



Long Subdivisions

Discretionary Permits

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What is a long plat (subdivision)?

A long plat is the subdivision of a parcel of land into five or more lots.

When do I need a long plat permit?

A conditional use is required when an applicant wishes to:

- Create five or more lots on a parcel of land (long plat),
- Re-divide a short plat before five years have elapsed since the land was short-platted, or
- Divide a reserve tract on a short plat.

Projects such as condominiums, industrial parks, and mobile home parks are divided under a different process (see Binding Site Plan handout #E₁).

Do I need an appointment for submittal?

Yes, you will need to schedule an appointment to obtain the necessary forms. The process is two-fold: first a preliminary plat and later a final plat.

At the first appointment, the Land Use staff will review the application forms with you and will explain both the preliminary plat and final plat processes, including fees, timelines, and types of review. Following that appointment, you will be required to complete the application and obtain any additional documentation such as the deed; easement agreement; survey; plans;

names, addresses and parcel numbers of adjoining property owners; written verification of public water and sewer or septic availability; fire and school approvals; and any other information required as part of the application submittal. In addition, you will schedule a second appointment for the actual submittal.

What information do I need to provide at the first appointment?

- Tax parcel number
- Vicinity map showing the size, shape, and dimensions of the property as well as abutting access roads

What is the review process for my project?

Following submission of the application packet and payment of the required fees, PDS staff will review the application and mail you a "Determination of Completeness" letter, at which time the review period begins. The entire file is copied and the originals are routed to the Hearing Examiner's Administrator, who will eventually schedule the hearing. Public notices are sent to the Bellingham Herald and to all persons owning property within 300 feet (if parcel is located in an Urban Growth Area) or 1000 feet (if parcel is located outside of an Urban Growth Area) from the boundaries of the subject site.

An "Agency Distribution" is also sent to all applicable agencies, including Health, Fire,

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES HANDOUT SERIES

Engineering, and other applicable agencies asking for their comments and conditions of approval. During that time, the Critical Areas Administrator and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Official also review the file. A Technical Review Committee (TRC) Meeting is held following the SEPA determination, at which time the proposal and all required conditions are discussed with the applicant and his or her engineer. Following the TRC meeting, the Senior Land Use Specialist drafts a staff report on behalf of the TRC with a recommendation of either approval or denial. A copy of the report is forwarded to the applicant, the applicant's engineer, and the Hearing Examiner.

When and where is the public hearing held?

Public hearings are currently held in the Council Chambers in the Whatcom County Courthouse at 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham. The Hearing Examiner's Office will notify you in writing of the date and time of the hearing, and they will also provide you with posting notices to be placed on the property in a location visible to public roads. You or your agent are required to attend the public hearing.

When can I sell the lots?

You cannot advertise lots for sale until the final approval has been completed and a mylar has been recorded with the Whatcom County Auditor.

Will my preliminary long plat expire?

If the final plat is not submitted within the five-year period following preliminary plat approval, the plat will expire.

Can I sell the plat to a new owner?

Yes. However, the new owner will be held to the same conditions and the same timelines as the original applicant.

Can long plats be amended?

There are two types of amendments:

- A major amendment is one in which new lots are created or the amendment is expected to create impacts to other lots owners or off-site property owners. A major amendment requires a new hearing.
- A minor amendment is one in which no new lots are created and the amendment is not expected to create any impacts to other lots in the division or off-site. Minor amendments are approved by the TRC and do not require a new hearing.

Fees

Please refer to the current Whatcom County Unified Fee Schedule.

Information

Due to the administrative complexity of these regulations, it is usually best to visit with PDS staff or contact a Planner to answer any additional questions.

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