City of MEDINA WASHINGTON

Critical Areas Ordinance Update

Medina Planning Commission
October 14, 2025

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Agenda

Critical Areas Ordinance Update

- Introduction
- Best Available Science and Gap Analysis
- Key Area for Consideration
  - Wetlands, Streams
- Nonconforming and Reasonable Use
- Schedule

Introduction

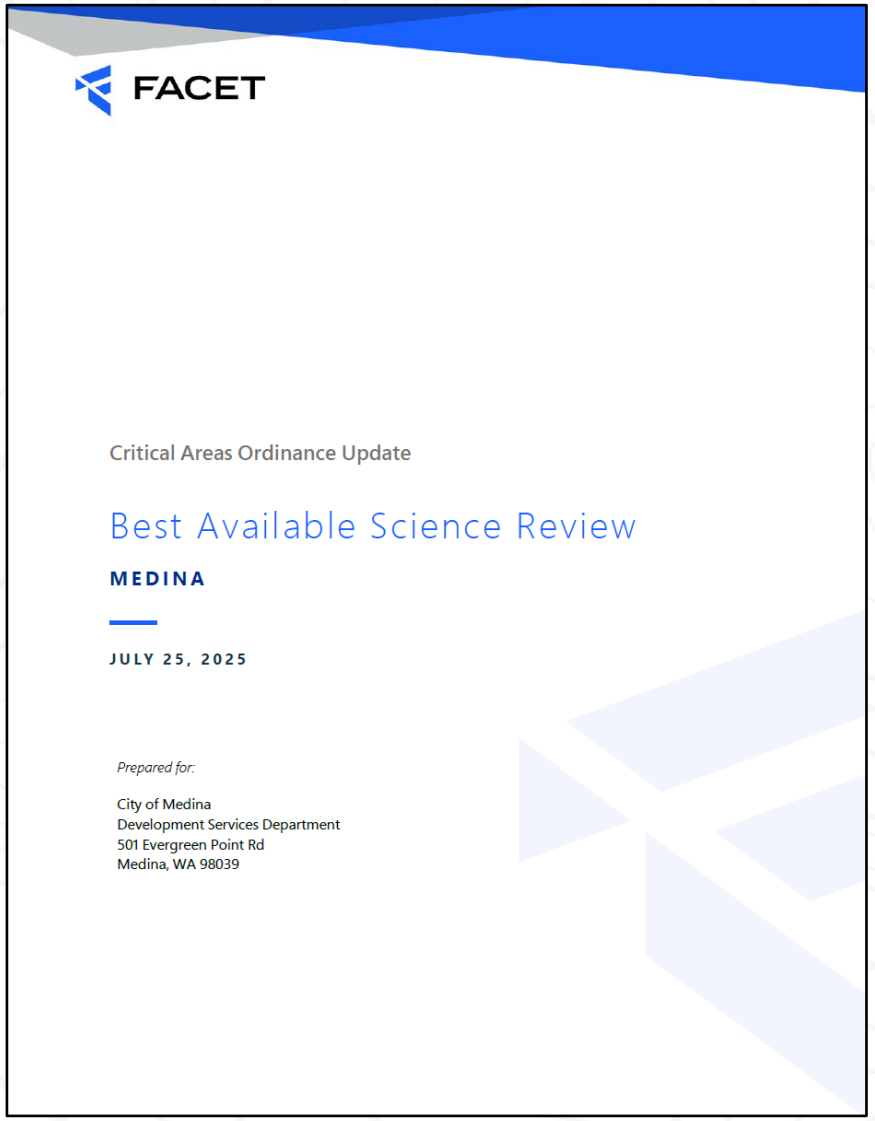
Purpose of the Critical Areas Update

- Previous update performed in 2016 with minor update in 2018
- State Law/Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.060 and RCW 36.70A.170)
- Consistency with Best Available Science (RCW 36.70A.172)
- State deadline December 31, 2025

BAS Review for Medina

Referenced materials include:

- Existing critical area inventories
- Peer-reviewed research publications
- Synthesis publications from state agencies
- Complete reference list provided in Section 7 - *Best Available Science Review, City of Medina* (Facet 7/25/2025).



Gap Analysis

Key Areas

- General Provisions (MMC 16.50.010)
- Wetlands (MMC 16.50.080)
- Geologic Hazard Areas (MMC 16.50.090)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area Areas (MMC 16.50.100)

Gap Analysis

Minor Updates Identified

- Definitions
- WAC references
- Agency resources
- Wetland Rating publication

Gap Analysis

Key Areas of Consideration

Wetlands – Development standards / Buffers *(MMC 16.50.080)*

- Review 2022 Ecology guidance with three BAS-based buffer options. Ecology's preferred option includes criteria for habitat corridors and vegetation standards.

