

Land Use & Zoning

The Land Use attorneys at Cairncross & Hempelmann are well-versed in the zoning, planning and land use laws of Washington. We have permitted projects in virtually all Counties and Cities in the Puget Sound region, and many others throughout the rest of the State, ranging from Arlington to Auburn, Bremerton to Bellevue, Spokane to Seattle, and Cle Elum to Covington. We have land use attorneys spanning from 2 years to over 50 years of experience in the Puget Sound region. Because the practice of Land Use consists not only of what you know, but who you know, we take pride in our deep relationships with clients, regulatory officials, and elected policymakers.

Our extensive experience in the field translates into an astute technical and practical knowledge of applicable codes and how they have historically been interpreted and applied. We represent both private and public sector clients, including property owners, developers, counties and municipalities. We help our owner and developer clients successfully negotiate the often-Byzantine framework of land use laws and regulation. We find the most direct route to, and creative solutions for, obtaining the permits needed to move projects forward.

Land Use Entitlements

We advise high profile and sophisticated clients through the life cycle of new projects. We conduct due diligence to help clients evaluate land use risks for potential property purchases. CH& Land Use attorneys help clients to secure permit acquisition and approval, obtain favorable rezones of property, navigate landmarks issues, obtain variances, and otherwise navigate the complicated framework of regulations in order to achieve a client's goals. We have decades of experience working with regulators and are skilled negotiators with local government officials. Using our connections and persistent persuasion, we help clients reach their goals. Clients benefit from our strategic work on the front end of a project with due diligence and feasibility, and then from our focused approach to the permitting process to get projects built in a timely manner.

SEPA and NEPA Compliance

We have extensive knowledge and experience with Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We advise clients on preparation of environmental documents, including checklists, expanded checklists, and environmental impact statements, and we navigate the environmental review process, including defending or bringing appeals when necessary.

Comprehensive Planning and Zoning and Development Regulations

We support clients with respect to the planning and regulatory process. Our work includes processing amendments to comprehensive plans, and zoning and development regulations to address future development needs. We also represent public entities seeking to develop or revise regulatory programs.

Master Planned Developments, Subdivisions, Annexation

Our attorneys have obtained approvals for some of the largest master planned developments in the region. We regularly process and achieve preliminary plat approvals for residential subdivisions. CH& attorneys also are well-versed and advise on local annexation proceedings.

Transit-Oriented Development

Our attorneys have demonstrated a strong commitment to shaping the Transit-Oriented Development ("TOD") industry in the Puget Sound Region for decades. We advise high-profile clients on cutting-edge projects that are geographically located close to transit stations and that will shape the region for future generations. Our attorneys have the experience to navigate the many challenges involved with land acquisition and sale, land use permitting, and political challenges. With this knowledge and key relationships, we help identify and initiate new TOD projects, maximize the value of property near future transit stations, and defend against potential eminent domain actions should they arise.

Shoreline Management Act and Critical Areas

Our attorneys have extensive experience advising clients on paths to comply with the Shoreline Management Act and critical area codes while allowing client projects to be developed. Through careful due diligence and feasibility studies, we help secure permits on sites containing shorelines, wetlands, streams, and steep slopes.

Growth Management Act Compliance and Appeals

CH& Land Use attorneys advise clients on Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, and, when necessary, we defend or bring appeals to move projects forward.

Natural Resources (including Forest Practices, Sand, Gravel, and Rock Mining)

Natural Resources companies have a long history in the Pacific Northwest and we are proud to represent them as they face issues in their industries. We advise clients regarding forest management activities, and obtaining permits to mine rock, sand and gravel and manufacture asphalt and concrete. We assist in responses to enforcement actions and help to reach solutions with mine neighbors.

Land Use and Real Estate Litigation and Appeals

When a client faces barriers to development projects, we work hard to successfully negotiate and resolve the dispute, and if needed, litigate matters that cannot be resolved out of court. Our negotiation skills help clients through critical proceedings and appeals before hearing examiners and local courts.