

# UNIT LOT SUBDIVISIONS

City of Tukwila - Permit Center  
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## WHAT ARE UNIT LOT SUBDIVISIONS?

Unit lot subdivisions allow a property to be divided into individually owned residential “unit” lots, while keeping the larger “parent” lot as a single, coordinated development site.

The **parent lot** is the overall parcel on which the development sits, ensuring that zoning, setbacks, and other site-wide standards are met, while the **unit lots** are the individually owned portions of the property, such as townhomes, duplexes, or accessory dwelling units (ADUs), that can be sold separately.

Under Washington State law (SB 5559, 2025), unit lot subdivisions are recognized as a way to increase housing options and homeownership while providing flexibility for existing homeowners. Each unit lot receives its **own parcel number**, creating a distinct, sellable property. More information on state requirements may be found in the [Department of Commerce’s Unit Lot Subdivisions Fact Sheet](#).

## BENEFITS OF UNIT LOT SUBDIVISIONS

Unit lot subdivisions are a land use tool for increasing housing options and homeownership, especially for middle housing like townhomes, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). They allow individual homes, even those on smaller lots, to be owned outright, meaning you own the land your home sits on. This also provides flexibility for current homeowners, letting them sell off parts of their property, like a backyard, for new housing while keeping their existing home. While the entire property must meet general zoning rules, individual unit lots within it don't have to, allowing for more flexibility in housing development.

## WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE?

The unit lot subdivision process begins with a **pre-application**, which helps applicants and City staff identify applicable development standards — such as access, utilities, critical areas, and infrastructure requirements.

To ensure consistency between the subdivision layout and actual site development, **any required permits** (e.g., for land modification or building construction) must be submitted **before or at the same time** as the unit lot subdivision application. This coordinated approach ensures that the parent lot and resulting unit lots are designed, reviewed, and built according to the same approved site plans, minimizing conflicts later.

Parent lots must be established before a unit lot subdivision to ensure compliance with legal boundaries, infrastructure obligations, and baseline conditions for the unit lot subdivision. A parent lot can be an existing lot or the existing lot can be subdivided to create multiple new parents, assuming the parent lot(s) meet the underlying minimum lot size. If establishing a new parent lot, the new parent lot must go through a separate subdivision process first before a unit lot subdivision may proceed.

A unit lot subdivision is directly tied to the development of occupiable structures on those lots. Before the new unit lots can be officially **recorded**, either:

- The homes must already be built, or
- The building permits must be approved and ready for issuance.

### Lot Count and Review Process:

- **9 or fewer unit lots:** Follow the [short subdivision](#) process.
- **10 or more unit lots:** Follow the [full subdivision](#) process.

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## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPLICATION

Tukwila’s [Title 17: Subdivisions and Plats](#) establishes the following requirements for unit lot subdivision applications:

- The parent lot and the unit lots (“full development”) must meet current standards in effect at the time that the permit application is submitted.
- None of the proposed changes can create or increase nonconformities on the parent lot.
- Easements and maintenance agreements are required for shared features (e.g., garages, open space).
- Parking can be on a separate tract if an easement is recorded.
- Any parent lot limitations must be noted on the plat.
- Unit lot count must comply with zoning density limits.
- Foundations may be built after preliminary approval of the unit lot subdivision, but occupancy, rental, or sale requires final approval.

## DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

A key benefit of unit lot subdivision is flexibility in applying zoning dimensional standards. While the overall parent lot must meet these standards, individual unit lots are exempt from requirements like:

- Lot size, depth, and width
- Setbacks and projections
- Lot and impervious surface coverage
- Minimum landscaping
- Other size- or distance-based standards

However, standards not tied to lot size—like maximum building height—still apply. Additionally, unit lot subdivisions do not allow uses or densities beyond what the underlying zone permits.

## EXAMPLES OF UNIT LOT SUBDIVISIONS

1. Preserved single-family house with three attached units built in the back yard.
2. A cottage cluster development with a shared open space.
3. A townhouse development with a shared driveway.
4. A duplex with an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on its own unit lot.

