



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services
WIND TURBINES – CUSTOMER FAQs
ZONING DIVISION

On May 15, 2013, the Board of Supervisors approved amendments to the Zoning Ordinance related to wind turbines.

Q. What are the changes?

A. Previously, the Zoning Ordinance identified three categories (small, medium, large) of use types related to wind turbines. Each category was regulated on a tiered scale, based primarily on the blade swept area of the wind turbine. The new two tier (small, large) framework replaces the existing classification system with a focus on energy output. Turbines with a rated capacity up to 50 kilowatts would fall under the “small wind turbine” tier and be subject to Zoning Verification Permit approval. Turbines with a rated capacity greater than 50 kilowatts would fall under the “large wind turbine” tier and would be allowed with approval of a Major Use Permit.

Streamlining provisions have been introduced under the small wind turbine tier, to increase the number of small turbines allowed using a Zoning Verification Permit process and increase the height limits for turbines sited on lots less than five acres in size. As part of the increased allowance, certain design and siting criteria provisions have been introduced to ensure that small turbines are designed and sited in a safe and responsible manner.

The large wind turbine tier continues to allow the development of large wind turbines as a Major Impact and Utilities Use type with approval of a Major Use Permit. Ordinance provisions have been updated or introduced to be consistent with current wind turbine technologies. These new provisions allow increases with regard to the height and capacity of large turbines when compared to existing regulations. A low frequency noise provision has also been introduced to address noise impacts associated with allowing larger turbines. Other key provisions include introducing a Wind Resources Map to specify areas within the County where large turbine development is permissible based on wind resources data, and introducing new major use permit findings specific for large turbine projects.

Q. How do I apply for a small turbine?

A. Installation of a small wind turbine requires approval of a Building Permit to ensure the turbine meets current Uniform Building Code and approval of a Zoning Verification Permit to ensure the turbine complies with County Zoning regulations. Both permits may be submitted and processed concurrently. Applicants should contact PDS Building at (858) 595-5920 or toll free at (888) 336-7553 for Building Code standards and requirements. Questions regarding Zoning requirements may be directed to PDS Zoning at (858) 565-5981.

Please note that small wind turbines proposed on properties located within designated Pre-Approved Mitigation Area of the Multiple Species Conservation program require approval of an Administrative Permit. Information concerning Administrative Permit requirements may be found at [Wind Turbine Project - Small](#).

Q. How do I apply for a large turbine?

A. Large wind turbines are classified as Major Impact and Utilities Use type and require approval of a Major Use Permit. A major-pre-application conference is required to process a Major Use Permit application. Additional information concerning the Major Use Permit process can be obtained from the [Major Use Permit Applicant's Guide](#) (PDS-313) or by contacting PDS Zoning at (858) 565-5981.



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Continued

Q. Where can I obtain a copy the Zoning Ordinance requirements related to wind turbines?

A. You may view a copy of the zoning regulations related to [small turbines](#) and/or [large turbines](#).

Related Links:

[Building Permit Application](#)

[Zoning Verification Permit Application – Small Wind Turbine Project](#)

[Minimum Plot Plan Information](#)

[Permit Coversheet – Small Wind Turbines](#)

[Major Use Permit Applicant's Guide](#)

[Small Wind Turbine Zoning Ordinance](#)

[Large Wind Turbine Zoning Ordinance](#)