



Small Subdivisions and Pipestem Lots

OVERVIEW OF CODE UPDATE

December 21, 2022

Sumner's 2021 Housing Action Plan includes strategies and implementation actions for addressing needed housing. City staff has been working on implementing a number of these actions, including the current proposal to increase the number of infill single-family lots that can be created through short subdivisions and pipestem lot subdivisions.

Why is this update needed:

- Currently, Sumner code allows land to be subdivided either as a "full subdivision" (for 5 or more lots) or a simple "short subdivision" (short plat). A full subdivision process is much more lengthy and costly than a short subdivision. Requiring that for a small development (e.g. 6-7 lots) can be a barrier to housing infill.
- Pipestem lots (flag-shaped lots with a driveway "stem") are created through the same subdivision process. However, current code limits these to 1 additional lot behind the main house, which is also a barrier to infill.
- State law currently allows up to 9 lots in a short subdivision. To encourage housing infill, many cities are increasing their subdivision thresholds to match the higher State threshold.

Goals of this code update:

- Increase opportunities for single-family infill development, making use of underutilized pockets of land throughout the city.
- Allow more homes to be created through a streamlined short subdivision process, and allow more homes on pipestem lots.
- Increase feasibility of housing projects on smaller sites and for small developers.
- Reduce construction costs and land costs for infill housing.

Summary of proposal:

- Raise the threshold for short subdivisions to 9 lots. This will allow more lots to be created through a less costly and more streamlined process.
- Raise the threshold for pipestem (flag) lot subdivisions to 4 lots. This makes it easier for a homeowner to create lots in underutilized areas behind their existing home, and to realize more of the development value of their property. Allow a 1-lot "credit" for keeping an existing home on the lot (preserves affordable older homes).
- Create narrower access standards for small subdivisions and pipestem lots. Allow a shared driveway for up to 5 dwellings and 25-foot private drive aisles for up to 9 dwellings. This will consolidate access for more efficient use of land, reduce impervious surfaces and curb cuts along the sidewalk, and reduce costs.
- For pipestem lots, make building height and lot sizes the same as regular single-family lots in the zone; require a 15-foot perimeter setback to increase privacy.
- Set a maximum lot size for single-family homes built in multifamily zones. This will reserve land in Medium-Density and High-Density Residential zones for more dense single-family infill and multifamily development, consistent with the original purpose of the zones.
- No change in the density already allowed in each zone; the code just makes it easier to create housing.