMP identifies when a SCUP will be required for certain uses, modifications and development. If a use or modification is not listed or not classified in the SMP, it may be authorized through a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit. A SCUP cannot be used to authorize a use explicitly prohibited in the SMP.³

SCUP review criteria for approval are found in [WAC 173-27-160](#) and related SMP requirements. In reviewing a SCUP, cumulative impacts must be considered over time. Cumulative impacts look at the collective approval of granting permits for like actions in the area as the total must not produce substantial adverse effects to the shoreline environment. For SCUPs to achieve approval, it is a multi- step process outlined in state law. First, the City of Lakewood must either approve, approve with conditions or deny a SCUP. Following this local decision, the Department of Ecology will review and have the final approval authority for a SCUP.

Shoreline Variance:

Shoreline variances are an exception from the standards for which a justifiable need and extraordinary circumstances must be demonstrated. A shoreline variance is used to allow a project to deviate from the SMPs dimensional standards such as setbacks, building height or lot coverage requirements.

³[WAC 173-27-160](#)

Criteria for approval must meet state rulemaking in [WAC 173-27-170](#) and related SMP requirements. Also, as part of the review, consideration shall be given to the cumulative impact over time of granting other permits for like actions in the area. The City of Lakewood must either approve, approve with conditions or deny a Shoreline Variance. Following a local decision, the Department of Ecology will review and provide the final decision on a Shoreline Variance.

Shoreline Exemptions:

The SMA provides for exemptions from some or all requirements depending on the proposed project and/or activities such as fish habitat enhancement projects, transportation maintenance and repair. The SMA explicitly provides exemptions from Shoreline Substantial Development Permits (SSDP) and are narrowly construed. Even though a use or development activity may be exempt from obtaining a SSDP, the project must still comply with the applicable goals, policies and regulations of local SMPs and the SMA. Types of SSDP exemptions include a project not exceeding a fair market value of \$8,504 (as of 2024) and further outlined in [WAC 173-27-040](#).

The City of Lakewood requires an application to determine if a project proposal is exempt and to ensure it meets Lakewood's SMP and SMA. Exemptions may be granted under specific conditions of approval to ensure consistency.

Technical Reports

Technical reports prepared by a professional biologist, geologist or hydrogeologist may be required as part of a complete shoreline application submittal. These technical reports provide helpful inventory and characterization of ecological function and value of current critical areas and how the proposed project may impact them and how to minimize those impacts. Technical reports could include but not limited to: a wetland delineation, arborist report, geotechnical assessment, habitat assessment or mitigation plan.

Other Permit Requirements

Most developments regulated under the SMP may also require other federal, state and local permits. Depending on the scale and scope of the proposed project, these may include:

- A land use permit
- Tree removal permit
- State Environment Policy Act review
- Building permit
- Site Development Permit
- WDFW Hydraulic Project Approval permit
- US Army Corps of Engineers permit

More information

- Contact our planning team at planning@cityoflakewood.us or 253-512-2261.
- Stop by during Planner of the Day, Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-12pm.
- Review Lakewood's Shoreline Master Plan Title 16 and Critical Area Protections in Title 14.
- Visit the Washington State Department of Ecology Shoreline Master Program and Permitting resources
- Visit the Washington State Shoreline Hearings Board website on past appeal decisions.