

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE CLEARFIELD COUNTY SUBDIVISION PROCESS

If you want to sell a piece of property, divide land to settle an estate, or transfer some land to your children, then you need to know about subdivision.

The subdivision process can be confusing, even for trained surveyors and municipal officials. This guide is intended to help you, the consumer, understand how the subdivision process works in Clearfield County.

What is a subdivision?

A subdivision is the division of a lot or parcel of land into two or more pieces. More generally, any time the boundaries of a piece of land change or are moved, this is considered to be a subdivision.

The term "subdivision" is also used to refer to the ordinance or ordinances regulating subdivision and land development in a municipality. In Clearfield County, this is the Clearfield County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (or "SALDO").

Why does the County regulate subdivisions?



The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gives Clearfield County and other municipalities the authority to regulate subdivisions and land development within their boundaries. This authority is granted by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (of "MPC"). Clearfield County has chosen to use this power to help guide growth in the County and to protect our citizens.

What are some of the benefits of subdivision?

Subdivision regulations help protect consumers in many ways. They guarantee that each piece of land in the County has an accurate description that can be enforced in court. Subdivision also ensures that each lot has legally enforceable access to a public right-of-way, as well as, a source of water and sanitary sewage. Subdivision ordinances also help ensure that roads are adequate to provide fire and ambulance protection to all residents.



What do I need to do to subdivide my land?

First, where is your land located? Clearfield County's SALDO only applies to land in municipalities that do not have their own subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs). Currently, 19 municipalities in Clearfield County have their own SALDOs:

- Boggs Township
- Bradford Township
- Cooper Township
- Covington Township
- Decatur Township
- DuBois City
- Girard Township
- Goshen Township
- Karthaus Township
- Lawrence Township
- Penn Township
- Sandy Township
- Woodward Township
- Clearfield Borough
- Curwensville Borough
- Falls Creek Borough
- Graham Township
- Morris Township
- Union Township

If you live in one of these municipalities, you should contact them to determine what you will need to do to subdivide your land.

The other 31 municipalities in Clearfield County currently do not have their own SALDOs, so they fall under the County's jurisdiction. These municipalities are:

- Beccaria Township
- Bloom Township
- Burnside Borough
- Chester Hill Borough
- Glen Hope Borough
- Gulich Township
- Irvona Borough
- Mahaffey Borough
- Osceola Mills Borough
- Ramey Borough
- Westover Borough
- Bell Township
- Brady Township
- Burnside Township
- Coalport Borough
- Grampian Borough
- Houtzdale Borough
- Jordan Township
- Newburg Borough
- Pike Township
- Troutville Borough
- Bigler Township
- Brisbin Borough
- Chest Township
- Ferguson Township
- Greenwood Township
- Huston Township
- Knox Township
- New Washington Borough
- Pine Township
- Wallaceton Borough

In either case, you will most likely need to hire a surveyor. The surveyor will come out and survey the property, then draw up a sketch plan of the property. This plan will be submitted to the Clearfield County Planning Commission (or to one of the 19 municipalities that have their own ordinances) for review and approval. Minor Subdivision Plans must be delivered to our office one week prior to the Planning Commission meeting and Land Development Plans must be delivered to our office two weeks prior to the Planning Commission meeting for consideration at that month's meeting.

How does the County Planning Commission Approve Plans?

The Clearfield County Planning Commission (or "CCPC") meets once a month to review and make decisions on subdivisions and land developments. **Meetings are held at 6:30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month with the exception of November and December where they may be held on the 3rd Wednesday due to the holiday schedule**, in the Commissioners' conference room in the Clearfield County Administrative Offices Building located at 212 E. Locust Street, Clearfield.



The County Planning Commission checks to see that each plan meets all of the requirements of the Clearfield County SALDO. If a plan is complete and no additional information is needed, the members of the Planning Commission may vote to **"Approve"** the plan. If a plan is missing any information, the Planning Commission may vote to **"Conditionally Approve"** the plan. This means that the surveyor will have ninety (90) days to bring in the missing information to the County Planning Department. When all conditions have been met, the plan will receive final approval.

In some cases, the members of the Planning Commission may vote to **"Deny"** a plan. The CCPC tries to be accommodating by granting Conditional Approvals, but in some cases too much information is missing, so a plan must be denied. In other, even more rare instances, a plan may be **"Tabled"** and reconsidered at a future meeting.

How long will it take for my subdivision plan to be approved?

Because not every plan submitted for consideration by the CCPC is administratively complete – that is, because some plans are missing important information – not every plan is automatically approved at each month's planning commission meeting. Your plan may receive its final approval that night, or it may receive a Conditional Approval, which means Final Approval is not granted until a few days, weeks, or even months after CCPC meeting.

In any case, the CCPC grants a final decision on a plan within ninety (90) days of the meeting for which the plan was originally submitted.

For example, if you plan was submitted for a meeting held on March 27, and your surveyor is still waiting for a sewage component approval letter from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to meet the County's SALDO, your plan will not receive final approval on March 27th. Instead, your surveyor will have until June 27th to submit the missing information to our office. In fact, your plan may not receive final approval until as late as June 27th; but in no case, will your plan receive final approval AFTER June 27th. If our office does not receive the missing information by June 27th, the plan will officially be "Denied."

This variable time frame is important to consider when you are subdividing and selling land. To be safe, **you should NOT expect to close on the property immediately after the CCPC meeting**. Our office reviews many plans each month, and to be fair, we must treat each plan the same. The County Planning Department cannot make special exceptions because an applicant scheduled their closing too close to the CCPC meeting expecting final approval to be granted that night, when in fact the plan was incomplete and only granted a Conditional Approval. While most plans receive final approval within a few days, **the subdivision process can take up to three (3) months**, so you should plan accordingly.



In the end, **it is your surveyor's responsibility to produce an accurate, complete survey of your property in a timely fashion**. Our best advice is for you to fire a good, reliable surveyor.



What happens after my subdivision is approved?

After each month's Planning Commission meeting, our office will send a letter to the surveyor, informing him or her about the CCPC's decision. This letter will also list any conditions that must be met before Final Approval can be granted. You (the owner of the property) and the municipality will receive courtesy copies of this letter. You will also receive copies of any additional correspondence from our office regarding your subdivision.



When all conditions are met and Final Approval is granted, we will again send letters to you, the municipality, and the surveyor. At this time, you should contact your surveyor. Either you or your surveyor will need to come to our office to pick up copies of your plan that have been signed by the Planning Commission. Your plan can now be recorded at the County Recorder's Office.



For more information about the Clearfield County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance or procedures, contact the County Planning and Community Development Office at (814) 765-5149 or visit our website at www.planning.clearfieldco.org

For information about plan recording requirements or fees, contact the County Recorder's Office at (814) 765-2641, Extension 5012.