



Zoning Requirements Checklist

Before you purchase house plans or meet with a building designer, make sure you have answers to the following zoning and planning questions. If zoning laws haven't changed, you should be able to replicate the same house you lost.

General Zoning Questions



What is your property's zoning designation? (e.g., R-1 single-family, R-2 duplex, mixed-use)



What are the required setbacks? (front, rear, and side yard distances from property lines)



What is the maximum building height? (some areas restrict height to preserve views or neighborhood character)



Are there limits on lot coverage or floor area ratio (FAR)?



How many parking spaces are required? (including garages or driveways)



Are there minimum open space or landscaping rules? (tree removal, planting requirements, view protections)



Do easements, rights-of-way, or utility lines restrict where you can build?



Is your property in a special hazard zone with added design rules? (flood, wind/tornado, fire hazard, seismic)

Special Considerations by Hazard Type

WILDFIRE

- ☒ Is your home in a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)? Fire-resistant siding, Class A roofs, ember-proof vents, and defensible space may be required.
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- ☒ In California: Has your jurisdiction adopted Chapter 7A of the Building Code? (Sets wildfire-specific construction standards.)
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EARTHQUAKE

- ☒ Is your property near a fault line or in a seismic hazard zone?
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Requirements may include engineered foundations, slab reinforcement, bracing, and geotechnical reports.

WIND & STORM

- ☒ Is your area subject to high winds, hurricanes, or tornadoes?
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Compliance may include FEMA/ICC codes requiring impact-resistant windows, wind-rated garage doors, reinforced roofs, and hurricane straps.

FLOODS

- ☒ Is your property in a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)?
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May require elevated structures, flood vents, breakaway walls, or specific foundation types.

After a Disaster

Has your area been rezoned after the disaster? Local governments sometimes revise ordinances for safety, such as:

- Wider streets for emergency access
- Density limits in hazard-prone areas

Stay informed about local planning changes — and voice concerns early if new rules could negatively affect your rebuild.