



City of Tacoma

Zoning Reference Guide



Planning and Development Services

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This document should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and policy requirements, regardless of whether they are referred to or contained within this document.

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What is the Purpose of this Document?

The City of Tacoma's Planning and Development Services Department has created this document to provide a broad overview of the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code is broken down into categories and then further broken down into districts. Each category and district is briefly described in the following pages to help provide a general understanding of the purpose of that zoning category and/or district.

What is the Planning and Development Services Department?

Planning and Development Services (PDS) encompasses all aspects of building, land-use, and site development. The Planning Division works together with the community, Planning Commission, and City Council to develop and update the *Comprehensive Plan*, along with neighborhood and subarea plans, as well as associated regulations and implementation strategies that guide the future development of the built and natural environment of Tacoma. Development Services provides consultations, permit reviews, and inspections for residential, commercial, and industrial development within the City. The Historic Preservation Program is also part of PDS. Historic Preservation provides support to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and also supports the City's emphasis on economic development and sustainability through adaptive reuse of existing buildings, as well as providing tools for the enhancement of neighborhood livability and community identity.

What Is Zoning?

The Land Use Regulatory Code is one of the several City regulations that guide the physical development of Tacoma. Within the Land Use Regulatory Code is the Zoning Code, which includes things like the appropriate locations for different types of businesses and housing, the height of buildings, how close buildings can be to the property line, the amount of parking, the size of signs, amount of landscaping, and some building design standards. The Zoning Code helps ensure that development is consistent with Tacoma's *Comprehensive Plan*. The Zoning Code is broken down into base zone categories; Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Downtown, Shoreline and Mixed-Use Center Districts. These categories are further broken down into specific uses and types of districts such as R-1 and R-2 for single family homes, or R-3 for two family homes; all three are examples of residential districts. Some zoning districts may also be part of an overlay zone which builds on the base zone and adds additional standards, such as the reduced height allowance in the View Sensitive Overlay District. Each of the base zone categories, districts, and overlay districts are further explained in the following pages.

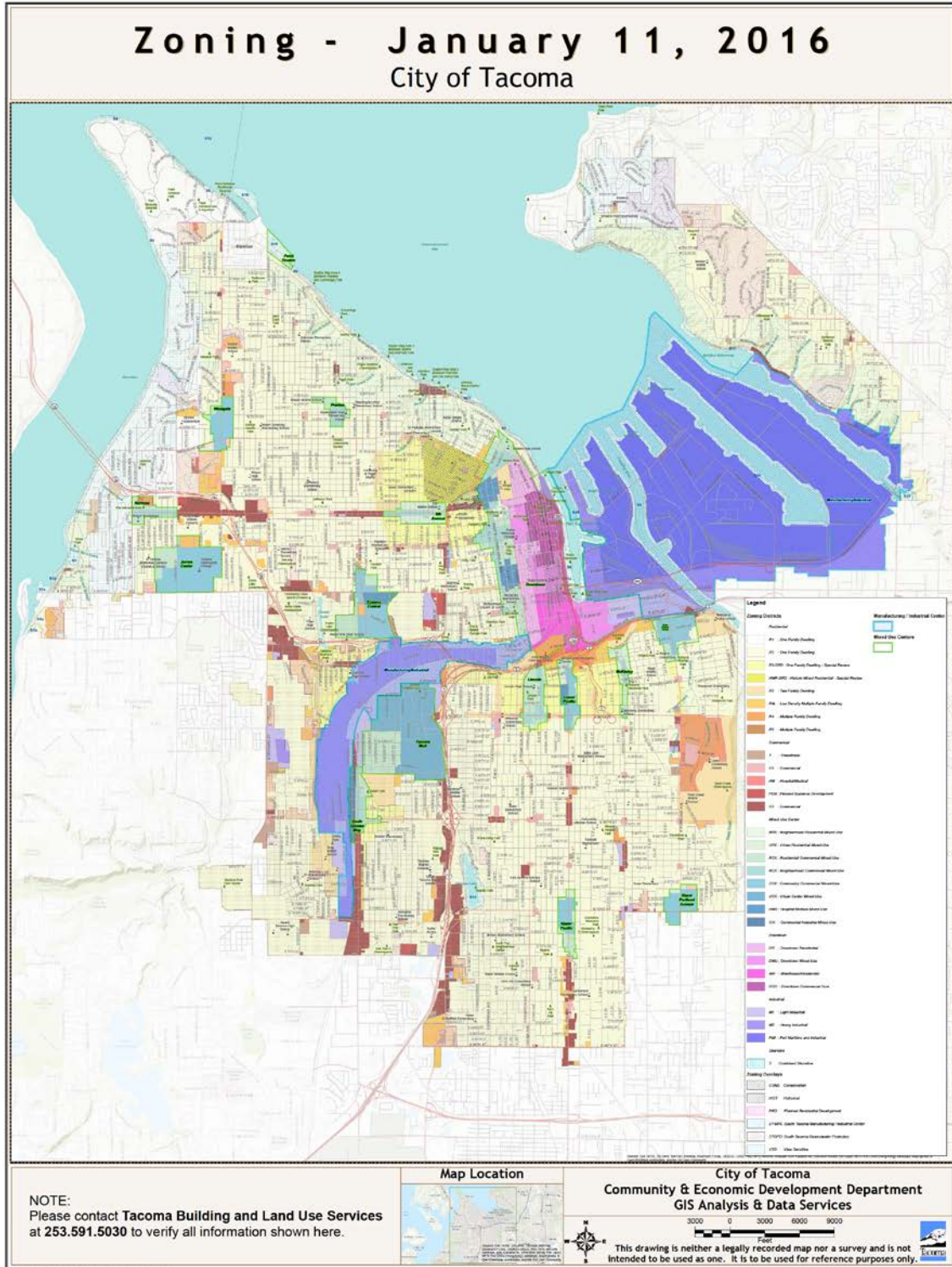
Where Can I Find Additional Information?

