



# Short Subdivision FAQ

## **What is a Short Subdivision?**

Short subdivisions (also known as short plats) are defined as a subdivision of land into 2, 3, or 4 lots, any one of which is less than 5 acres in area. Short plats are reviewed and approved by the Planning Division staff after being referred to agencies affected by the proposal for their comments. Short plats require potable water, sewage disposal, survey, legal access, and compliance with County environmental regulations.

## **What is Preliminary Approval?**

The Preliminary Approval letter is the staff report that discusses the Department's findings regarding your proposed subdivision, and identifies conditions that must be completed before final subdivision approval.

## **What is a Final Plat?**

Generally speaking, a plat is a map that describes a subdivision. The Final Plat is the final, correct map identifying the property being subdivided, and contains all the required surveyor information identified in your preliminary approval. Once the Final Plat is approved, signed, and recorded, the subdivision is complete and the lots may be sold or transferred.

## **What are Bluelines? And what is a Mylar?**

Bluelines is a term used to describe the paper review copy of the Final Plat. Typically, bluelines are submitted for review along with the final subdivision approval packet and reviewed for completeness and correctness. Any necessary corrections are identified on the bluelines copy of the final plat and returned to the surveyor for corrections. Once the final plat is deemed complete and correct, the surveyor will produce the final Mylar. The Mylar is printed on a semi-transparent sheet of polyester film and is the copy that will be signed and recorded.

## **What is the Final Subdivision application packet?**

Once all conditions of approval are completed and a blueline copy of the final plat has been obtained from your surveyor, you are ready to submit the Final Subdivision application packet. This packet will include all the necessary documentation for the Planning Department to review and complete your short subdivision. A checklist is provided with the Preliminary Approval letter to aid you in identifying whether you have met all required conditions. Please note, that bluelines, soils tests, and other documentation will not be accepted until all conditions of approval are met and submitted as part of this packet.

## **When can I sell my new lots?**

Only when the subdivision has been completed and the final plat recorded can a lot be sold or transferred. Lots may be advertised for sale before the subdivision is complete, but is **strongly** discouraged due to the speculative nature of land developing and subdividing. Please be aware that complications can arise during the process, and may not correspond with the anticipated availability dates for the new lots or contractual obligations to prospective buyers.

## **Do I need to drill a well for my Short Subdivision?**

All lots within a short subdivision require a source of potable water. If the property has a well, it is possible to share an existing well with other lots in your subdivision. If the property does not have a well, or you are unwilling/unable to share an existing well, then a new well will need to be drilled. For each lot using a well for potable water, a Water Availability Certificate will be required. It is important to note that even when there is an existing home using an existing well, it may not have a Water Availability Certificate, and one will need to be obtained using the same application process as a new well. Water Availability requirements and application packets can be picked up at our front counter, visiting our website, or contacting the Department of Building and Planning.

## **Do I need to build a private road?**

If you are subdividing off an existing private road, or more than 2 lots will be utilizing a single access point from a County road, then you will be required to construct or upgrade that access to County private road standards. All private road construction must be completed before the subdivision can be recorded. These requirements are outlined in CCC 11.36.070, and can be viewed in the County Code section of Cowlitz County's website. All private roads are required to be engineered, and a permit must be issued before road construction may begin.

## **When is SEPA compliance required?**

SEPA, the State Environmental Policy Act, is a state policy that requires state and local agencies to consider the likely environmental consequences of a proposal before approving or denying the proposal. SEPA compliance is required for short subdivisions anytime there is surface water onsite, including streams, creeks, rivers, ponds, or lakes. Even if a creek or stream forms a property line for your property, SEPA compliance is still required before Preliminary Approval can be issued. Private road construction permits also require SEPA compliance.