

Community Development Department Frequently Asked Questions

What is my zoning?

Community Development can tell you in which zoning district your property is located. You will need to provide either your street address or KPB Parcel Number or both. We have a digitized version of the Zoning Map it is available on the City of Seward webpage for your convenience. If further information is needed, you can call or send an email to planning@cityofseward.net

What are my setback requirements?

Community Development department maintains a map that shows zoning for every parcel in the City. The map can be viewed at the Community Development office, or anyone can call 224-4020 to speak with a planner regarding specific zoning, setback, and related questions. Each zoning district establishes minimum setback requirements for the front, sides and rear yards. Setback requirements can be found in Seward city code Table 15.10.222. Some lots, such as corner or oddly configured lots, require that planning staff make a determination with respect to where each setback applies. Staff will consider the access to the lot and orientation of the house among other factors when making such a determination.

What are the requirements to establish a business in my home or operate a short term rental?

If you wish to conduct a business from your home or operate a short term rental within the City of Seward, you must file for a City Business License and short-term rental permit. To ask questions regarding a specific business you are proposing to establish and to determine what the requirements might be, you may call 224-4048 or 224-4020 to speak with Community Development or send an email request to planning@cityofseward.net.

Can I build a storage shed/garage in my back yard?

Placement is dependent on minimum setbacks, maximum height requirements and lot coverage, which are dependent on your property's zoning. Call Community Development to obtain the specific standards for your property. You will also need to contact the Building Department 224-4075 to obtain a building permit.

Can I add on to my house/ convert my garage into living space (e.g., bedroom, family room, etc...)?

Any addition and remodeling requires a building permit. Your permit will then be reviewed by all necessary city departments prior to issuance of a building permit. You can contact the Building Department to obtain a building permit 224-4075.

Why does the City have all these land use rules? Why can't I just do what I want with my property?

The Seward City Code and Charter sets forth the general principles and strategies to be used by the City to guide land use decisions and the growth and development, as shaped by the public, City Council, and Planning & Zoning Commissioners. Federal and State land use laws and regulations aside, the City of Seward has established land use regulations to protect the health and general welfare of all citizens and to manage growth and development responsibly. Citizens themselves, through their opportunity to vote for their elected officials and to participate in public meetings, affect what kind of regulations the City adopts. The current City of Seward Zoning Code has been amended several times since its adoption. Each amendment process involves significant public involvement and input. Any member of the public, as well as the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission or staff may initiate an amendment at any time.

Why is land use so important?

The Seward Zoning Code regulates the development and use of land within the City. These regulations protect the health, safety and general welfare of residents and property owners by creating zones to prevent incompatible uses in close proximity to each other. The regulations also maintain the character of established neighborhoods and prevent inappropriate activities, such as alcohol sales near parks and schools. Permitted and conditional uses are designated for each zoning district. Permitted uses are controlled by specific regulations, such as setbacks from a structure to the property line, height of the structure, number of parking spaces, etc. An example of a permitted use is a single-family residence. A permit is required when a proposed use may have a different operating characteristic than those permitted in the zoning district.

What is code compliance and why is it important?

Through our Seward City codes and ordinances, the City Council sets minimum requirements and standards regarding property and structures to promote and protect the public health, convenience, order, and general safety of all its citizens. These minimum standards are designed to preserve and improve the quality of life for present and future citizens of the City, promote a sense of community, and facilitate clean and peaceful neighborhoods. Preservation and improvement should be recognized by our City leaders as it is necessary to prevent the deterioration of our surroundings and enhance our quality of life.

The most effective means of improving our community is through voluntary compliance, so educating and guiding our citizens is our top priority. Please visit www.cityofseward.us or https://library.municode.com/ak/seward/codes/code_of_ordinances for all City Code information.