

# Can I Subdivide?

Subdivision of land (or “platting”) will make a single property into two or more lots for building houses. Whether or not you can subdivide your land depends on several factors, primarily the lot size, zoning, presence of critical areas, requirements for access and drainage, and any required right-of-way dedication. The process can be complicated and lengthy, and typically requires professional assistance to achieve a successful subdivision. This handout summarizes the information you’ll need, describes the general process you’ll follow, and provides some resources to get started.

## Subdivision Process



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### Determine zoning and allowable density.

Residential density depends on your zoning designation. Find your zoning by locating your property on the Sammamish Property Tool, King County iMap, or asking the City’s Permit Center for help.

**Sammamish Municipal Code 21.02.060.C.18** requires that if a property is located in an existing subdivision, density must be calculated for the entire plat.

Did You Know?



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### Determine how many lots will be allowed on your property.

You will need the following information to determine how many lots you’ll be able to build:

- Total land area of your property (or the total subdivision if located in an existing subdivision)
- Total land area of critical areas (steep slopes, wetlands, streams, and applicable buffers)
- Total land area needed for street access and/or required right-of-way dedication

This information will be included on the required site survey.

## EXAMPLE

For example, a property owner has two acres of property zoned R-4. There are wetlands and buffers taking up approximately 0.5 acres of property, there needs to be an internal access road that is 0.125 acres, and right-of-way will be dedicated along the existing street frontage for another 0.125 acres.

*The net lot area is:*

$$\begin{aligned} & 2.0 \text{ acres of land area} \\ - & 0.5 \text{ acres of critical areas and buffers} \\ - & 0.125 \text{ acres of street access} \\ - & 0.125 \text{ acres of right-of-way dedication} \\ \hline & = 1.25 \text{ acres of net lot area} \end{aligned}$$

*The allowable density is:*

$$\begin{aligned} & 1.25 \text{ acres of net lot area} \\ & \quad \times \\ & 4 \text{ dwelling units per acre} \\ \hline & = 5 \text{ dwelling units} \end{aligned}$$

**NOTE:** If your density calculation results in a fraction, you need to **round down** to the whole number. You cannot round up to the next-highest whole number.

*The formula for calculating your net lot area is:*

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{total acres of land area}) \\ - & (\text{total acres of critical areas and buffers}) \\ - & (\text{total acres of street access}) \\ - & (\text{total acres of right-of-way dedication}) \\ \hline & = (\text{total acres of net lot area}) \end{aligned}$$

*Then, calculate your allowable density using the following formula:*

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{total acres of net lot area}) \\ & \quad \times \\ & (\text{residential density allowed by zone}) \end{aligned}$$

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### Hire qualified professionals to assist you and apply for a pre-application conference.

Work with a qualified professional engineer or professional land surveyor to lay out a preliminary design for your subdivision or short subdivision and apply for a pre-application conference at [MyBuildingPermit.com](http://MyBuildingPermit.com). The pre-application conference is an opportunity for the City to provide feedback on the design and identify any potential issues with the project.

If your project creates ten or more lots, you'll follow a subdivision process. If your project creates nine or fewer lots, you'll follow a short subdivision process. These processes are sometimes also called "platting" or "short platting."

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### Hold a neighborhood meeting.

You will need to host a neighborhood meeting to help those who may be affected by your project learn more about it. This meeting also helps you identify items that may need to be redesigned to address issues and align with code.

A notice of neighborhood meeting needs to be mailed at least 21 days before your meeting. You'll need to provide documentation of this meeting to the City and to all attendees. If your application is not submitted within 120 days of the neighborhood meeting, you'll be required to hold another one. Learn more at [www.sammamish.us](http://www.sammamish.us).

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## Apply for Traffic Concurrency.

A Certificate of Traffic Concurrency is required to be submitted with the preliminary application.

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## Submit your application for review.

