



Real Estate

Q: In January 2013, the Seattle City Council adopted a comprehensive update of regulations pertaining to areas on or within 200 feet of the shoreline (including Lake Washington and Puget Sound). When do those regulations go into effect, and how will they apply to existing structures and uses?

A: These regulations, known as the City's "Shoreline Master Program" or SMP, are effective when approved by the Washington Department of Ecology. That approval process is expected to take several more months, and may result in further changes. Under the City-adopted SMP update, existing shoreline uses and structures that were lawful when initially

built or developed, but do not meet the SMP's new standards, are allowed to continue in current form. Be aware, however, that the SMP restricts the expansion of such "nonconforming" uses and structures. The new shoreline regulations will not apply to "vested" projects. Vested status is typically achieved by obtaining a shoreline permit, or submitting a complete building permit application, prior to the SMP's effective date. For certain projects, it may be advantageous to reapply under the updated SMP, if the relevant regulations have become more favorable.

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