
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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STAFF REPORT

CRITICAL AREA REVIEW 2

Project No.:	CAO25-005
Description:	A request for a Critical Area Review 2 for the demolition of an existing single-family residence and the construction of a new single-family residence on a lot containing geologically hazardous areas, wetlands, and a watercourse.
Applicant / Owner:	Marianne Stover (Permit & Land Use Services LLC) / Derek & Eileen Cheshire
Site Address:	7615 E Mercer Way, Mercer Island WA 98040 King County Assessor tax parcel number: 302405-9036
Zoning District:	Single Family Residential (R-9.6)
Staff Contact:	Grace Manahan, Code Compliance Planner
Exhibits:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Development Application, received by the City of Mercer Island on March 17, 20252. Revised Development Plan Set, received September 22, 20253. Project Narrative, received March 17, 20254. Geotechnical Engineering Report prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, dated April 22, 2024 and updated November 1, 2024, received March 17, 20255. Memo prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, dated June 12, 2025 and received June 17, 20256. Memo prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, dated August 8, 2025 and received August 8, 20257. Concurrent Review Request Form, received March 17, 20258. Critical Areas Disclosure and Notice on Title, recorded with the King County Recorder's Office on August 27, 2025, under Recorder's File No. 20250827000622.9. Hazard Report, generated by the City of Mercer Island on September 29, 202510. Watercourse Map, generated by the City of Mercer Island on September 29, 2025.11. Determination of Complete Application, dated March 19, 202512. Notice of Application, dated March 24, 202513. City of Mercer Island Review Letters

- 13.1. Review Letter 1, dated April 30, 2025
- 13.2. Review Letter 2, dated July 10, 2025
- 13.3. Review Letter 3, dated August 21, 2025
14. Applicant Response to City Review Letters
 - 14.1. Applicant Response to Review Letter 1, dated June 17, 2025
 - 14.2. Applicant Response to Review Letter 2, dated August 8, 2025
 - 14.3. Applicant Response to Review Letter 3, dated September 19, 2025
15. Public Notice of Decision, dated October 13, 2025

INTRODUCTION

I. Project Description

The applicant has requested approval of a Critical Area Review 2 for the demolition of an existing single-family residence and the construction of a new single-family residence on a lot containing geologically hazardous areas, wetlands, and a watercourse.

The proposal consists of the following components:

1. A request to the demolition of an existing single-family residence and the construction of a new single-family residence on a lot containing geologically hazardous areas, wetlands, and a watercourse subject to the standards of Chapter 19.07 of the Mercer Island City Code (MICC).
2. The watercourse buffers and setback, the wetland buffers and setback, and zoning setbacks were vested under a short subdivision, SUB20-002, within the approved building pad. The purpose of this review is to review potential impacts to geologically hazardous areas.

II. Site Description and Context

1. The proposed activity is to occur at 7615 E Mercer Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040. The subject property is designated Single Family Residential (zoned R-9.6). Adjacent properties are within the R-9.6 zone and contain residential uses. The subject property contains potential slide, steep slope, erosion, and seismic geologically hazardous areas, along with a watercourse and wetlands (**Exhibit 9, 10**).

Findings of Fact & Conclusions of Law

III. Application Procedure

1. The application for a Critical Area Review 2 was received by the City of Mercer Island on March 17, 2025. The application was determined to be complete on March 19, 2025 (**Exhibit 11**).
2. Under MICC 19.15.030, Table A, applications for Critical Area Review 2 must undergo Type III review. Type III reviews require notice of application (discussed below). A notice of decision is issued once the project review is complete.
3. On March 24, 2025, the City of Mercer Island provided public notice of application for this Critical Area Review 2, pursuant to the provisions of MICC 19.15.090 (**Exhibit 12**). The comment period for the public notice period lasted for 30 days, from March 24, 2025 to April 23, 2025. The following methods were used for the public notice of application:
 - 1) A mailing sent to neighboring property owners within 300 feet of the subject parcel.
 - 2) A sign posted on the subject parcel.
 - 3) A posting in the City of Mercer Island's weekly permit bulletin.

4. No public comments were received during the public comment period.

IV. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

The proposal is categorically exempt from SEPA pursuant to WAC 197-11-800(1)(b)(i).

