



Critical Areas Designation (CAD)

A Critical Areas Designation (CAD) provides an applicant with defined limits of critical areas and their buffers on a parcel in unincorporated King County. The evaluation area can either be a portion, or the entirety, of the subject parcel. The results of the CAD is an official letter and site map prepared by the Department of Local Services, Permitting Division (Permitting) that is valid for five years from the approval date.

What are critical areas and critical area buffers?

Critical areas are lands with natural geologic hazards or lands that support certain unique, fragile or valuable resource areas. Lands designated by King County as critical include areas at high risk for erosion, landslides, seismic liquefaction, channel migration, or flooding; or subsidence due to abandoned underground coal mines; critical aquifer recharge areas; wetlands; or aquatic areas such as streams, rivers, lakes, and marine waters. Buffers are areas adjacent to a critical area and are also restricted from specific building and development activities. The King County Code (KCC) protects critical areas and their buffers in order to protect public health and safety, and to promote environmental health in the region.

What are CADs used for?

A CAD identifies critical areas and buffers on-site and adjacent to a subject property without requiring the submittal of a development proposal or building permit. The most common use for a CAD is in preparation for submitting a permit to Seattle-King County Public Health for septic system or well approval for residential projects. They can also be used to determine the presence of critical areas as part of real estate transactions, development planning, or in preparation for subdividing or altering parcel boundaries.

What is the application process?

To apply online: Go to MyBuildingPermit.com and sign up for an account if you don't already have one.

To apply by mail or in person: The application form and fee schedule can be found online: [Critical Areas Designation](#). A completed CAD application form and application fee may be submitted to our office.

Apply On-Line at MyBuildingPermit.com

Select: King County | Land Use | Any Project Type | Critical Areas | Designation



Critical Areas Designation (CAD), continued

Once your application is accepted, it is assigned a permit number (e.g., CADSXX-XXXX) and routed to an environmental scientist to review. We will conduct an initial screening and subsequent site visit. The Critical Area Designation review time can vary depending on the presence or absence, types, and complexity of critical areas within the evaluation area, as well as the volume of CAD applications in the queue at the time your application is accepted.

Extensions

Critical Areas Designations may be extended for an additional five year period. A new application for the same evaluation area must be submitted prior to the expiration date. Please see [Fees](#) for the current fee amount for an extension of a CAD.

Where can I find more information?

More information regarding [Critical Areas Designation](#) is available on our website.

More information regarding [MyBuildingPermit.com](#) application submittal is available online.

Critical areas specialists are available to assist walk-in customers at the Permitting [customer service Center in Snoqualmie during customer service hours](#). You may also direct questions to us at 206-296-6600, or by email to DPERWebinquiries@kingcounty.gov.

Additional Resources

King County Department of Local Services, Permitting Division

[Property research and maps](#)

Seattle – King County Public Health, [Environmental Health Services](#)

[Private wells, plumbing, gas piping and on-site sewage systems](#)

[On-site septic as-build records](#)

