
SENATE BILL 5559

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Lovelett, Nobles, and Trudeau

Read first time 01/28/25. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to streamlining the subdivision process inside
2 urban growth areas; and amending RCW 58.17.020 and 58.17.060.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 58.17.020 and 2002 c 262 s 1 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 As used in this chapter, unless the context or subject matter
7 clearly requires otherwise, the words or phrases defined in this
8 section shall have the indicated meanings.

9 (1) "Subdivision" is the division or redivision of land into five
10 or more lots, tracts, parcels, sites, or divisions for the purpose of
11 sale, lease, or transfer of ownership, except as provided in
12 subsection (6) of this section.

13 (2) "Plat" is a map or representation of a subdivision, showing
14 thereon the division of a tract or parcel of land into lots, blocks,
15 streets and alleys, or other divisions and dedications.

16 (3) "Dedication" is the deliberate appropriation of land by an
17 owner for any general and public uses, reserving to himself or
18 herself no other rights than such as are compatible with the full
19 exercise and enjoyment of the public uses to which the property has
20 been devoted. The intention to dedicate shall be evidenced by the
21 owner by the presentment for filing of a final plat or short plat

1 showing the dedication thereon; and, the acceptance by the public
2 shall be evidenced by the approval of such plat for filing by the
3 appropriate governmental unit.

4 A dedication of an area of less than two acres for use as a
5 public park may include a designation of a name for the park, in
6 honor of a deceased individual of good character.

7 (4) "Preliminary plat" is a neat and approximate drawing of a
8 proposed subdivision showing the general layout of streets and
9 alleys, lots, blocks, and other elements of a subdivision consistent
10 with the requirements of this chapter. The preliminary plat shall be
11 the basis for the approval or disapproval of the general layout of a
12 subdivision.

13 (5) "Final plat" is the final drawing of the subdivision and
14 dedication prepared for filing for record with the county auditor and
15 containing all elements and requirements set forth in this chapter
16 and in local regulations adopted under this chapter.

17 (6) "Short subdivision" is the division or redivision of land
18 into four or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites, or divisions for the
19 purpose of sale, lease, or transfer of ownership. However, the
20 legislative authority of any city or town may by local ordinance
21 increase the number of lots, tracts, or parcels to be regulated as
22 short subdivisions to a maximum of nine. The legislative authority of
23 any county planning under RCW 36.70A.040 that has adopted a
24 comprehensive plan and development regulations in compliance with
25 chapter 36.70A RCW may by ordinance increase the number of lots,
26 tracts, or parcels to be regulated as short subdivisions to a maximum
27 of nine in any urban growth area.

28 (7) "Binding site plan" means a drawing to a scale specified by
29 local ordinance which: (a) Identifies and shows the areas and
30 locations of all streets, roads, improvements, utilities, open
31 spaces, and any other matters specified by local regulations; (b)
32 contains inscriptions or attachments setting forth such appropriate
33 limitations and conditions for the use of the land as are established
34 by the local government body having authority to approve the site
35 plan; and (c) contains provisions making any development be in
36 conformity with the site plan.

37 (8) "Short plat" is the map or representation of a short
38 subdivision.

39 (9) "Lot" is a fractional part of divided lands having fixed
40 boundaries, being of sufficient area and dimension to meet minimum

1 zoning requirements for width and area. The term shall include tracts
2 or parcels.

3 (10) "Block" is a group of lots, tracts, or parcels within well
4 defined and fixed boundaries.

5 (11) "County treasurer" shall be as defined in chapter 36.29 RCW
6 or the office or person assigned such duties under a county charter.

7 (12) "County auditor" shall be as defined in chapter 36.22 RCW or
8 the office or person assigned such duties under a county charter.

9 (13) "County road engineer" shall be as defined in chapter 36.40
10 RCW or the office or person assigned such duties under a county
11 charter.

12 (14) "Planning commission" means that body as defined in chapter
13 36.70, 35.63, or 35A.63 RCW as designated by the legislative body to
14 perform a planning function or that body assigned such duties and
15 responsibilities under a city or county charter.

16 (15) "County commissioner" shall be as defined in chapter 36.32
17 RCW or the body assigned such duties under a county charter.

18 (16) "Parent lot" means a lot that is subdivided into unit lots
19 through the unit lot subdivision process.

20 (17) "Unit lot" means a subdivided lot within a development as
21 created from a parent lot and approved through the unit lot
22 subdivision process.

23 (18) "Unit lot subdivision" means a subdivision or short
24 subdivision proposed as part of a development project that meets the
25 development standards applicable to the parent lot at the time the
26 application is vested, but which may result in development on one or
27 more individual unit lots becoming nonconforming as to specified land
28 use and development standards based on the analysis of the individual
29 unit lot. By June 30, 2026, all unit lot subdivisions shall require
30 notification to purchasers of their legal status as further described
31 in RCW 58.17.060.