V. Consistency with the Critical Areas Code and Land Development Code

1. MICC 19.07.070 lists requirements for disclosure and notice on title. The applicant shall disclose to the city the presence of critical areas on the development proposal site and any mapped or identifiable critical areas within the distance equal to the largest potential required buffer applicable to the development proposal on the development proposal site.
 - a. The owner of any property containing critical areas and/or buffers on which a development proposal is submitted, except a public right-of-way or the site of a permanent public facility, shall file a notice approved by the city with the records and elections division of King County. The notice shall inform the public of the presence of critical areas, buffers and/or mitigation sites on the property, of the application of the city's critical areas code to the property and that limitations on actions in or affecting such critical areas and/or buffers may exist. The notice shall run with the land in perpetuity.
 - b. The applicant shall submit proof to the city that the notice has been recorded prior to approval of a development proposal for the property or, in the case of subdivisions, short subdivisions, and binding site plans, at or before recording of the final subdivision, short subdivision, or binding site plan.

Staff Analysis: A critical areas Disclosure and Notice on Title has been recorded with the King County Recorder's on August 27, 2025, under Recorder's File No. 20250827000622. The Notice informs the public of the presence of critical areas and proposed mitigation due to the proposed development; therefore, this requirement is met.

2. MICC 19.07.090 describes the purpose and procedures by which the city will review and authorize development and verify consistency with this chapter.
 - a. Critical Area Review 2. The purpose of a critical area review 2 is to review critical area studies and mitigation plans in support of proposed buffer averaging and reduction of wetland and watercourse buffers.
 - b. Review timing and sequence.
 - A. When development and/or activity within a wetland, watercourse, fish and wildlife habitat conservation area or buffer associated with these critical area types is proposed, a critical area review 2 is required to be reviewed and approved prior to construction authorization.
 - B. When development and/or activity is proposed on a site containing only geologically hazardous areas, an application has the option of either:
 - i. Applying for a critical area review 2 in advance of construction permits, using the procedures required for a Type III land use review; or
 - ii. Requesting consolidation of the review of geologically hazardous areas together with construction permit review.
 - C. When development and/or activity is proposed on a site containing geologically hazardous areas and on or more of the critical area types listed in subsection (B)(2)(a) of this section or the associated buffer of one of those critical areas, a critical area review 2 reviewing all

critical areas is required to be reviewed and approved prior to construction authorization, using the procedures required for a Type III land use review.

Staff Analysis: The applicant submitted a Concurrent Review Request Form (**Exhibit 7**) requesting consolidation of the review of geologically hazardous areas together with construction permit review under Building Permit No. 2503-130.

3. MICC 19.07.100 lists requirements for mitigation sequencing. An applicant for a development proposal or activity shall implement the following sequential measures, listed below in order of preference, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to environmentally critical areas and associated buffers. Applicants shall document how each measure has been addressed before considering and incorporating the next measure in the sequence:
 - a. Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action. The applicant shall consider reasonable, affirmative steps and make best efforts to avoid critical area impacts. However, avoidance shall not be construed to mean mandatory withdrawal or denial of the development proposal or activity if the proposal or activity is an allowed, permitted, or conditional use in this title. In determining the extent to which the proposal should be redesigned to avoid the impact, the code official may consider the purpose, effectiveness, engineering feasibility, commercial availability of technology, best management practices, safety and cost of the proposal and identified changes to the proposal. Development proposals should seek to avoid, minimize and mitigate overall impacts based on the functions and values of all of the relevant critical areas and based on the recommendations of a critical area study. If impacts cannot be avoided through redesign, use of a setback deviation pursuant to section 19.06.110(C), or because of site conditions or project requirements, the applicant shall then proceed with the sequence of steps in subsections B through E of this section;
 - b. Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation, using a setback deviation pursuant to section 19.06.110(C), using appropriate technology, or by taking affirmative steps to avoid or reduce impacts;
 - c. Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
 - d. Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action;
 - e. Compensating for the impact by replacing, enhancing, or providing substitute resources or environments; and/or
 - f. Monitoring the impact and taking appropriate corrective measures to maintain the integrity of compensating measures.

Staff Analysis: The applicant provided a Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) which addresses mitigation sequencing for the proposed development and found that the proposed work will not adversely impact the critical areas present on the project site and the proposed developments will mitigate the impact of the critical area on the project site and adjacent properties. The subject site is fully encumbered with critical areas (**Exhibit 9, 10**) so avoiding impact all together is not an option. The impact is minimized, and the proposed development takes affirmative steps to avoid impacts; therefore, mitigation sequencing has been incorporated, and this requirement is met.

