

Subdivision Review

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Subdivision of land is defined as the division of a lot, tract, or parcel of land into two or more lots or other divisions of land for the purpose of sale or of building development. Subdivision also includes vacating lot lines between adjoining parcels, corrections of lot lines between adjacent parcels, and the addition of land from one adjoining parcel to another for the purpose of property enlargement.

In Washington County, there are three basic forms of subdivision: 1) Subdivision for the purpose of creating new building lots, 2) Replats or Re-subdivisions, and 3) Simplified subdivisions.

Subdivision for the Purpose of Creating New Building Lots

Anytime a property owner wishes to divide their property for the purpose of creating one or more new building lots, a subdivision plat is required to be submitted to the Department of Planning & Zoning for review and approval. Depending on the number of new lots a property owner wishes to create and what impacts the new development will have on public infrastructure and the environment, the form of subdivision plat may vary. All subdivision plats are required to be drafted by a licensed land surveyor, registered in the State of Maryland. This person or company will act as the consulting agent by being the liaison between the Department Staff and the developer/owner.

Types of New Building Subdivisions

Minor Subdivisions

Minor Subdivisions are defined as division of a property in seven lots or fewer. Generally, these types of subdivision do not require new infrastructure such as water or sewerage main extensions or new road construction.

Major Subdivisions

Major Subdivisions are defined as a division of land into eight or more lots. These types of plats generally have some type of new infrastructure proposed to serve the new development.

Types of New Building Subdivision Plats

Preliminary Consultations

Preliminary Consultations can be held for any type of new development; however, they are required for subdivisions of eight or more lots that are created out of an original parcel of land as of September 8, 1970. The purpose of the Preliminary Consultation process is to provide an open forum for discussion between the developer, the land use planners, and the various public service agencies to coordinate a balanced development plan. Consultation summaries are also reviewed by the Planning Commission; however, no formal action is taken.

Preliminary Plats

Preliminary plats are usually associated with larger developments that require new public infrastructure to be built but can also be done for smaller subdivisions. The purpose of the Preliminary Plat is to refine the design of the subdivision based on comments received during the Preliminary Consultation (if applicable), coordinate the design of the new development to meet the regulations set forth in the various County ordinances, and to develop plans to implement construction of public infrastructure such as roads, water and sewerage lines, utilities, and storm water management facilities to service the new development.

Final Plats

Final plats are the last phase in the subdivision plan review process. At this stage in the process, all plans relating to infrastructure implementation and development layout should be in their final format. Depending on the size of the development, final plats may either be recorded for the entire development or in phases designated at the developer's discretion, per an approved phasing plan.

Replats or Re-Subdivisions

A replat or re-subdivision is needed when an approved or recorded subdivision is changed in a manner that affects any street layout, lot line, approval condition or area reserved or dedicated to public use. From time to time unforeseen circumstance arise either during construction or even a few years later when a person wants to improve their property. The replat process is most commonly used to resolve property line discrepancies or to amend other conditions on the plat that may cause title encumbrances on the property.

Simplified Subdivisions

The simplified plat procedure is designed to provide an abbreviated subdivision review and approval process. New parcels created by the simplified procedure are intended to be conveyed to and used in conjunction with existing parcels of record. There shall be a common property line between the new parcel and the existing adjacent and abutting parcel that will be vacated at the time of subdivision. Following simplified subdivision approval, the joined parcels shall be considered a single unit and require additional subdivision approval to be separated or transferred individually.

The simplified plat procedures shall not be used to create new parcels for development with principle structures or uses, either immediately or in the future. This process shall not be used to bypass the preliminary and final plat procedures outlined in the Subdivision Ordinance which are designed for the purpose of evaluating a parcel's suitability for development as an independent unit.