Streams – Classification & Buffers *(MMC 16.50.100)*

- Review WDFW management recommendations, choose predictive model or Site Potential Tree Height methodology (SPTH)
- Review riparian buffer recommendations, consider increases to current protections.

Wetland Buffers – Current vs. Proposed

Current Wetland buffer regulations

- Current wetland buffers vary by wetland Category and habitat score.
- Habitat scores are grouped in four value ranges: 3-4, 5, 6-7, 8-9.
- Buffer size range from 50’ – 300’
- Buffer modification options:
    - Buffer reduction with enhancement
    - Buffer averaging

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Wetland Buffers – Current vs. Proposed

Proposed Update

- Adjust habitat score groupings to three rankings: 3-5, 6-7, 8-9
- Ecology provided three BAS based buffer options
- Buffer modification options:
    - Strike reduction with enhancement
    - Retain buffer averaging
- Establish clear criteria for the two-tier buffer approach
    - Narrower (Reduced) buffer must meet certain criteria
    - Wider (Standard) buffer applies when that criteria is not met

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Wetland Buffer Update – Current Code

Current wetland buffers apply habitat scores broken down into four value ranges: 3-4, 5, 6-7, 8-9.

Wetland Rating	Habitat Score and Buffer Width							
	Standard	Reduced	Standard	Reduced	Standard	Reduced	Standard	Reduced
	3-4		5		6-7		8-9	
Category I	100	75	140	105	220	165	300	225
Category II	100	75	140	105	220	165	300	225
Category III	80	60	140	105	220	165	N/A	N/A
Category IV	50	37.5	N/A					

Note: Current code allows buffer averaging and buffer reduction by 25% with enhancement.

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Wetland Buffer Update – Option 1

Recommended 2022 Ecology Wetland Buffer Option 1.

Wetland Rating	Habitat Score and Buffer Width							
	Standard	Mitigated	Standard	Mitigated	Standard	Mitigated	Standard	Mitigated
	3-5		5		6-7		8-9	
Category I	100	75	Habitat score of 5 is now grouped with Low (3-4)		150	110	300	225
Category II	100	75			150	110	300	225
Category III	80	60			150	110	N/A	N/A
Category IV	40	40	N/A					

Habitat scores are grouped into 3 value ranges, Low, Medium and High.

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Wetland Buffer Discussion

Questions about Wetland Buffer Option 1 Recommendation?

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Stream Regulations Update

Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1: Science Synthesis & Management Implications

- Riparian functions and ecosystems
- Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) to protect for full riparian functions

Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations

- WDFW recommends using Site Potential Tree Height model to establish Riparian Management Zones (RMZ)
- A 100-foot-wide buffer/RMZ is the recommended minimum for all streams based on water quality efficacy

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Streams – BAS Considerations

Water Quality – Protect water quality, minimum 100-ft buffer recommended.

Riparian Areas – The term riparian is important to reflect the ecosystem interactions between in-stream and adjacent terrestrial areas.

Riparian Vegetation – Dense native vegetation is necessary to achieve riparian functions.

Restoration – Encourage the restoration of degraded streams and riparian areas.

Daylighting – Provide clear direction on daylighting streams in existing nonconforming sites.

Incentivize - Low Impact Development and retrofits.