4. MICC 19.07.110 lists requirements for a critical area study. A critical area study is required when a development proposal will result in an alteration to one or more critical area buffers or when

required to determine the potential impact to a critical area. The critical area study may be waived or modified if the applicant demonstrates that the development proposal will not have an impact on the critical area or its buffer in a manner contrary to the purposes and requirements of this chapter.

Staff Analysis: The applicant provided a Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) which meets the criteria for a critical area study; therefore, this requirement is met for the alteration to one or more critical areas.

5. MICC 19.07.160 lists standards for development on sites containing geologically hazardous areas.

A. Geologically hazardous areas are lands that are susceptible to erosion, landslides, seismic events, or other factors as identified by WAC 365-190-120. These areas may not be suited for development activities because they may pose a threat to public health and safety. Areas susceptible to one or more of the following types of hazards shall be designated as geologically hazardous areas: landslide hazard areas, seismic hazard areas, and erosion hazard areas.

Staff Analysis: The subject site contains erosion, seismic, steep slope and potential slide hazard areas (**Exhibit 9**).

B. Alteration within geologically hazardous areas or associated buffers is required to meet the standards in this section, unless the scope of work is exempt pursuant to section 19.07.120, exemptions, or a critical area review 1 approval has been obtained pursuant to section 19.07.090(A).

1. When an alteration within a landslide hazard area, seismic hazard area or buffer associated with those hazards is proposed, the applicant must submit a critical area study concluding that the proposal can effectively mitigate risks of the hazard. The study shall recommend appropriate design and development measures to mitigate such hazards. The code official may waive the requirement for a critical area study and the requirements of subsections (B)(2) and (B)(3) of this section when he or she determines that the proposed development is minor in nature and will not increase the risk of landslide, erosion, or harm from seismic activity, or that the development site does not meet the definition of a geologically hazardous area.

Staff Analysis: The Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) found that, provided the recommendations presented in the report and addendum are followed during project design and construction, the proposal would not result in adverse impacts to critical areas on the site or neighboring properties.

2. Alteration of landslide hazard areas and seismic hazard areas and associated buffers may occur if the critical area study documents find that the proposed alteration:

- a. Will not adversely impact other critical areas;
- b. Will not adversely impact the subject property or adjacent properties;
- c. Will mitigate impacts to the geologically hazardous area consistent with best available science to the maximum extent reasonably possible such that the site is determined to be safe; and
- d. Includes the landscaping of all disturbed areas outside of building footprints and installation of hardscape prior to final inspection.

Staff Analysis: The Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) states that provided the recommendations in the report are followed, the planned development will not adversely impact the stability of the neighboring properties or result in a need for increased critical area buffers on those adjacent properties. The proposed development includes a landscaping plan that includes the landscaping of all disturbed areas outside of the building footprints and installation of hardscape, required prior to final inspection, as conditioned (**Exhibit 2, Sheets L2.1 and L2.2**).

3. Alteration of landslide hazard areas, seismic hazard areas and associated buffers may occur if the conditions listed in subsection (B)(2) of this section are satisfied and the geotechnical professional provides a statement of risk matching one of the following:
 - a. An evaluation of site-specific subsurface conditions demonstrates that the proposed development is not located in a landslide hazard area or seismic hazard area;
 - b. The landslide hazard area or seismic hazard area will be modified or the development has been designed so that the risk to the site and adjacent property is eliminated or mitigated such that the site is determined to be safe;
 - c. Construction practices are proposed for the alteration that would render the development as safe as if it were not located in a geologically hazardous area and do not adversely impact adjacent properties; or
 - d. The development is so minor as not to pose a threat to the public health, safety and welfare.

Staff Analysis: The Geotechnical Memo prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC (**Exhibit 6**) includes the following statement of risk, matching statement (b) above:

“The landslide hazard area or seismic hazard area will be modified or the development has been designed so that the risk to the site and adjacent property is eliminated or mitigated such that the site is determined to be safe”

- C. Development is allowed within landslide hazard areas and associated buffers, when the following standards are met:
 1. A critical area study shall be required for any alteration of a landslide hazard area or associated buffer;
 2. Buffers shall be applied as follows. When more than one condition applies to a site, the largest buffer shall be applied:
 - a. Buffer widths shall be equal to the height of a steep slope, but not more than 75 feet, and applied to the top and toe of slopes;
 - b. Shallow landslide hazard areas shall have minimum 25-foot buffers applied in all directions; and
 - c. Deep-seated landslide hazard areas shall have 75-foot buffers applied in all directions.