32 **Sec. 2.** RCW 58.17.060 and 2023 c 337 s 11 are each amended to
33 read as follows:

34 (1) The legislative body of a city, town, or county shall adopt
35 regulations and procedures, and appoint administrative personnel for
36 the summary approval of short plats and short subdivisions or
37 alteration or vacation thereof. When an alteration or vacation
38 involves a public dedication, the alteration or vacation shall be
39 processed as provided in RCW 58.17.212 or 58.17.215. Such regulations

1 shall be adopted by ordinance and shall provide that a short plat and
2 short subdivision may be approved only if written findings that are
3 appropriate, as provided in RCW 58.17.110, are made by the
4 administrative personnel, and may contain wholly different
5 requirements than those governing the approval of preliminary and
6 final plats of subdivisions and may require surveys and
7 monumentations and shall require filing of a short plat, or
8 alteration or vacation thereof, for record in the office of the
9 county auditor: PROVIDED, That such regulations must contain a
10 requirement that land in short subdivisions may not be further
11 divided in any manner within a period of five years without the
12 filing of a final plat, except that when the short plat contains
13 fewer than four parcels, nothing in this section shall prevent the
14 owner who filed the short plat from filing an alteration within the
15 five-year period to create up to a total of four lots within the
16 original short plat boundaries: PROVIDED FURTHER, That such
17 regulations are not required to contain a penalty clause as provided
18 in RCW 36.32.120 and may provide for wholly injunctive relief.

19 An ordinance requiring a survey shall require that the survey be
20 completed and filed with the application for approval of the short
21 subdivision.

22 (2) Cities, towns, and counties shall include in their short plat
23 regulations and procedures pursuant to subsection (1) of this section
24 provisions for considering sidewalks and other planning features that
25 assure safe walking conditions for students who walk to and from
26 school.

27 (3) All cities, code cities, and towns~~((, and counties shall~~
28 ~~include in their short plat regulations))~~ located in a county
29 planning under RCW 36.70A.040 shall by June 30, 2026, adopt or enact
30 procedures for unit lot subdivisions ~~((allowing division of a parent~~
31 ~~lot into separately owned unit lots))~~. Portions of the parent lot not
32 subdivided for individual unit lots shall be owned in common by the
33 owners of the individual unit lots, or by a homeowners' association
34 comprised of the owners of the individual unit lots.

35 (a) These procedures shall include, at a minimum, the requirement
36 that prominent informational notes be placed on the unit lot
37 subdivision's plat, and recorded in the county or counties in which
38 such land is located, to acknowledge each of the following:

39 (i) Approval of the design and layout of the unit lot's housing
40 development project was granted based on detailed review of that

1 specified project, as a whole, on the parent lot, including specific
2 reference to the applicable permit or file number for that specified
3 project;

4 (ii) Subsequent subdivision actions, additions, or modifications
5 to the unit lot housing development project's structures may not
6 create or increase any nonconformity of the parent lot as a whole,
7 and shall conform to the approved unit lot housing development
8 project or to the land use and development standards in effect at the
9 time of the proposed actions, additions, or modifications;

10 (iii) If a structure or portion of a structure within the unit lot
11 housing development project has been damaged or destroyed, any
12 repair, reconstruction, or replacement of any structure shall conform
13 to the approved unit lot housing development project or to the land
14 use and development standards in effect at the time the proposed
15 repair, reconstruction, or replacement project's permit application
16 becomes vested; and

17 (iv) Additional development or redevelopment of the individual
18 unit lots may be limited as a result of the application of
19 development standards to the parent lot.

20 (b) These procedures shall also:

21 (i) Not require any public predecision meeting or hearing, nor
22 any design review other than administrative design review;

23 (ii) Apply only clear and objective development regulations;

24 (iii) Be logically integrated with the application, review, and
25 approval procedures that apply to the underlying unit lot housing
26 development project to the greatest extent feasible; and

27 (iv) Be specifically subject to the maximum time period for local
28 government actions as set forth in RCW 36.70B.080, unless extended
29 pursuant to project-specific mutual agreement as permitted by RCW
30 36.70B.080.

31 (c) After June 30, 2026, no city, code city, or town subject to
32 this section may decline to accept, process, or approve an
33 application for a unit lot subdivision, consistent with the
34 procedural requirements of (a) and (b) of this subsection, solely
35 because that city, code city, or town has not completed adoption or
36 enactment of the procedures required under this section.

37 (d) Nothing in this section:

38 (i) Prohibits a city or county from applying public health,
39 safety, building code, and environmental permitting requirements to a

1 development project that is subject to or integrated with a unit lot
2 subdivision process;

3 (ii) Requires a city or county to authorize a development project
4 or a unit lot subdivision in a location where development is
5 restricted under other laws, rules, or ordinances, such as in
6 locations where development is limited as a result of physical
7 proximity to on-site sewage system infrastructure, critical areas, or
8 other unsuitable physical characteristics of a property.

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