

Plat/Land Division FAQs

Information for Land Developers



What is the Health Department's review time frame?

You should expect an initial response within 30 business days of submitting your application. The final approval time frame depends on the number and extent of any proposed water supply or sewage disposal issues, and their adequate resolution.

Who do I contact for assistance?

- Drinking Water Program: Michelle Harris, mharris@tpchd.org or (253) 649-1801.
- Onsite Sewage Program: George Waun, gwaun@tpchd.org or (253) 649-1818.
- For general questions contact:
 - EHsepticssystems@tpchd.org
 - EHdrinkingwater@tpchd.org

What are the Health Department fees?

See current fee schedule at tpchd.org/fees.

What type of drawings must I submit?

The survey drawing you submit to us must match what you submit to Pierce County Planning and Public Works or the municipality.

What are the limitations to the number of lots I can develop?

Water rights, type of water source, soil type and lot density.

What are the steps for the Health Department plat application process for short plats and formal plats?

We require a preliminary and final application and fee for all proposals. First submit a preliminary application and get approval, then submit for final.

Septic/Sewer FAQs

The proposal will be on sewer utility. What do I need?

For final plat, please provide evidence of an approved sewer connection.

When does the Health Department require a septic designer?

For any onsite septic system (OSS) proposed to serve the plat. See link for WA State licensed septic designers and professional engineers at tpchd.org/designers.

Is a formal septic design required for land division approval?

We may require an OSS design justification submitted by a licensed septic designer for each lot or parcel proposed, based on site development constraints, soil or density issues. We will accept conceptual designs of community systems for preliminary and accepted as-builts of community systems for final.

How many soil test holes do I need to provide? Where should they be located?

Consult your OSS designer to coordinate this requirement. Each proposed lot needs at least one soil hole and log. We may require additional soil holes and logs to evaluate the development proposal. Community systems require an adequate number of test holes to justify the designs of the community systems.

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What are the required setbacks from existing or proposed septic tank and drain fields to proposed new property lines, building foundations, wells, etc.?

Refer to minimum horizontal setbacks in [Environmental Health Code, Chapter 2, On-Site Sewage - Board of Health Resolution 2014-4414](#), Section 20, table 4, page 36.

The property has an existing individual septic system. What do I do?

Through our application, permitting and approval, any existing OSS must be:

1. Properly decommissioned if not in use;
2. Documented in writing as adequate for continued use by a certified O&M professional; or
3. The OSS must be modified or replaced ('retro-fitted') as necessary to conform to the treatment and density requirements for the new land division.

Your septic designer can assist you with requirements and any options, depending on your site conditions and proposal.

How does the density of development and soils on the site impact my proposed number and size of individual lots?

Outside Urban Growth Area:

1. Maximum sewage density shall not exceed 3.5 unit volumes of sewage/day/acre.
2. The minimum new lot size shall meet our requirements based on soil type (not less than 12,500 square feet), unless reduced lot sizes are adequately justified as part of a planned unit development or are within the service area of a recognized sewer utility.
3. We may require larger lot sizes or land areas per unit volume of sewage where the Board of Health has determined it necessary to protect public health.

In Urban Growth Area:

1. If a proposed lot is within 300 feet of a sewer hook-up, minimum Pierce County Planning and Public Works density requirements apply: maximum lot size is 7,260 ft.
2. If proposed lot is more than 300 feet from a sewer hook-up, minimum density requirements apply. However, only one proposed lot may exceed the minimum of 7,260 square feet, if improvements associated with the land division do not preclude future access or other improvements needed to achieve minimum density for any future land division. As a result, community drainfields or separate drainfield tracts are required to meet minimum Pierce County density requirements.

Drinking Water FAQs

What does the Health Department require for the water availability letter?

We require a valid and accurate water availability letter at each stage of the platting process. Preliminary plat requires the initial signature from the water purveyor. Final plat requires the final signature on the water letter from the water purveyor.

An existing well is on the property and is not in use. What do I do?

All wells located within the boundary of the plat must be decommissioned before final plat approval, unless the existing well will be part of the water source or supply infrastructure of the water system serving the plat. We require a decommissioning application and fees for the preliminary plat. A licensed well driller must decommission wells, per Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-160.

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What are Health notes?

Professionals/Surveyors add these conditions to the plat drawing for land division approval. They are used when the plat has proposed individual wells or existing individual wells.