Planning and Development Services staff are available to answer questions Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm in person on the third floor of the Municipal Building, and 8am-5pm on the phone at (253) 591-5577.

The entire *Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC)* can be found online at www.cityoftacoma.org/municode. The Zoning Code can be found in Chapters 13.06 and 13.06A.

Map of the Zoning Districts

The Zoning Map provides an overview of the many zoning districts within the City of Tacoma. For more details or information associated with your property, visit: <http://www.govme.org/gMap/MGMain.aspx>.



Residential Zoning Districts

The residential zoning district's primary use is for single-family and multi-family housing. Community facilities such as parks, schools, daycares, golf courses, and religious facilities may also be appropriate in the residential districts. The specific purpose of the residential districts can be found in the *Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.06.100*.

R-1: Single-Family Dwelling District



The R-1 District is intended for a typical single-family residential neighborhood. It is most appropriate in established areas with a relatively quiet and stable neighborhood environment. The R-1 District has low traffic volumes and larger lot sizes. The minimum standard lot size in the R-1 District is 7,500 sq. feet; small lots may be 6,750 sq. ft. The minimum front setback is 25 feet and the maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

R-2: Single-Family Dwelling District

The R-2 District is the most common residential zoning district in the City. This district is similar to the R-1 District, however its density is slightly higher than the R-1 District. It permits all uses allowed in the R-1 and may also allow for lodging uses limited to one guest room. It generally abuts more intense residential and commercial districts. The minimum standard lot size in the R-2 District is 5,000 sq. feet; small lots may be 4,500 sq. ft. The minimum front setback is 20 feet and the maximum building height in the R-2 district is 35 feet.



R-2SRD: Residential Special Review District

The R-2SRD District is very similar to the R-2 District. However, it allows for a limited number of two- and three-family dwellings, subject to an approved conditional use permit. Some pre-existing multi-family dwellings may also exist in this district. The minimum lot size in the R-2SRD District is 5,000 sq. feet for single-family dwellings, 6000 sq. feet for two-family dwellings, and 9,000 sq. feet for three-family dwellings. For townhouses the minimum lot area is 3,000 sq. feet. The minimum front yard setback requirement is 20 feet and the maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

HMR-SRD: Historic Mixed Residential Special Review District



The HMR-SRD District is designed to apply to existing neighborhood areas or portions of existing neighborhood areas which have been designated as a Historic Special Review District because the buildings within reflect significant aspects of Tacoma's early history, architecture and culture. Single-family dwellings are the predominant land use within the HMR-SRD District. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

R-3: Two-Family Dwelling District

The R-3 District is intended for one-, two-, and three-family dwellings. Some lodging and boarding homes are also appropriate. The R-3 District is characterized by low residential traffic volumes and generally abuts more intense residential and commercial districts. The setback requirements are the same as the R-2 District. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.



R-4-L: Low Density Multiple-Family Dwelling District:



The R-4-L District is intended for low-density multiple-family housing, retirement homes, and group living facilities. The R-4L district is very similar to the R-4 District, but has more restrictive site development standards which are intended to minimize adverse impacts of permitted and conditional uses on adjoining land. The minimum front setback requirement is 20 feet for the R-4-L District. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

R-4: Multiple-Family Dwelling District

The R-4 District is intended for medium-density multiple-family housing. Other appropriate uses may include day care centers, and certain types of special needs housing. The R-4 District is located generally along major transportation corridors and between higher and lower intensity uses. The maximum building height in this district is 60 feet.



