

CHAPTER 3

SHORELINE ENVIRONMENT DESIGNATIONS AND POLICIES

3.1 Shoreline Planning Environments

Introduction

In order to plan and effectively manage shoreline resources, the City of Mountlake Terrace has developed a system of categorizing shoreline areas as part of its Master Program. This system is designed to provide a uniform basis for applying policies and use regulations within distinctively different shoreline areas. To accomplish this, the environmental designations to be given any specific area will be based on the existing development pattern, the biophysical capabilities and limitations of the shoreline being considered for development and the goals and aspirations of the public.

The system to be utilized in the City of Mountlake Terrace is based upon the recommendations and requirements of the Shoreline Management Act's Final Guidelines (WAC 173-16-040(4)). This system classifies the City's shorelines into four distinct environments (Natural, Aquatic, Urban Conservancy, and Shoreline Residential) which provide the framework for implementing shoreline policies and regulatory measures.

This system is designed to encourage uses in each environment which enhance the character of that environment. At the same time, the City will place reasonable standards and restrictions on development so that such development does not disrupt or destroy the character of the environment.

The basic intent of this system is to utilize performance standards which regulate use activities in accordance with goals and general development policies previously developed as part of the Master Program. Thus, the particular uses of type of developments placed in each environment must be designed and located to that there are no effects detrimental to achieving the objectives of the environment and other Master Program development criteria.

This approach provides an "umbrella" environment class over present and future City land use planning and zoning of the shorelines. Since every area of the City as well as the remainder of the State is endowed with different resources, has different intensity of development and attaches different social values to these physical and economic characteristics, the environment designations should not be regarded as a substitute for on-going City and municipal planning and land use regulations.

General Designation Criteria

The determination as to which designation should be given any specific area in the City should be made in the following manner:

1. The resources of the shoreline areas should be analyzed for their opportunities and limitations for different uses. Completion of the comprehensive inventory of resources is a prerequisite to identifying resource attributes which determine these opportunities and limitations. (See Appendix C, Shoreline Inventory and Characterization Report, September 2010.)

2. Each of the plan elements should be analyzed for their effect on the various resources throughout the City's shoreline areas. Since shorelines are only a part of the system of resources within the City of Mountlake Terrace's jurisdiction, it is particularly important that planning for shorelines be considered an integral part of area wide planning.
3. Public desires should be considered through the citizen involvement process to determine which environment designations reflect local values and aspirations for the development of different shoreline areas within Mountlake Terrace.
4. All areas within shoreline jurisdiction that are not mapped or designated shall be assigned an Urban Conservancy designation until the shoreline can be redesignated through a Master Program amendment.

The location and boundaries of each environment designation is shown on the Shoreline Environment Designation Map (see Appendix A).

The management objectives and features which characterize each of the environments are given in the following sections to provide a basis for environment designation and management within Mountlake Terrace.

Each environment category includes several elements including:

1. Purpose which attempts to describe the basic function and purpose of the particular environment category.
2. Designation criteria which define the development, uses and/or features and resources which characterize each environment.
3. Management policies which are designed to regulate use and development consistent with the character of each environment.

3.1.1 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the "natural" environment is to protect those shoreline areas that are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions intolerant of human use. These systems require that only very low intensity uses be allowed in order to maintain the ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes. Consistent with the policies of the designation, the City of Mountlake Terrace should include planning for restoration of degraded shorelines within this environment.

Designation Criteria

A "natural" environment designation applies to shoreline areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

1. The shoreline is ecologically intact and therefore currently performing an important, irreplaceable function or ecosystem-wide process that would be damaged by human activity;
2. The shoreline is considered to represent ecosystems and geologic types that are of particular scientific and educational interest; or
3. The shoreline is unable to support new development or uses without significant adverse impacts to ecological functions or risk to human safety.

Ecologically intact shorelines, as used here, means those shoreline areas that retain the majority of their natural shoreline functions, as evidenced by the shoreline configuration and the presence of native vegetation. Generally, but not necessarily, ecologically intact shorelines are free of shoreline structural modifications, structures, and intensive human uses. This designation applies to Ballinger Island.

Management Policies

1. Prohibit any use that would substantially degrade the ecological functions or natural character of the Natural Environment.
2. New development or significant vegetation removal that would reduce the capability of vegetation to perform normal ecological functions should not be allowed.
3. Apply severe restrictions to the intensity and type of uses allowed in order to maintain the natural systems and the resources of the Natural Environment in their natural state.
4. Permit limited access to the Natural Environment for scientific, historical or education purposes as long as there is no significant ecological impact.
5. Prohibit uses or activities requiring permanent installations which would permanently deplete or consume the physical and biological resources found in the Natural Environment.
6. New uses other than those referenced in Policy #4 should not be allowed in the Natural Environment.
7. Restoration opportunities should be encouraged in the Natural Environment.

3.1.2 AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the “aquatic” environment is to protect, restore, and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.

Designation Criteria

An “aquatic” environment designation applies to lands waterward of the ordinary high-water mark. The Aquatic shoreline environment designation includes the water surface together with the underlying lands and the water column. This designation applies to that portion of Lake Ballinger within the city limits of Mountlake Terrace.