Current Health notes:

1. "Cesspools, privies, drainfields, or any other receptacle for the disposal of sewage shall be located outside of the 100 ft well radius."
2. "In the event that public water or an alternative individual well becomes available as a domestic water source to lots of this short plat, the 100-foot non-pollution radii may be no longer applicable and said radii shall be automatically vacated."
3. "Existing well located on Lot (XX) serves existing house on Lot (XX) only. If there is a change of use for the well or the existing house is replaced, remodeled, or other revisions occur, the existing well may require review and approval by the TPCD."

An existing source of water is being used. What are the requirements?

The water source must currently be in use and continue to serve the existing home. The existing well must be part of the plat water source or supply the infrastructure of the water system serving the plat.

The proposal is for a new individual well(s). What are the requirements?

Each well located on the plat must meet the siting restrictions of Chapter 3 of the Environmental Code.

We must approve well siting for all new individual wells at preliminary plat.

- We require a separate well siting fee for each proposed individual well.
- A separate well application is no longer required.
- If fee is not paid at time of plat submittal, we will invoice the applicant.
- This fee must be paid before we conduct the well site(s).

We now implement water withdrawal requirements for the Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIA) by Department of Ecology.

- The new withdrawal requirements limit the number of wells based on the location of your property. Any wells drilled prior to 2018 are exempt from this requirement.
- Pierce County has 4 WRIA areas:
 - WRIA 11 (Nisqually) requirement is 3,000 gallons per day, per home.
 - WRIA 15 (Kitsap) requirement is 950 gallons per day, per home.
 - WRIA 10 (Puyallup-White) requirement is 950 gallons per day, per home.
 - WRIA 12 (Cham Chambers-Clover) requirement is 950 gallons per, day per home.
- Water rights are required for lot development of greater than 5 lots for individual wells in WRIA 12, WRIA 15 and WRIA 10.
- If you are in WRIA 11, a Group B is the only option, unless there is an existing well older than Jan. 19, 2018. This would allow you to drill 1 additional individual well, which would allow a 2-lot short plat.

I'm proposing a Group B Water System. What are the requirements?

1. No more than 6 lots may be connected to a Group B water system without having the appropriate water rights to serve the lots.

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2. Only one Group B Water System can be used to act as a water supply for a plat.
3. If a new Group B water system will be created to provide water to the plat, then the public water system shall meet WAC 246-291 and Chapter 3 of the Environmental Code.
4. The public well and water system design must be completed at preliminary plat. Final plat will require the water system to be constructed and fully approved.
5. We require source meters and individual home meters on all new 6 connection Group Bs.
6. In addition, we require quarterly meter readings.

When do I need water rights?

Any plat in Washington State is limited to 5,000 gallons per day.

- Additional withdrawal above 5,000 gpd requires a water right from Department Ecology.
- New home usage withdrawals determined by Department of Ecology have impacted the amount of lots allowed for individual wells on a plat.
- Water rights are required for lot development of greater than 6 lots for a Group B Water System.

Are individual wells used for irrigation only allowed as part of the land division?

All wells located within the boundary of the plat must be decommissioned before final plat approval unless the existing well will be part of the water source or supply infrastructure of the water system serving the plat.

Land Division Types and Terms - Definitions

Short plat (short subdivision): The division or re-division of land into 9 or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites or divisions within an urban growth area, or 4 or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites or divisions outside an urban growth area.

Formal Plat (subdivision): Any voluntary or involuntary division or re-division of land into 10 or more lots, tracts, parcels, sites or division.

Planned Development District: A flexible zoning concept that allows for development of projects to vary from some of the standards in return adding new amenities or features. Most commonly used now with small lot design.

Planned Unit Development: A flexible zoning concept that allows for development of projects on a huge scale. Classified as 1 of 7 types:

- Employment based.
- Master Planned Community.
- Master Planned Resort.
- New Fully Contained Community.
- State Corrections Overlay.
- Rural Airport.
- Major Institution Master Plan.

Binding Site Plan: An exemption from the Subdivision regulations specific for the division of land for commercial use.

Large Lot: Division of property where each proposed lot is 5 acres in size or larger.

Unit Volume of Sewage: Any of the following anticipated sewage flows:

- From a single-family residence (SFR);
- From a mobile home site in a mobile home park (MHP); or
- 450 gallons of sewage per day if not an SFR or MHP.