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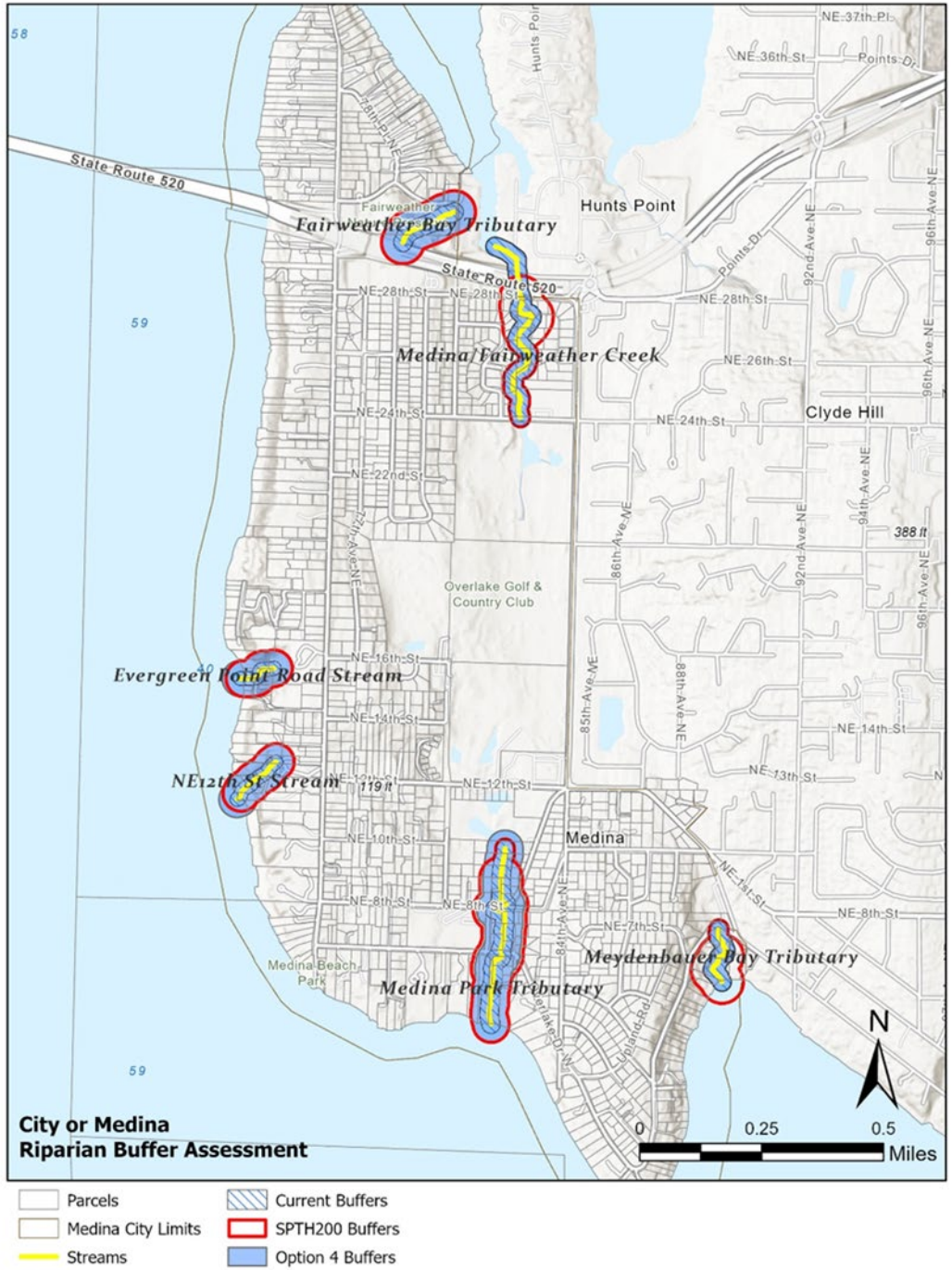

Streams / Riparian Areas – GIS Analysis

There are various SPTH200 RMZ values within the city limits

- Lowest 100 feet
- Largest 231 feet
- Streams may have multiple SPTH200 values

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Streams / Riparian Areas – GIS Analysis

Stream Type	Existing CAO (ft)	SPTH (ft)	Proposed Option (ft)
Type 1	100	100-231	150
Type 2	75	100-231	100
Type 3	50	100-231	100

Results	Existing CAO	SPTH	Proposed Option
Affected Parcels	77	109	90
Fully Encumbered (80-90%)	20	53	39

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Stream Regulations

Stream Type	Current buffer (ft)	Recommended Standard buffer (ft)	Recommended Increased buffer (ft)
Type 1	100	**150**	**200**
Type 2	75	**100**	**133**
Type 3	50	**100**	**133**

Note: WDFW is supportive of the recommended buffer approach

Clyde Hill buffer approach is 125’ for Type 1 and 100 for Type 2 & 3

Recommended Buffers

Requirements for standard buffer widths:

- Native vegetation standards
- Planting plan if above is not met

Buffer modification options

- Buffer averaging retained, maximum reduction at any point is 25% of buffer assigned
- Buffer reduction removed, not supported by BAS
- Interrupted buffer standard

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Stream Standards Discussion

Questions about Stream Standards/Buffer Recommendation?

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Nonconforming

Purpose

- Structures, uses, or developments that no longer meet current code standards
- Allows for flexibility
- City discretion (to a point)

Standards

- Existing nonconforming structures may be maintained, repaired, and expanded
- Vertical expansion and additions are allowed within existing improved areas
- Damaged or destroyed structures may be rebuilt in kind

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Reasonable Use Exception (RUE)

Purpose

- Provides relief when strict application of code denies all reasonable use of property
- Ensures minimum necessary impact to critical areas
- Balances property rights with environmental protection

Standards

- Proposed use must be the least impactful feasible alternative
- Not caused by applicants own actions
- Result in “no net loss”
- Comply with other development regulations

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Nonconforming and RUE Discussion

Questions about nonconforming and Reasonable Use Exception Recommendation?

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CAO Update Timeline

THANK YOU

Question and Answer