Plat/Land Division FAQs

Information for Land Developers

**What is the time frame for Health Department review?**
You should expect an initial response within 30 days of application submittal. The final approval time frame is highly dependent on the number and extent of any proposed water supply or sewage disposal issues, and their adequate resolution.

**Who do I contact at the Health Department for assistance?**
- Drinking Water Program: Michelle Harris, mharris@tpchd.org or (253) 798-7683.
- Onsite Sewage Program: George Waun, gwaun@tpchd.org or (253) 798-6485.

**General questions contact?**
EHsepticsystems@tpchd.org
EHdrinkingwater@tpchd.org

**What are the Health Department fees?**
See current fee schedule [www.tpchd.org/fees](http://www.tpchd.org/fees)

**What type of drawings must I submit to the Health Department?**
The site plan submitted to Health must match what is submitted to Pierce County (PALS) or the municipality.

( i.e., survey or drawings)

**What are the limitations to the number of lots that I can develop?**
Water rights, type of water source, soil type and lot density.

**What are the steps for the Health plat application process for short plats and formal plats?**
A preliminary and final application and fee are required for all proposals.

*Septic/ Sewer FAQ’s*

**The proposal will be on sewer utility, what do I need?**
For final plat please provide evidence of an approved sewer connection.

**When is a septic designer required?**
For any onsite septic system (OSS) proposed to serve the plat. See link for WA State licensed septic designers and professional engineers. [www.tpchd.org/Designers](http://www.tpchd.org/Designers)

**Is a formal septic design required for land division approval?**
The Health Department 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.

**How many soil test holes do I need to provide, and where should they be located?**
Consult your OSS designer to coordinate this requirement. Each proposed lot shall be represented by at least one soil hole and log. The Health Department may require additional soil holes and logs as needed to evaluate the development proposal.
What are the required setbacks from existing or proposed septic tank and drainfields 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

There is an existing individual septic system located on the property, what do I do?
Through Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department application, permitting and approval, any existing OSS must be:
1. Properly decommissioned,
2. documented in writing as adequate for continued use by a Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department 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 Health Department 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. The Health Department 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:
If a proposed lot is within 300 feet of a sewer hook-up, minimum Pierce County Planning and Land Services density requirements apply: maximum lot size is 7,260 ft. If proposed lot is MORE than 300 feet from a sewer hook-up, minimum density requirements apply, but only one (1) 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.

Water FAQs
What is required 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 prior to final plat approval unless the existing well will be part of the water source or supply infrastructure of the water system serving the plat. A decommissioning application along with fee is required at preliminary plat. Wells must be decommissioned by a licensed well driller per Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-160.

Health notes—What are they?
These are conditions added to the plat drawing for land division approval. They are primarily used when the plat has proposed individual wells or existing individual wells.
Here are the current Health Notes being used:

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 TPCHD.”

**An existing source of water is being used, what are the requirements?**

Must currently be in use and will 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?**

Approved well siting is required for all new individual wells at preliminary plat. A separate well site application and fee is required for each proposed individual well. Each well located on the plat must meet the siting restrictions of Chapter 3 of the Environmental Code and the Pierce County Critical Areas requirements. Evidence of meeting the critical areas must be provided.

**Proposing a Group B Water System. What are the requirements?**

1. No more than six lots may be connected to a Group B water system without having the appropriate water rights to serve the lots.
2. Only one Group B Water System can be utilized 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. Any combination of individual wells and Group B water system connections may be used to provide water to the proposed lots subject to the 5,000 gallon per day group water right exemption.

**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 prior to final plat approval unless the existing well will be part of the water source and/or supply infrastructure of the water system serving the plat.

**When do I need water rights?**

Water rights are required for lot development of greater than six lots for a Group B Water System. Water rights are required for lot development of greater than 12 lots for individual wells. The limit is due to the 5,000 gallon per day of water withdrawal set by Department of Ecology and Chapter 3 Board of Health.

**Land Division Types and Terms - Definitions**

**Short plat (short subdivision)** The division or re-division of land into nine or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites, or divisions within an urban growth area, or four 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 ten 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 one of seven types: Employment based, Master Planned Community, Master Planned Resort, New Fully Contained Community, State Corrections Overlay, Rural Airport, and 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.