



Short Plats

Short Subdivision Team

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What is a short plat?

A short plat is a division of land into four (4) or fewer lots. If you want to divide your property into more than four lots, see the Long Subdivision handout. (Handout E₂)

Why do I have to do a short plat?

By state law, anyone dividing property for the purpose of sale, lease, or transfer must obtain approval from the city or county with jurisdiction over the land. This approval may come in the form of a “short subdivision” or “short plat.”

What parcels are eligible for a short plat?

In order for a short plat to be approved, the parcel must meet all of the following criteria:

- Adequate water supply, and sewage disposal capability for each lot;
- Safe and legal vehicular access to each lot;
- Building sites outside of wetland, stream, and shoreline buffers;
- A wetland delineation if you have wetlands on your property;
- Zoning;
- Lot of Record Status;
- Critical Areas, Geological Hazards, and Flood Review; and

- A survey depicting the new lots, accesses, and quite possibly many other things depending on where your property is located.

How does the short plat process work?

An application must be submitted to the Planning and Development Services Land Use Division. The Whatcom County subdivision team will review the permit for zoning, and subdivision compliance. The permit will then be reviewed by the Whatcom County Health Department for water & sewer/septic review, Whatcom County Engineering for road review, Washington State Department of Transportation (if your access is from a state highway), and the appropriate city if you are in an Urban Growth Area. There is also a possibility of additional reviews (i.e. critical areas, shorelines, geological hazards, etc.)

PDS will schedule a Technical Review Committee meeting, which you should attend. It is also helpful if you bring your surveyor. At the meeting, you will be issued either a preliminary approval or a “Notice of Additional Requirements,” which means PDS needs more information to determine if the short plat is viable.

Final approval

Once you receive preliminary approval, you have five years to submit the original drawing of the short plat. If the applicant fails to submit the original drawing within these time frames, the county shall proceed to deny final approval of the short plat.

Along with the original drawings, the applicant shall submit a current title report, issued no more than 60 days prior to the director signing the original drawing. After obtaining preliminary approval, you are permitted to build roads, drill wells (with Health Approval), and proceed with wetland mitigation if your access or building sites encroach on a wetland buffer.

Once completed, you submit a final MYLAR to be signed by the Director of Planning and Development Services. It is then filed with the County Auditor for record. At that time the short plat is formally approved, and the lots may be

sold. You are not permitted to list the property for sale until the MYLAR map has been filed.

Fees

Please refer to the current Whatcom County Unified Fee Schedule.

Information

Short Plat methods are varied and complex. For a comprehensive application process for your individual lot please contact the Short Subdivision Team at the subdivision counter between 8:30 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday.

Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98226 USA
E-mail: pds@co.whatcom.wa.us

Staff Contact: Short Subdivision Team
Phone: (360) 676-6907