



Snohomish County
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This Assistance Bulletin only applies to property within unincorporated Snohomish County and does not apply to property within incorporated city limits.

Assistance Bulletin

Short Subdivision (Short Plat) Approval

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Keyword: Assistance Bulletins

Q: What is a Short Subdivision?

A: A short subdivision (or short plat) is the division of property to create up to four individual lots (in rural areas) or up to nine lots (in Urban Growth Areas, or UGAs). To determine if your property lies within a UGA, reference the official County zoning map.

Q: Do I need to get the County's approval for a Short Subdivision?

A: Yes, if any lot is going to be smaller than 80 acres in size. It is illegal to convey, sell, offer for sale, lease, rent or give away any portion of an existing parcel of land in unincorporated Snohomish County without first getting approval of a Short Plat Subdivision, unless all parcels involved are 80 acres or larger.

Q: Can I subdivide my property into more than four lots (in rural areas) or into more than nine lots (in a UGA)?

A: Yes. But, if you wish to create more than four lots in rural areas or more than nine lots in a UGA, a Formal Subdivision (Formal Plat) is required, and the Short Subdivision process can not be used. A Formal Plat requires a public hearing and approval by the County Hearing Examiner, while a Short Plat is usually reviewed and approved administratively by PDS.

Q: What is the Short Plan approval process?

A: Short Plats are received, processed and approved in accordance with the requirements of state and county code requirements. The state law governing Short Subdivisions is RCW 58.17, which may be obtained through the Public or County Law Libraries or online at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/>. Chapter 30.41B is the county law governing the Short Plat process, and copies may be obtained from the Planning & Development Services Customer Service Center or online at www.snohomishcountywa.gov, County Code Title 30.

Q: What steps are involved in the Short Plat process?

A: The following steps must be followed:

- Present the PDS Permit & Zoning Assistance counter with your Assessor's Tax Account number to find out the zoning of your property and whether there are restrictions applicable to your property that may limit or prohibit your ability to subdivide.

This bulletin is intended only as an information guide. The information may not be complete and is subject to change. For complete legal information, refer to Snohomish County Code.

- Contact a professional land surveyor to discuss the proposal and work up a preliminary design. Both preliminary and final Short Plats must be prepared by a licensed professional surveyor. Many professional surveying firms also provide full professional services and can assist applicants through the Short Plat process.
- If there are unusual circumstances or potential problems identified by your surveyor, you may wish to schedule a pre-application meeting with staff in the PDS Land Use Division to discuss your specific project and the Short Subdivision process. This pre-application meeting is optional.
- Schedule a pre-submittal conference with the Department of Public Works (425) 388-6440 to discuss and confirm your obligations pursuant to the county road impact mitigation ordinance (Chapter 30.66B) and road design requirements if a private road is proposed.
- Schedule a pre-submittal conference with the County Assessor at (425) 388-3540 or (425) 388-3706 to ascertain your tax liabilities when your property is in a “special use” classification (i.e., open space or designated forest land).
- Complete the Short Plat application package and submit the application to the PDS Land Use Coordinator by appointment. Instructions for preparing the Short Plat application package, including submittal requirements, are attached to the application form.
- The preliminary Short Plat is processed and reviewed, then a determination is made by the Land Use Division. A determination that the application is complete is made within 30 days of submittal. Copies are sent to reviewing agencies for comments and public notice is given. PDS determines whether to approve with conditions, deny, deny without prejudice, or forward the application with a recommendation to the Hearing Examiner.
- Respond to the PDS determination. If the application is denied without prejudice, you must make corrections and/or submit the information necessary for the Short Plat to be approved within six months of decision. If you are granted preliminary approval, you are given a specific set of conditions to satisfy within a five-year period, and you proceed to satisfy those conditions. If the application is denied, this ends the process unless this determination is appealed. If your application is one of the few that may be referred to the Hearing Examiner, you await notice and prepare for the public hearing.
- Once conditions for approval have been satisfied and the necessary certifications, inspection reports and final documentation has been obtained, the final Short Plat is submitted to PDS for processing. A decision of approval or need for correction is made within 30 days. Upon approval, the Short Plat is recorded with the Auditor and the process ends.

Q: How long does the whole process take?

A: The time necessary to complete the entire Short Plat process depends upon the time required for the applicant to submit a complete, accurate application, satisfy the conditions of approval, and submit a complete application for final approval.

Environmental review is required for Short Plats which are redivisions of existing Short Plat lots, contain lands covered by water, require grading in excess of 500 cubic yards, or would require a Forest Practices Conversion permit (see Bulletin#93).

If your property contains steep slopes, stream corridors, water bodies or wetlands, additional review will probably be required in accordance with the County Drainage Requirements (Chapter 30.63A) and Critical Areas Regulations (Chapters 30.62A, 30.62B and 30.62C). This will likely require additional submittal requirements and longer processing timelines.

Q: How do I get more information regarding specific design requirements, construction plan approvals and fees?

A: Refer to the Short Plat submittal instructions, fee schedule and Chapter 30.41B.
