

2026 Environmental Critical Areas Regulations Update Public Participation Plan

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About this Project

Seattle's Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) is updating its Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) regulations to align with state law, best available science, and the City's Comprehensive Plan. ECAs include geologic hazard areas, steep slope erosion hazard areas, flood-prone areas, wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and abandoned landfills. Standards for ECAs help protect both the environment and public safety by promoting safe, stable, and compatible development that avoids and mitigates adverse environmental impacts and potential harm.

Project Goals

Seattle's last major update of the environmentally critical areas code was in 2017. The goals of the 2026 ECA Code update include:

- Use best available science to preserve ecological functions and habitat, and protect public health and safety
- Maintain compliance with current state requirements
- Align ECA requirements with new Comprehensive Plan goals and policies
- Create clear, predictable regulations for future development

Public Engagement Goals

Community input is an important part of the ECA update process. Our outreach process will:

- Share information about the proposed update in clear and accessible language
- Provide opportunities for residents and stakeholders to learn and ask questions
- Gather feedback to help inform proposed updates

- Be transparent follow state public participation requirements
- Use plain talk, high-quality graphics, and news media to communicate information about the update.

We encourage participation from residents, community organizations, environmental groups, businesses, property owners, and others interested in Seattle's ECA regulations.

How We Will Engage

1.0 Race and Social Justice

SDCI will start the engagement process using the City's Racial Equity Toolkit which is a cornerstone of the Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), and a legally binding framework integrated directly into the Seattle Municipal Code. It is a vital decision-making framework used across all city departments to systematically evaluate how municipal policies, budget choices, and public programs affect racial disparities and looks past individual bias to directly dismantle systemic and institutional racism.

1.1 Tribal Engagement

As the first step in the engagement process, SDCI will draft a government-to-government letter inviting tribal participation in the ECA update process. If a Tribe is interested in engaging on this matter, they must contact the SDCI project lead. Tribal engagement occurs independently of all other public engagement processes in recognition of government-to-government relationships. Tribal engagement does not replace individual City-Tribal memoranda of agreement, consultation plans, or other specific agreements between the City and a Tribe.

2.0 Public Participation Opportunities

Seattle is committed to ensuring meaningful public participation throughout the ECA update process. The City will employ a variety of communication methods to keep the public informed and to actively encourage engagement. Outreach activities will include:

- Four stakeholder listening sessions
- Public Open House
- Project webpage + social media
- Opportunities to provide written comments
- Committee Briefings

2.1 Stakeholder Listening Sessions

Seattle will host four stakeholder listening sessions, targeting participation from stakeholders representing environmental organizations, local watershed groups, environmental professionals (biologists, landscape architects, engineers, etc.), and anybody with experience with ECA regulations during a permitting process. These listening sessions will be held in October 2026, prior to the first draft of code revisions.

2.2 Open House

After the first draft of potential code changes, SDCI will host an online open house to present recommendations and solicit feedback.

2.3 Website and Social Media

Seattle maintains a dedicated project website [Environmentally Critical Areas Update - What & Why - SDCI | seattle.gov](#) where the public can access status updates, draft documents, official notices, meeting minutes, and other project-related information. This website serves as the primary repository for all materials related to the update process. The site also provides contact information, including staff email for questions and a portal submit comments. SDCI will also share updates through a monthly newsletter and social media to reach a broader audience and support ongoing public engagement.

2.4 Written Comments

Interested parties are encouraged to provide comments to project manager Chanda Emery by [email](#), throughout the duration of the process.

2.5 City Council Committee Briefings

The Seattle City Council's Land Use Committee reviews and recommends policies, regulations, and code changes related to planning, zoning, development, and major land use decisions before they go to the full City Council for action. Before a land use proposal goes to the full Seattle City Council, the Committee will review the proposal, receive public and staff input, discuss potential amendments, and vote on whether to recommend it for Council consideration.

3.0 Public Participation Notification

An email distribution list has been established for the ECA update and is maintained by SDCI. This list is used to notify interested parties about project progress, upcoming participation opportunities, and other relevant updates. Members of the public can join the distribution list by subscribing through the "Get Involved" page on the project website.

The local news media will be kept up to date on the process and will receive copies of all official notices. This includes a press release.

Official notices will be published as established in Daily Journal of Commerce and SDCI's Land Use Information Bulletin.

4.0 ECA Code Update Project Schedule

Please visit SDCI's [project website](#) for the most current schedule.