Submit your preliminary subdivision or short subdivision application for review within 180 days of your preapplication conference using [MyBuildingPermit.com](http://MyBuildingPermit.com). The City will determine if you've submitted all the documents necessary for technical review of the application and issue a Letter of Completion (or Incompletion). If your application is not complete, the City will let you know what else needs to be submitted.

After the application is deemed complete, the City will issue a Notice of Application and begin technical review.

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## Receive preliminary subdivision or short subdivision decision.

After the City completes their review, a decision is made either by the Department Director (short subdivisions) or by the Hearing Examiner (subdivisions).

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## Apply for site development.

Once you've received your preliminary subdivision or short subdivision approval, you'll need to submit your site development permit application at [MyBuildingPermit.com](http://MyBuildingPermit.com). A site development permit must be issued before construction can begin. The process typically takes about 4 months.

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## Apply for final subdivision.

After you complete site development, the City will inspect and accept the improvements and you can apply for final subdivision or short subdivision approval. After final approval, you will record the subdivision or short plat with King County and you will be able to sell or develop the new lots.

## Resources



### 2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This document guides decisions and establishes priorities for decisions within Sammamish.



### SAMMAMISH MUNICIPAL CODE

Particularly: SDC 21.02.060 – Land Division, Chapter 21.09 – Administrative Procedures/ Environmental Policy, and Chapter 21.06 – Development Code



### CRITICAL AREAS HANDBOOK

The Department of Commerce's guide on a variety of topics related to critical areas.



### SAMMAMISH PROPERTY TOOL

A one-stop-shop for all City mapping.



### AS-BUILT LIBRARY

A collection of as-builts for all projects, subdivisions, and developments within the City of Sammamish.



### STORM BANDIT

The City storm water system and associated infrastructure.



### HISTORIC LANDMARKS & RESOURCES

Shows historic resources throughout the City to help identify properties that may potentially be designated as landmarks.



### FOREST PRACTICES APPLICATION MAPPING TOOL

Washington State Department of Natural Resources mapping tool that is good for wetland and stream typing.



### SAMMAMISH PLATEAU WATER

Learn about how to obtain water and/or sewer service and get your questions answered.



## FAQs

### Can I split my property into two or more lots?

**It depends.** Your property needs to have enough net lot area to meet the maximum density requirements for multiple dwelling units. If your property has enough net lot area to make two or more units, you may be able to subdivide it.

### How do I know if my property is in an existing subdivision?

Review the legal description for your property. You can do this by looking at your title report or looking at the property details on King County's iMap application.

### How much does a subdivision or short subdivision cost?

There are many costs associated with a subdivision or short subdivision. You will need a current survey of your property, a title report, design services from a qualified professional engineer and/or professional land surveyor, environmental analyses (if critical areas are present or suspected to be present), permit and other development fees (see Fee Schedule), specialized studies (determined by unique characteristics of your property), and impact fees (streets, school, parks, water/sewer).

### How long does it take to split my lot into two or more lots?

**It depends.** Both subdivision and short subdivision applications are processed in accordance with the Local Project Review Act. After submittal, the City has up to 28 days to determine if the application is complete. Once the application is complete the City has up to 120 days to issue a decision. The 120 days includes time used to review the application, issue notices, and hold a hearing (if necessary). Any time the City spends waiting for an applicant to respond to a request for information is not counted toward the 120-day clock. Typical time from preliminary to final plat recording takes approximately 1-1.5 years depending on the complexity of project.

### How do I find out if I have critical areas on my property?

The Sammamish Property Tool is available online and can provide some insight into whether critical areas may be present (but does not provide an official critical areas determination or delineation). Some critical areas are very obvious (steep slopes, streams), and some are not (erosion or seismic hazard areas, some types of wetlands). Areas that are seasonally or persistently wet may be regulated wetlands that need to be delineated and typed. Any investigative work to delineate, review, and evaluate a critical area needs to be completed by a professional qualified to study that type of critical area (i.e. wetland scientist, geotechnical engineer, etc.).



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