Staff Analysis: The applicant submitted a Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) for the alteration of the landslide hazard area which found that the recommendations in the report will prevent the planned development from

adversely impacting the stability of the neighboring properties. It was also found that no buffers are necessary to mitigate the mapped landslide area.

D. When development is proposed within a seismic hazard area:

1. A critical area study shall be required and shall include an evaluation by a qualified professional for seismic engineering and design, a determination of the magnitude of seismic settling that could occur during a seismic event, and a demonstration that the risk associated with the proposed alteration is within acceptable limits or that appropriate construction methods are provided to mitigate the risk of seismic settlement such that there will be no significant impact to life, health, safety, and property.
2. Seismic hazard areas shall be identified by a qualified professional who references and interprets information in the U.S. Geological Survey Active Faults Database, performs on-site evaluations, or applies other techniques according to best available science.
3. When development is proposed on a site with an active fault, the follow provisions shall apply:
 - a. A 50-foot minimum buffer shall be applied from latest Quaternary, Holocene, or historical fault rupture traces as identified by the United States Geological Survey or Washington Geological Survey map databases or by site investigations by licensed geologic professionals with specialized knowledge of fault trenching studies; or
 - b. Mitigation sequencing shall be incorporated into the development proposal as recommended based on geotechnical analysis by a qualified professional to prevent increased risk of harm to life and/or property.

Staff Analysis: The Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) and Memo prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC (**Exhibit 6**) found that the site susceptibility to liquefaction may be considered low to moderate due to the absence of a uniformly established shallow groundwater table and the relatively dense, fine-grained characteristics of the native soils. It was also found that the new construction will essentially replace the same footprint area as the existing structure with a similar height; therefore, no significant increase in loading is expected and that no further measures are needed to mitigate the mapped seismic hazard.

E. When development is proposed within an erosion hazard area:

1. All development proposals shall demonstrate compliance with chapter 15.09, storm water management program.
2. No development or activity within an erosion hazard area may create a net increase in geological instability on or off site.

Staff Analysis: The critical area review is occurring concurrently with review of the associated construction permit under Building Permit No. 2503-130. As conditioned, the proposed development is required to obtain all related permits. The construction permit has been reviewed and approved by Ruji Ding, Senior Development Engineer, for compliance with chapter 15.09, storm water management program. The Geotechnical Engineering Study prepared by Earth Solutions NW, LLC, Inc. (**Exhibit 4**) finds that the risk of erosion at the site resulting from the proposed construction is very low, provided that the typical erosion

measures outlined in Geotechnical Engineering Study (**Exhibit 4, Page 8**) are implemented during construction; therefore, this requirement is met.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. The project proposal shall be in substantial conformance with **Exhibit 2** and all applicable development standards contained within Mercer Island City Code (MICC) Chapter 19.07.
2. The applicant is responsible for documenting any required changes in the project proposal due to conditions imposed by any applicable local, state and federal government agencies.
3. Any changes to the design as a result of the review of the associated building permit may require a new post-design memorandum prepared by the geotechnical professional confirming that the proposed development is consistent with the design recommendations in the Geotechnical Engineering Report (**Exhibit 4**) to be submitted.
4. Construction or substantial progress toward construction of a development for which a permit has been granted must be undertaken within three years after the approval of the permit or the permit shall terminate. The code official shall determine if substantial progress has been made.
5. Landscaping of all disturbed areas outside of building footprints and installation of hardscape consistent with the landscaping plan in **Exhibit 2, Sheets L2.1 and L2.2**, or as revised under the associated building permit, is required prior to final inspection of the associated building permit.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATION COMPLIANCE – DISCLOSURE

1. The applicant is responsible for obtaining any required permits or approvals from the appropriate Local, State, and Federal Agencies.
2. All required permits must be obtained prior to the commencement of construction.

DECISION

Based upon the above-noted Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Critical Area Review 2 application **CAO25-005**, as depicted in **Exhibit 2**, is hereby **APPROVED**. This decision is final, unless appealed in writing consistent with adopted appeal procedures, MICC 19.15.130(A), and all other applicable appeal regulations.

Approved this 13th day of October, 2025

Grace Manahan

Grace Manahan
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Community Planning & Development
City of Mercer Island