

Variance to Parking Standards

OFF-STREET PARKING LOT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Each business or use is required to provide a certain number of off-street parking stalls, depending on the zoning district it's located in. A parking area of 5 or more motorized vehicles, trailers, or a combination thereof, must meet the minimum standards listed in Tacoma Municipal Code (hereinafter TMC) 13.06.510.B.2. The standards include review of entrances and exits by a City engineer, minimum parking aisle widths and stall sizes, border barricades, surfacing of parking areas, landscaping, & lighting.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED A VARIANCE?

If there are circumstances that prevent compliance with either the parking lot development standards or the parking quantity standards, the project may be discussed with a Land Use Planner over the phone at (253) 591-5577 or in-person at Building and Land Use Services on the 3rd floor of the Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market Street. Except under extraordinary circumstances, the off-street parking quantity standard shall not be reduced by more than 50 percent. The Land Use Administrator or Hearing Examiner may issue such conditions as necessary to maximize possible compliance with the intent of the regulations. It is the applicant's responsibility to demonstrate how each variance criteria pertains to the project.

VARIANCE PROCESS

1. A meeting with a Planner and Traffic Engineer in Permit Intake Center, located on the third floor of the Tacoma Municipal Building at 747 Market Street, is recommended prior to submittal.
2. A submittal checklist is provided below.

3. Once the application packet is ready, it may be submitted during walk-in hours or by appointment at Building and Land Use Services, 747 Market St, 3rd Floor. If submitting without an appointment, payments are accepted from 10:00am - 2:30pm Monday and Friday, 8:00am - 4:30pm Tuesday - Thursday. **Pre-application meetings can be requested online via the Tacomapermits.org questionnaire.**
4. After submittal, the applicant is notified if additional information is needed. If no additional information is needed, a complete application letter is mailed and the applicant is directed to pick-up the property information sign(s) to post at the site.
5. Yellow post card public notices are mailed to neighbors within 100 feet of the property. The public notice includes instructions for viewing the submitted application materials on-line. The public is given 14 days to comment on the project. **Neighbors who have provided comments will receive a copy of the full report and decision.**
6. The Planning Director will issue a decision to either approve or deny the request within 120 calendar days from the date that the application is submitted. (Timeline is approximate and does not account for any time when the permit is in an inactive status.)
7. A request for reconsideration or an appeal may be made within 14 days after the decision is issued.
8. If the variance is approved, the applicant has five years from the date of approval to submit a complete application for the construction permit(s).

SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

All application materials must be submitted in electronic PDF format on compact disc (CD) or online at TacomaPermits.org. See [Tip Sheet G-230](#).

- Application for Land Use Permit, completed and signed
- Site Plan to scale
- Written response to criteria
- Application fee
- Other applicable information, as requested



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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VARIANCE TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

A written response to the criteria listed under TMC 13.06.645.B.6 is required as part of a submittal packet. The following questions may be used as guidelines in providing information for the written response. Applicants must describe how the variance request meets one or more of the following:

1. Does the project provide reasonable alternatives which are in the same spirit and intent of the municipal code standards? Specifically describe the alternatives proposed and why they meet the intent of the code.
2. Would strict enforcement of the standards cause unnecessary hardship due to the unique character or use of the property? Describe the hardships that would effect the project and uniqueness of the property.

VARIANCE TO THE QUANTITY OF REQUIRED PARKING STALLS

The following questions may be used as guidelines in providing a written response to the review criteria contained in TMC 13.06.645.B.7. Applicants must describe how the variance request meets each of criteria 1-3 and at least one of criteria 4-7 listed below:

1. **How would granting the variance allow for reasonable use of the property? Describe in detail.**
2. **How would the project be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan? How would the project improve the character of the neighborhood? Describe specific aspects of the Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood characteristics that would be consistent with or improved by the project. The Comprehensive Plan is available on-line: <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/planning>.**
3. **How would the project be beneficial to the public interest?**
4. Have you talked to the affected neighbors about the project? Would approval of the request grant special privilege that is not enjoyed by other properties in the area? How does the project allow for a more environmentally sensitive property design or construction than would otherwise be allowed?
5. What are the hardships on the property, such as size, shape, location, or other conditions that make it difficult to meet zoning standards? How will zoning goals still be met with the request (such as maintaining space between structures to prevent fire hazards and ensuring yard space for neighbor privacy)? The

response should clearly describe what the specific hardship is, how the applicant did not create this hardship, and why strict application of the zoning code would be unreasonable due to this hardship. This response should describe the existing conditions of the property and why there is a hardship affecting the site due to unique conditions.

6. Does the project provide reasonable alternatives to the standards which are in the spirit and intent of the [Tacoma Municipal Code](#)?
7. Do any of the following site-specific circumstances apply?
 - a) A parking study was done that demonstrates that the individual characteristics of the use at that location require less parking than is generally required for a use of this type and intensity.
 - b) An approved carpooling/vanpooling or commute trip reduction program applies, consistent with TMC 13.15.
 - c) The site has availability of private, convenient transportation services to meet the needs of the use.
 - d) The site has access to public transportation which stops near the site frequently.
 - e) The site is residential and has availability of pedestrian access due to proximity to health and medical facilities, shopping facilities and other services providing for everyday needs and amenities.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

- Tacoma Municipal Code Section: [13.05 – Land Use Permit Procedures](#), [13.06 - Zoning](#), [13.06.645 - Variances](#)



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