WHAT ARE SUBDIVISIONS AND LAND DEVELOPMENT?

Municipalities use subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs) to manage community planning goals. By using SALDOs, municipalities can avoid unnecessary challenges or roadblocks to development.

Dividing land for transfer, lease, or development creates subdivisions. This doesn’t apply when dividing land for agricultural leases if the parcels are larger than 10 acres. Improving land for any purpose involving a single nonresidential building or two or more residential buildings is considered land development. It includes plans for streets, common areas, building groups, or other features.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO REVIEW A SUBDIVISION OR LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

To create a subdivision of land development, an application must be submitted to the municipality. The municipality and county planning agency review the plan to make sure it complies with the SALDO and other local and county ordinances including zoning. A recommendation is made to the governing body (unless the planning commission has been given the authority to approve or reject a plan directly).

The governing body must approve (with or without conditions) or deny the plan at a regular public meeting. The municipality may choose to hold optional public hearings about the plan, but it is not required. Once a decision is made, the municipality must notify the applicant in writing within 15 days. If approved, the plan must be recorded in the county’s Office of the Recorder of Deeds within 90 days of the approval.
TIPS FOR REVIEWING A PLAN

• Request a sketch plan prior to the formal SALDO plan submission. This can save time and money for both the applicant and community by starting a dialogue about the plan before costly design and engineering work is completed.

• Incomplete SALDO plan submissions don’t have to be accepted. Applications can be returned for being administratively incomplete (something that should be determined within a few days of submission).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Governor’s Center for Local Government Services provides technical assistance on a variety of planning, land use, and development matters to planning commissions, zoning officers, zoning hearing boards, and other local government officials. For more information visit dced.pa.gov/planning.