

REZONES

Introduction

Properties in Grays Harbor County are classified into various zoning classifications which permit certain uses; however, land uses change. To meet these evolving needs (when they are, in fact, justified), it is sometimes necessary to change zone boundaries. This is called a reclassification or a rezone. Rezones result in a change to the zoning map which is a part of the zoning ordinance. The ordinance describes all zones in detail and sets up the rules and regulations under which all zoning decisions are made. The zoning map shows the zoning classifications, property by property.

Sometimes, changes in zoning are needed to reflect changes in the lifestyle of citizens. Transportation needs have changed, as have the requirements for industrial development. Changes involving rezones have also occurred at the personal level. Property owners have wanted to change the zones of their property so that they could do something not permitted by current zoning.

Rezoning Principles

Because rezoning influences the way in which land is used, changes to the zoning map must be carefully considered. If you're thinking about requesting a rezone (whether large or small), you should ask yourself these questions. The question come from principles for making zoning map changes.

Would the land use you want be compatible with the land uses surrounding you? If not, what could you do to make your property more compatible? Could it be landscaped or screened, for example?

If the rezone were passed, would the zoning classifications be similar on both sides of the street? This is important because it promotes visual harmony and compatibility.

Would the rezone you're considering reasonably reflect the land use conditions existing in the surrounding area?

Is there really a public and economic need for the rezone?

Would the rezone you're considering be spot rezoning? Spot zoning is an area that is (1) small in size, (2) zoned differently from everything else around it, and (3) usually incompatible with the development around it. If you want to spot rezone an area, be forewarned: This type of zoning is **not** favored. It violates a fundamental principle of zoning by extending special privileges to individual property owners at the expense of the general public.

Would your rezone essentially be "strip" or "ribbon" zoning for business or commercial uses? If so, be aware that this too should be avoided.

All rezones—and especially those which cover considerable land—may require that the environmental consequences of the rezone be studied. An Environmental Impact Statement may be required to be written. If so, air quality, noise levels, and land use history will be among the environmental factors studied.

Applications

Applications for a zone reclassification (rezone) can be obtained from the Planning and Building Division. The completed application must meet all stated requirements and must be filed in person.

If you are submitting related land development applications, please submit them at the same time so that they can be considered together in one hearing. If the rezone is in connection with a subdivision or short subdivision application, both may be submitted to the County at the same time.

Preliminary Division Review and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

After your application is filed, the division reviews it to determine whether any additional information or

specific studies are needed. Once all of the necessary material is received, the application is reviewed again to identify whether significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the proposal and whether such impacts can be reasonably mitigated. This process may take 10 weeks to 4 months, depending on additional studies or information that may be required from the applicant. The division will publish a “threshold determination,” which may require various project mitigations or the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Planning and Building Division will make a decision about the environmental impacts of the rezone petition. They will decide whether or not an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or what’s called a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS), will be required. Then the EIS or the DNS will be prepared. They may contact you for further information at this time or later on as they study the request.

A date for a public hearing before the Planning Commission will be set once the EIS or DNS has been prepared and adopted.

See Development Assistance Bulletin #9: [Guide to Public Hearings](#) for a description of the public hearing process.

Planning Commission Action

If the Planning Commission recommends approval of the rezone, it will be sent to the Board of County Commissioners for adoption. Sometimes conditions or restrictions imposed by the Planning Commission (for example, dedication of right-of-way) must be satisfied before the ordinance adopting the reclassification can become effective.

Board of County Commissioners Action

The Board of County Commissioners may also approve the application with the stipulation that additional conditions must be satisfied to make the application compatible with the environment and to carry out applicable state and county regulations. Conditions affecting building height or landscaping, for example, may be imposed by the Board of County Commissioners and must be satisfied at the time of development of the property.

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REZONE APPLICATION PROCESS

