Pierce County Flood Control Zone District

Comprehensive Plan of Development Guidance to Project Sponsors

Version February 18, 2026

Introduction

The Pierce County Flood Control Zone District (the District) provides funding for acquisition, planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of flood control improvements in Pierce County (the County). Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 86.15.140 sets forth the process by which flood control zone districts approve an annual budget.

The District's Comprehensive Plan of Development (District Plan) sets the District's goals and objectives and identifies regional policies, programs, and projects the District could fund.

Roles related to the District Plan include:

- The Board of Supervisors (the Board) and the Executive Committee, composed of Pierce County Council members, govern the District. They are responsible for approving the District Plan.
- The District Executive Director supports the deliberations of the Board and the Executive Committee. The Executive Director also provides direction to the District Administrator on behalf of the Board.
- District staff, including the District Administrator, are designated personnel within Pierce County's Department of Planning & Public Works who administer the District's approved projects and programs. They provide the technical work for the District Plan content, including proposed adjustments, amendments, and updates.
- The District Advisory Committee (the Advisory Committee) provides expert policy advice to the Board on regional flood protection issues. Among other duties, the Advisory Committee reviews adjustments to the District Plan and makes recommendations to the Board. The Advisory Committee also performs any additional review and/or recommendation functions as directed by the Board (Pierce County Code 11.06.030).
- Project sponsors are cities and towns, unincorporated Pierce County, and the Port of Tacoma that submit projects for inclusion in the District Plan and request funding assistance from the District for flood control improvements.

This guidance document is intended to assist project sponsors that want to propose a new project for consideration by the Board or request adjustments, amendments, or updates to the District Plan. The sections below describe the eligibility and procedures for adjusting, amending, and updating the District Plan.

Prerequisites for Capital Improvement Program

Projects must be included within the District Plan as (1) an identified project with an initial project ranking number or (2) a project or programmatic action that addresses an identified problem (see approved District Plan) to be considered for inclusion in the annual budget as part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). See the separate guidance document titled Annual Budget and Capital Improvement Program Processes for additional details.

Adjustments to the Comprehensive Plan of Development

An adjustment is a change to a project within the District Plan that can occur at any time and requires approval from the District Administrator. Some changes, such as a change in the method of construction, would not require an adjustment. As an example, if the District Plan identifies a floodwall, how the floodwall is constructed is up to the jurisdiction and regulatory entities. Examples of changes that would require and be eligible for an adjustment include:

- The adjustment does not increase the impact beyond what was approved in the District Plan and its accompanying environmental documents.
- The adjustment increases or decreases the size of a proposed project by 10% or less.
- The adjustment does not change the location or description of the project from what was identified within the District Plan.
- The adjustment corrects typographical errors.

Process for Project Sponsors Requesting Adjustments

To request an adjustment, a project sponsor may contact the District Administrator at any time. Requested adjustments will be noted and tracked by District staff. Approval of adjustments to the District Plan will be considered with the next available amendment cycle.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan of Development and Its Environmental Documents

An amendment is a change to the District Plan that could occur at any time and would require Board approval. Amendments to the District Plan and its environmental documents are limited in size and scope and are intended to:

- Correct oversights;
- Update project description and costs;
- Remove a project;
- Update or supplement existing environmental documents;
- Add or adjust proposed solutions to flood problems identified in the District Plan;
- Add or adjust proposed solutions identified in special studies occurring after the initial proposal;

- Reduce the scope and/or flood and/or habitat benefit by 10% or more; or
- Adjust the description or location of the project from what was identified within the District Plan.

Process for Project Sponsors Requesting Amendments

First Steps:

A request for an amendment to the District Plan will be submitted to the Board for its review and consideration. To begin the process, a project sponsor will need to submit a request and provide evidence of legislative action by the sponsor community to initiate the amendment process.

Timeline:

Requests for amendments to the District Plan should be submitted to the District Administrator in writing. The District Administrator will submit requests to the Board for amendments to the District Plan within 30 days of receipt. The community and the Board must be in agreement for the process to proceed.

Once the Board approves moving forward with the amendment, the project sponsor will work with the District Administrator to identify the information necessary to include in the amendment. Information will be provided to District staff who will prepare the amendment.

The District Administrator will prepare a recommendation for each amendment request, including facts and findings and will present proposed amendment language to the Advisory Committee for its review and recommendation. Recommendations on the proposal will be presented to the Executive Committee for its review and recommendation. The recommended amendments will be forwarded to the Board for its approval at the next Board meeting.

Cost:

In most cases, the cost of amending the District Plan and its environmental documents will be borne by the project sponsor.

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan of Development and Its Environmental Documents

The District is committed to keeping the District Plan and its environmental documents current with the needs of the communities it serves. Public participation and outreach will be implemented as part of District Plan updates. The District will ensure that the District Plan complies with the State Environmental Policy Act.

Updating the District Plan is the only method to add a project that does not address a problem identified in the adopted District Plan. Review of new capital projects to determine project ranking will be the responsibility of the District Administrator, who will use the ranking criteria in the District Plan.

The District Plan will be updated at least every 10 years, and the update is subject to Board approval. The planning and public outreach process for these scheduled updates will typically begin around the seventh year of each 10-year period to ensure that an updated District Plan is adopted prior to the beginning of the next 10-year phase.

Given the similar subject matter between the District Plan and Pierce County's Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan, the timing for updates to the District Plan may be synchronized to the County's update.

Process for Project Sponsors Requesting an Update

The Board may choose to start an off-cycle update of the District Plan. A request for an update of the District Plan will be submitted to the Board for its review and consideration.

Legislative action by the requesting community will be required to initiate the process. The community and the Board must be in agreement for the process to proceed.

Coordinating with the District

You are encouraged to contact the District to discuss project ideas prior to submitting a request. For questions or to discuss possible projects, contact the District Administrator, L. Brandon Smith, PE, at 253-798-3154 or pcfczd@co.pierce.wa.us. Requests may also be sent by U.S. Postal Service to:

L. Brandon Smith
District Administrator
Pierce County Flood Control Zone District
2702 South 42nd Street, Suite 201
Tacoma, WA 98409-7322

Definitions

Adjustment: A change to a project within the Comprehensive Plan of Development that can occur at any time and can be approved by the District Administrator.

Amendment: A change to the Comprehensive Plan of Development that could occur at any time and would require Board approval.

Capital Program (Capital Improvement Program): A multiyear financial plan that:

- Lists and describes capital projects that a project sponsor plans to undertake, and
- Indicates how projects will be funded.

Comprehensive Plan of Development (District Plan): A plan that:

- Sets the District's goals and objectives, and
- Identifies regional policies, programs, and projects the District could fund.

Update: A scheduled change on a regular cycle (at least every 10 years) to the Comprehensive Plan of Development that requires Board approval.