



CRITICAL AREAS

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As a jurisdiction planning under the state's Growth Management Act, La Center is required to adopt and periodically maintain a Critical Areas Ordinance. Critical areas include:

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Due to the exceptional susceptibility and/or vulnerability of ground waters underlying aquifer recharge areas to contamination and the importance of such ground waters as sources of public water supply, it is the intent of this chapter to safeguard ground water resources by mitigating or precluding future discharges of contaminants from new land use activities.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Riparian Habitat Areas - Although riparian areas comprise only a small portion of the surface landscape, approximately 90 percent of Washington's land-based vertebrate species prefer, or are dependent upon, riparian habitat for essential life. Riparian habitat areas are those areas immediately adjacent to waterways that contain elements of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems that mutually influence each other.

Endangered or Threatened Species Habitat - Areas that have a primary association with federal listed endangered or threatened species of fish or wildlife and which if altered may reduce the likelihood that the species will maintain and reproduce over the long term. Point locations are the specific sites (nests, dens, etc.) where critical wildlife species are found. Development of such lands shall be controlled in accordance with a site specific fish and wildlife management plan consistent with the WDFW's priority habitats and species management recommendations and prepared by a qualified consultant.

Priority Habitats & Species (PHS) Areas are areas associated with state-listed monitor or candidate species or federally listed candidate species, as specified in Washington Department of Wildlife Policies 4802 and 4803, and which if altered may reduce the likelihood that the species will maintain and reproduce over the long term. Priority habitats include but are not limited to: aspen stands (1 acre); biodiversity areas and corridors; herbaceous balds; old-growth/mature forest; Oregon white oak woodlands (1 acre); riparian habitat; westside prairie; freshwater wetlands and fresh deepwater; in-stream channels; caves; cliffs; snags and nurse logs, and; talus.

Local Habitat Areas are areas associated with species of local importance that are of local concern due to their population status or their sensitivity to habitat manipulation or that are game species. The City has not yet identified any Local Habitat Areas.

Frequently Flooded Areas

The areas of special flood hazard identified by the Federal Insurance Administration in a scientific and engineering report entitled —The Flood Insurance Study for La Center, Washington dated March 28, 1986, with accompanying FIRM, and any revisions thereto, are hereby adopted by reference and declared to be a part of this chapter. The flood insurance study is on file at the office of the city clerk/treasurer. The best available science shall be the basis for regulation until a new FIRM is issued which incorporates the data used to inform this chapter.

Geo-Hazards

Erosion hazard areas are those areas containing soils that, according to the federal Soil Classification System, may experience severe to very severe erosion.

Landslide hazard areas are areas potentially subject to risk of mass movement due to a combination of geologic, topographic, and hydrologic factors.

Seismic hazard areas are areas subject to severe risk of damage as a result of earthquake induced ground shaking, slope failure, settlement, or soil liquefaction.

Slopes with a Gradient of 25 Percent or Greater

Development on slopes greater than 25 percent is prohibited. Slopes between 15 percent and 25 percent are generally considered buildable but the City may require an applicant to provide substantial evidence that a slope between 15 percent and 25 percent are geologically stable if there is evidence that similarly situated slopes have demonstrated substantial instability in the past.

Wetlands

Wetlands constitute important natural resources which provide significant environmental functions including: the control of flood waters, maintenance of summer stream flows, filtration of pollutants, recharge of ground water, and provisions of significant habitat areas for fish and wildlife. Uncontrolled urban-density development in and adjacent to wetlands can eliminate or significantly reduce the ability of wetlands to provide these important functions, thereby detrimentally affecting public health, safety, and general welfare.

But I Still Have Questions!

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