Management Policies

1. Allow new over-water structures only for water-dependent uses, public access, or ecological restoration.
2. The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use.
3. In order to reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, over-water facilities should be encouraged to serve multiple functions.
4. All developments and uses on navigable waters or their beds should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation.
5. All developments and uses should be located and designed to consider impacts to public views, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.
6. Uses that adversely impact the ecological functions of critical freshwater habitats should not be allowed except where necessary to achieve the objectives of RCW 90.58.020, and then only when their impacts are mitigated according to the sequence described in WAC 173-26-201 (2)(e) as necessary to assure no net loss of ecological functions.
7. Shoreline uses and modifications should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.
8. Ensure that piers, docks, and boat ramps are compatible with the shoreline area where they are located and are designed and maintained to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.
9. Dredging and dredge material disposal should be limited to the minimum amount necessary. Dredging operations should minimize impacts to other shoreline uses and functions.
10. Restoration opportunities associated with project impacts should be encouraged in the aquatic environment.

3.1.3 URBAN CONSERVANCY ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the "urban conservancy" environment is to protect and restore ecological functions or open space, flood plain and other sensitive lands where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible uses. This designation applies to the north and east shorelines of Lake Ballinger.

Designation Criteria

An "urban conservancy" environment designation applies to shoreline areas appropriate and planned for development that is compatible with maintaining or restoring the ecological functions of the area,

that are not generally suitable for water-dependent uses and that lie in incorporated municipalities or urban growth areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

1. They are suitable for water-related or water-enjoyment uses;
2. They are open space, flood plain or other sensitive areas that should not be more intensively developed;
3. They have potential for ecological restoration;
4. They retain important ecological functions, even though partially developed; or
5. They have the potential for development that is compatible with ecological restoration.

Management Policies

1. Give preference to those uses which do not permanently deplete the physical and biological resources of the Urban Conservancy Environment.
2. Give priority to activities and uses of a nonpermanent nature which do not substantially degrade the existing character of the Urban Conservancy Environment.
3. Encourage outdoor recreation activities to be the predominant uses in the Urban Conservancy Environment.
4. Maintain the Urban Conservancy Environment by encouraging recreational activities which will not be detrimental to the shoreline character or the forces which created and maintain the shoreline area.
5. Restrict new development to those which are generally compatible with the natural and biological limitations of the land and water and will not require extensive alteration of the land-water interface.
6. Prohibit development which would be hazardous to public health and safety, or which significantly interferes with natural processes.
7. Allow beach enrichment projects when it can be shown that other portions of the shoreline will not be adversely affected.
8. Discourage development which would permanently strip the shoreline of vegetative cover or cause substantial landslide, erosion, sedimentation or impairment of fish and aquatic life.
9. Prohibit the construction of flood control works or streambank stabilization projects that would contribute to destructive streamway channelization or substantial modification of existing shoreline character except for streamway rehabilitation projects.
10. Encourage streamway rehabilitation projects which will restore or enhance the natural streamway character.

11. Uses that preserve the natural character of the area or promote preservation of open space, floodplain or sensitive lands either directly or over the long term should be the primary allowed uses. Uses that result in restoration of ecological functions should be allowed if the use is otherwise compatible with the purpose of the environment and the setting.
12. Standards should be established for shoreline stabilization measures, vegetation conservation, water quality, and shoreline modifications within the Urban Conservancy designation. These standards shall ensure that new development does not result in a net loss of shoreline ecological functions or further degrade other shoreline values.
13. Public access and public recreation objectives should be implemented whenever feasible and significant ecological impacts can be mitigated.
14. Water-oriented uses should be given priority over non-water-oriented uses.
15. Require use of low impact development techniques for any development occurring within the Urban Conservancy environment consistent with City codes, including Chapter 16.20 MTMC.

3.1.4 SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the “shoreline residential” environment is to accommodate residential development and appurtenant structures that are consistent with this shoreline Master Program. An additional purpose is to provide appropriate public access and recreational uses.

Designation Criteria

A “shoreline residential” environment designation applies to shoreline areas that are predominantly single-family or multifamily residential development or are planned and platted for residential development. This applies to existing residential properties on the northwest side of Lake Ballinger.

Management Policies

1. Maintain and enhance the residential character of the Shoreline Residential Environment by carefully controlling the type, location, scale and timing of new shoreline development.
2. Restrict the Shoreline Residential Environment to low-intensity residential and recreational uses.
3. Provide incentives and actively promote aesthetic considerations in Shoreline Residential development by means of sign control regulations, architectural design standards, landscaping requirements, and other such means.
4. Allow beach enrichment projects only when it can be shown that other portions of the shoreline will not be adversely affected.
5. Multi-lot residential and recreational developments should provide public access and joint use for community recreational facilities when consistent with statutory and constitutional limitations on development exactions.

6. Any new development or redevelopment should utilize low impact development techniques where feasible and appropriate.
7. Standards for density or minimum frontage width, setbacks, lot coverage limitations, buffers, shoreline stabilization, vegetation conservation, critical area protection, and water quality shall be set to assure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions, taking into account the environmental limitations and sensitivity of the shoreline area, the level of infrastructure and services available, and other comprehensive planning considerations.
8. Access, utilities, and public services should be available and adequate to serve existing needs and/or planned future development.
9. Limited non-residential uses, such as parks, day cares, home occupation businesses may be allowed, provided they are consistent with the residential character.
10. Development should be located, sited, designed and maintained to protect, enhance and be compatible with the shoreline environment.
11. Private property owners should be encouraged to preserve and enhance native shoreline vegetation and use environmentally friendly landscaping practices, through incentives, information and other assistance.
12. Water-oriented recreational uses should be allowed.
13. Public access and public recreation objectives should be implemented if feasible and wherever any significant ecological impacts, such as importation of invasive species to Lake Ballinger, can be mitigated.