R-5: Multiple-Family Dwelling District



The R-5 District is intended for high-density multiple-family housing and also permits residential hotels, retirement homes, and limited mixed-use buildings. The district is generally located in the center of the City in close proximity to employment centers, conveniences, services, major transportation corridors, and public transportation facilities. Minor retail businesses such as drug stores, personal services such as beauty salons, and minor eating and drinking establishments are also permitted in the R-5 District. The maximum building height in this district is 150 feet.

Downtown Tacoma Zoning Districts

The downtown districts are the highest density areas in the City. Downtown uses include a mix of residential and commercial uses. Downtown is a pedestrian-oriented area and has a concentration of various transit options such as the LINK light rail and bus service. The specific purposes of the Downtown Districts can be found in the *Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.06A*.

DCC: Downtown Commercial Core



The DCC District is intended to focus high rise office buildings and hotels, street level shops, theaters, and various public services into a compact, walkable area, with a high level of transit service. The preferred use of this district is for retail, office, hotel, cultural, and governmental uses. Residential, educational, and some industrial are allowed. Industrial uses not located entirely within a building and automobile service stations/gasoline dispensing facilities are prohibited. The maximum building height in this district is 400 feet.

DMU: Downtown Mixed-Use District

The DMU District is intended to contain a high concentration of educational, cultural, and governmental services together with commercial services and uses. The preferred uses of this district are governmental, educational, office, residential, and cultural. Retail and industrial located entirely within a building are allowed. The same uses prohibited in the DCC District are also prohibited in the DMU District. The maximum building height in this district is 100 feet.



DR: Downtown Residential



The DR District contains a predominance of mid-rise, higher density, urban residential development, together with places of employment and retail services. The preferred use of the DR District is residential. Retail, office, and educational uses are also allowed. Industrial uses are prohibited. The maximum building height in this district is 90 feet.

WR: Warehouse Residential District

The WR District is intended to consist principally of a mixture of industrial activities and residential buildings in which occupants maintain a business involving industrial activities. The preferred uses of the WR District are industrial located entirely in a building and residential. Retail, educational, office, and governmental uses are allowed. The maximum building height in this district is 100 feet.



Commercial Zoning Districts

Commercial districts are denser zoning districts in the City located outside of the Downtown area. These districts contain a variety of uses ranging from small and large scale office space to hospitals and light warehousing. The intensity of commercial development depends on the district. Residential uses are also appropriate in all commercial districts. The specific purposes of the Commercial Districts can be found in the *Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.06.200*.

T: Transitional District

The Transitional District is intended to serve as a transition between commercial or industrial areas and residential areas. The area is characterized by lower traffic generation, shorter operation hours, smaller scale buildings and less signage than general commercial areas. Permitted uses include small-scale office space, daycares, schools, parks, religious facilities, group housing, and retirement homes. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.



C-1: General Neighborhood Commercial District



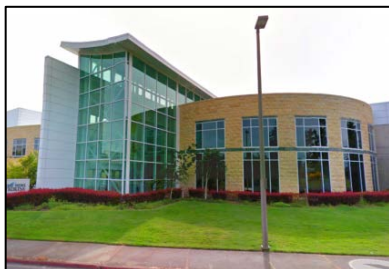
The C-1 District contains low-intensity, smaller-scale land uses such as retail, office, and service uses. All uses permitted in the Transitional District are also permitted in the C-1 District with the addition of fueling stations. Building sizes are limited for compatibility with surrounding residential areas. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

C-2: General Community Commercial District

The C-2 District is similar to the C-1 District however it is intended to serve a larger market area. Higher intensity uses of the permitted uses in the C-1 District are allowed in the C-2 District. The maximum building height in this district is 45 feet.



PDB: Planned Development Business District



The PDB District is intended to provide limited areas for a mix of land uses that include warehousing, distribution, light assembly, media, education, research, and limited commercial. Retail uses are size limited and signage is reduced. Sites in the PDB District should have reasonably direct access to a highway or major arterial. The maximum building height in this district is 45 feet.

