

# A-Z Glossary of Common Land Use Terms

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**Accessory Structure:** A building or structure subordinate to the property's primary use.

**Administrative Decision:** A discretionary decision on a land-use permit, made by city or county staff without a hearing.

**Applicant:** The person who fills out an application for a permit to develop or divide land (see "Property Owner").

**Building Official:** The official who administers the building code and issues building permits.

**Building Permit:** Approval from the local building official to build, alter or place structures on real property.

**Comprehensive Plan:** A document adopted by the local government that provides the long-range land-use planning goals and policies of a city or county. The plan is composed of text and a map.

**Conditional Use:** A use that may be allowed, if it meets prescribed conditions in the zoning ordinance or additional conditions set forth by the decision-making body.

**Complete Application:** An application is deemed complete when all the information necessary to process it is provided to the planning official.

**Decision-Making Body:** The body that has the legal authority to make decisions on requests for development permits and adopt or amend land-use ordinances (i.e., planning commission or city council).

**Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD):** The administrative arm of the Land Conservation and Development Commission.

**Easement:** A right to use, for a specified purpose, a particular piece of land owned by another.

**Evidentiary Hearing:** A hearing in which evidence may be presented.

**Findings:** A statement of the standards, facts and conclusions used in decision making.

**Floodplain:** Low areas adjacent to rivers, lakes, estuaries and oceans that are periodically flooded at intervals of varying frequency.

**Height Requirements:** The maximum distance, from the ground to the highest part of the structure, that is allowed by a zoning ordinance.

**Land-Use Application:** A form on which a person requests a land-use action.



**Land-Use Action:** A final decision or determination made by a decision-making body affecting land use.

**Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC):** A seven-person volunteer commission appointed by the Governor to develop and administer Oregon's statewide planning goals.

**Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA):** An independent, three-person board appointed by the Governor to hear and rule on appeals of land-use decisions made by local governments and special districts. LUBA is the only forum that can hear appeals of local land-use decisions.

**Legislative Decision:** Decisions that create general rules or policies. A legislative matter affects an entire jurisdiction or a broad area, and a wide range of property owners. Making a legislative decision is generally optional.

**Ministerial Decision:** A non-discretionary decision on a proposed use of land, often made by staff. An example is a building permit for a structure that is an outright permitted use in the zone (see "Outright Permitted Use").

**Nonconforming Use:** A land use not permitted by current zoning regulations. The term is frequently used to describe a structure that was legally established but is no longer permitted. An example may be a house constructed prior to zoning regulations in an area that is now designated industrial.

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**Nuisance:** That which substantially interferes with the enjoyment and use of one's land.

**Off-Street Parking:** An area on private property designated for parking motor vehicles.

**Oregon Revised Statutes:** The laws passed by the Oregon Legislature (also referred to as "ORS" and "statutes").

**Outright Permitted Use:** A use permitted by a zoning ordinance that does not require consideration of discretionary approval criteria by a planning official.

**Partition:** An act of partitioning land, or an area or tract of land that is partitioned. "Partition land" means to divide land into two or three parcels within a calendar year.

**Planning Commission:** A group of laypeople appointed by the governing body of a city or county to advise the governing body in matters pertaining to land use and comprehensive planning.

**Pre-Hearing Contact:** Contact between a decision-maker and an applicant or citizen on a matter that is to be heard by the decision-making body.

**Periodic Review:** A formal process by which the local government's land-use planning documents are reviewed to address changing circumstances and ensure compliance with new laws and rules.

**Public Notice:** Information about a land-use decision or a hearing to be held regarding such a decision. Such notice is published in a newspaper, mailed to property owners of adjacent property, or both.

**Quasi-Judicial:** The application of existing regulations to specific properties. The local government is generally required to make a decision on a quasi-judicial matter.

**Residential:** Structures intended for or used as living quarters for human beings (single-family dwellings, apartments, manufactured homes, etc.).

**Setback:** The placement of a building a specified distance away from a property line, other structure or feature.

**Sign Ordinance:** An ordinance that regulates the size, shape, color and elimination of signs.

**Site Plan:** A map showing the land and buildings involved in an application for a development permit.

**Statewide Planning Goals:** The state of Oregon adopted 19 planning goals, 14 of which are applicable to every jurisdiction in the state. The remaining five goals cover the Willamette Greenway (Goal 15) and the coastal area (Goals 16-19).

**Structural Plan:** A plan describing how a building will be constructed.

**Subdivision:** Either an act of subdividing land, or an area or tract of land that is subdivided. "Subdivide land" means to divide land into four or more lots within a calendar year.

**Subsurface Facilities:** Facilities installed beneath the earth's surface, such as septic tanks and electrical, sewer and water lines.

**Urban Growth Boundary (UGB):** An imaginary line around cities separating urban from rural land. Upon establishment, an UGB contains sufficient land to accommodate 20 years of growth for residential, commercial, industrial and public uses.

**Variance:** A decision to lessen or otherwise modify the requirements of a land-use ordinance as it applies to a particular piece of property.

**Zoning Ordinance:** An implementation tool of the comprehensive plan or zoning code. It identifies specific land-use zones and provides the regulations affecting uses within each zone. It includes the processes to administer various types of land-use actions. Sometimes it is combined with the regulations for dividing land.

**Zoning Map:** A map that shows parcel-specific zoning districts.