

When Is A Special Use Permit Required?

In each of the zoning districts there are land uses listed that, because of their unique characteristics, can be difficult to site and be incompatible with other uses of land. These uses require approval of a Special Use Permit. Depending on the use proposed and the zoning for the location, approval authority for a Special Use Permit may rest with the Community Planning & Economic Development Department or the Hearing Examiner. In either case, the approval authority must find that the proposed use will cause no undue adverse effects that cannot be mitigated.

NOTE: The specific special use approval standards within the rural County and the Urban Growth Areas (UGA) for Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater vary. Refer to the appropriate Thurston County Code provision for specific standards.

Rural County – Title 20

Lacey Urban Growth Area – Title 21

Tumwater Urban Growth Area – Title 22

Olympia Urban Growth Area – Title 23

How Do I Apply?

Submit a completed application package to the Building Development Center with the applicable fee. Complete package requirements are outlined in the application.

Review Process and Timing (TCC 20.60)

Administrative Special Use Permits are reviewed under the Type I procedure. This means that staff is the review authority and the review time can be up to 58 days. Public notification is not required.

Hearing Examiner Special Use Permits are reviewed under the Type III procedure. This means that the approval authority is the Hearing Examiner and the review time can be up to 148 days. This is a public notification and hearing process.

Note: Review times may take longer if a request for additional information is required. Workload may also affect the timelines listed above.

Is A Presubmission Conference Required?

A Presubmission Conference is required for all Hearing Examiner Special Use Permits and is recommended for Administrative Special Use Permits, particularly for more complicated proposals and UGA proposals.

A Presubmission Conference is a meeting scheduled with the applicant and a representative from each of the reviewing departments who will explain the applicable standards based on the information provided by the applicant. A request form with the applicable fee must be submitted to the Building Development Center to schedule a Presubmission Conference.

When An Application Requires Environmental Review (SEPA)

SEPA is required if a project meets any of the following thresholds:

- Any work conducted over water or in the water
- Commercial buildings larger than 8,000 square feet
- Filling or excavation of more than 500 cubic yards
- Agricultural buildings larger than 20,000 square feet
- Parking lot with more than 30 spaces
- Underground storage tanks of more than 10,000 gallons

If a proposal requires SEPA, an Environmental Checklist must be completed and submitted with the underlying project proposal. The checklist may be obtained at the Thurston County Building Development Center or online at the website address referenced at the bottom of the page.

Note: A Critical Area Administrative Review is required if critical areas exist on the subject property but the proposal does not exceed a SEPA threshold.

Appeals

All decisions may be appealed. An Appeal form and associated appeal fee must be submitted within 14 days

Building Development Center

3000 Pacific Avenue SE, Suite 100, Olympia, Washington 98501-2043 (360)
786-5490/FAX (360) 754-2939 TTY/TDD call 711 or 1-800-833-6388 Website: <https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/community-planning-and-economic-development>

from the date of the decision. Administrative decisions are appealed to the Hearing Examiner. Hearing Examiner decisions may be appealed to the Board of County Commissioners. All appeal forms are submitted to the Building Development Center.

Expiration

If a building permit has not been issued, or if construction activity or operation has not commenced within three years from the date of final approval, the Special Use Permit will expire. The Special Use Permit will also expire when the use or activity for which the permit was granted is vacated for a period of three years.

I Still Have Questions...

The information in this bulletin is a general guideline of the procedures and rules. You should not rely on this bulletin to identify the specific requirements for your project. For additional information, speak with a staff member at the Building Development Center. Contact information is listed below. You may also review all Thurston County Codes online on the County website referenced at the bottom of this page.

Revised 12-28-10

Building Development Center

3000 Pacific Avenue SE, Suite 100, Olympia, Washington 98501-2043 (360)
786-5490/FAX (360) 754-2939 TTY/TDD call 711 or 1-800-833-6388 [Website: https://
www.thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/community-planning-and-economic-
development](https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/community-planning-and-economic-development)