Mixed-Use Center Zoning Districts

The mixed-use center districts are areas in the city with a mix of residential, retail, commercial, and service uses that are intended to create spaces where people can work, live, walk, shop, play, and eat all in the same area. Mixed-use center districts accommodate and support alternative transportation such as walking, transit, and bicycling to reduce reliance on the automobile. The core areas of the districts are the central hub and focus of the greatest level of growth and activity. Residential uses are encouraged in all mixed-use center districts. The X-District Bonus program provides a mechanism to achieve greater density and growth by allowing additional building height, above and beyond the standard maximum height limits. In order to achieve these increased height limits, projects are required to provide one or more public benefit bonus features from the height bonus palette. The specific purpose of the mixed-use center districts can be found in the *Tacoma Municipal Code section 13.06.300*.

NCX: Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use District



The NCX District provides areas with day-to-day convenience shopping and services at a level that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The district is intended to enhance, preserve, and stabilize the neighborhood's unique character. Retail frontages are generally uninterrupted by driveways and parking facilities and pedestrian access and street amenities are encouraged. The standard building height in this district is 45 feet; additional height can be achieved through the bonus program.

CCX: Community Commercial Mixed-Use District

The CCX District provides commercial and retail businesses which are intended to serve many nearby areas and attract people from throughout the City. This district is envisioned as a traditional suburban development that evolves into a denser urban district. Common uses include shopping centers with a wide variety of commercial establishments, commercial recreation, gas stations, and business, personal, and financial services. The standard building height in this district is 60 feet; additional height can be achieved through the bonus program.



UCX: Urban Center Mixed-Use District

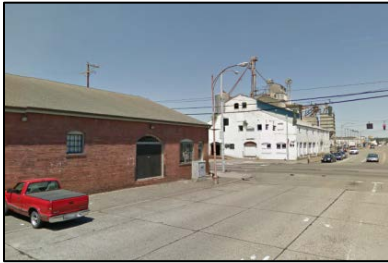


The UCX District holds the highest densities outside the Central Business District. This district contains a dense concentration of residential, commercial, and institutional development which includes regional shopping centers, supporting businesses and services uses and other regional attractions. The UCX District is also a focus for both regional and local transit systems. The standard building height in this district is 75 feet; additional building height can be achieved through the bonus program.

RCX: Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District

The RCX District is primarily residential in nature. Commercial uses in this district are small in scale and serve the immediate neighborhood. These districts provide housing on the perimeter of more intense commercial zones and are often a transition area to single-family neighborhoods. These districts provide for an opportunity for employment close to home. The maximum building height in this district is 60 feet.

CIX: Commercial Industrial Mixed-Use District



The CIX District contains a mix of commercial establishments and a mix of limited industrial uses such as light manufacturing, assembly, distribution, and storage of goods. Raw materials processing and bulk handling are not permitted. Buildings in this district may be larger in scale. The maximum building height in this district is 75 feet.

NRX: Neighborhood Residential Mixed-Use District

The NRX District is predominantly residential and discourages the removal of single-family residential structures. This district encourages infill of the appropriate size and design. This district is intended for areas which previously allowed denser residential uses and some neighborhood commercial uses. Adaptive reuse of single-family dwellings into duplexes and triplexes may be permitted with an approved conditional use permit. Multiple-family structures that existed prior to reclassification to NRX are considered conforming. The maximum building height in this district is 35 feet.

URX: Urban Residential Mixed-Use District

The URX District contains mainly medium density residential development such as townhouses, condos, and apartments. This district generally abuts or serves as a transition between more intense mixed-use center and commercial areas. The maximum building height in this district is 45 feet.



HMX: Hospital Medical Mixed-Use District



The HMX is limited to areas that contain hospitals and/or other similar large-scale medical facilities. A dense mix of other related or supportive facilities may also be included in this district such as outpatient medical offices, care facilities, counseling and support services, medical equipment and support facilities, food and lodging. The maximum building height in this district is 150 feet.

Industrial Zoning Districts

The industrial districts include light, heavy, and port industrial activities. These districts are not appropriate for residential uses, except on a limited basis for quarters for caretakers and watchpersons. Other permitted uses include pubs and breweries, eating establishments, some retail, and fueling stations. The specific purpose of the industrial districts can be found in the *Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.06.400*.

M-1: Light Industrial District

The M-1 District is intended to serve as a buffer between heavier industrial areas and less intensive commercial/residential areas of the City. The maximum building height in this district is 75 feet.



M-2 Heavy Industrial District

This M-2 District is intended to allow most industrial uses. Impacts from these uses include extended operating hours, heavy truck traffic, and higher levels of noise and odors. The maximum building height in this district is 100 feet.

PMI: Port Maritime and Industrial District



The PMI District is intended to allow all industrial activities that are not permitted in other districts. The Port of Tacoma, facilities that support the Port's operations and other public and private maritime and industrial activities make up a majority of the uses in this district. This area is characterized by deep-water berthing, 24-hour operations to accommodate regional and international shipping and distribution schedules, raw materials processing and manufacturing, transport of raw materials, transport of finished products, and freight mobility infrastructure, with the entire area served by road and rail corridors designed for large, heavy truck and rail loads. The maximum building height in this district is 100 feet.

Shoreline Zoning Districts

The shorelines of Tacoma have great social, ecological, recreational, cultural, economic and aesthetic value. Wapato Lake, the Puyallup River and Tacoma's marine shoreline areas provide citizens with clean water; deep-water port and industrial sites; habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife including salmon, shellfish, forage fish, and waterfowl; archaeological and historical sites; open space; and areas for boating, fishing, and other forms of recreation. However, Tacoma's shoreline resources are limited and irreplaceable. Use and development of shoreline areas must be carefully planned and regulated to ensure that these values are maintained over time. There are 17 shoreline districts in the City and, unlike the other zoning districts; the numbering of shoreline districts does not correlate to the intensity of the district. For example, the S-10 district regulates development in the Port area and the S-14 District regulates development surrounding Wapato Lake. The maximum building height is 35 feet in most districts, however in the S-7 and S-9 Districts the building height may go up to 100 feet.



Overlay Districts

Overlay districts are combined with an underlying zoning district and supplement the regulations of that district. Overlay districts only apply to land carrying the overlay district designation.

View Sensitive Overlay District:

This overlay district is intended to protect views. Buildings in this district may not exceed a height of 25 feet. The View Sensitive Overlay District is a common overlay in the R-1 District, but may also be found with the R-2 District and a few C-2 District areas located closer to the marine shoreline.

ST-M/IC South Tacoma Manufacturing/Industrial Center Overlay District:

This overlay district is intended to provide additional protection to industrial and manufacturing uses within the designated boundary of the South Tacoma M/IC by placing further restrictions on incompatible uses within this defined area.

Historic Special Review Overlay District:

The Historic Special Review Overlay District is intended to protect the historic fabric of the area as well as enhance the economic viability of the districts through the promotion of their architectural character, and provide a clear set of physical design parameters for property owners, developers, designers, and public agencies.

Conservation Overlay District:

The Conservation Overlay District is an area designated for the preservation and protection of historic resources and overall characteristics of traditional development patterns, and that meets the criteria for such designation.

South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District:

The South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District is an overlay zoning and land use control district specifically designed to prevent the degradation of groundwater in the South Tacoma aquifer system by controlling the handling, storage and disposal of hazardous substances by businesses.

Glossary

Comprehensive Plan: Tacoma's *Comprehensive Plan* is the City's official statement concerning future growth and development. It sets forth goals, policies and strategies to protect the health, welfare, safety and quality of life of Tacoma's residents. The *Comprehensive Plan* is adopted pursuant to the authority conferred by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and Title 13 of the Tacoma Municipal Code.

Conditional Use Permit: A Conditional Use is a use which may be essential or desirable to a particular neighborhood, but which is not allowed outright within a zoning district. The Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process allows the applicant some flexibility within the zoning code, but also allows the City to place conditions on a project that can safeguard neighborhoods against possible negative impacts of the development.

Density: The amount of development permitted per acre. In Tacoma, the numbers of the districts do *not* correspond with the permitted development (e.g., number of residential units) per acre. Higher numbers do correlate to higher-density districts, except in the Shoreline Districts.

Infill Development: Infill development is using underdeveloped or undeveloped land in a built up area for further development. Infill can provide further opportunities for housing or community amenities and services.

Setbacks: The required separation between a property line and a structure or other use (such as parking).

Tacoma Municipal Code: The *Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC)* is the set of City laws that protect the public health and safety as well as implement the goals and visions of the Comprehensive Plan. There are 17 titles in the *TMC* that range from topics like the Land-Use Regulatory Code to the Police Code; the Zoning Code is contained in the Land Use Regulatory Code, which is located in Title 13.

X-District Height Bonus Program: The X-District Height Bonus program provides a mechanism to allow for additional height for projects within certain portions of the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers. It is designed to encourage new growth and foster economic vitality within the centers, while balancing taller buildings and greater density with public amenities that help achieve the community's vision for the centers, with improved livability, enhanced pedestrian and transit orientation, and a quality built environment, and realize other City-wide goals. Additional detail on the X-District Height Bonus Program can be found in *TMC 13.06.300.E.2*.

Notes

