



What is a plat?

A plat is a survey of land which identifies the boundaries of the property and any easements, flood zones, roadway and access rights-of-way. A recorded official plat is required for the subdivision of land into smaller lots where the purpose of the owner is to establish building lots, or to dedicate street rights-of-way, easements or parks. A replat is also a plat.

Why is platting required?

An official recorded plat is also required in border counties under Texas law before water, wastewater, electric, telephone, or other public utility service is extended to the property in the city or its extraterritorial jurisdiction. This rule applies to the reconnection of prior service in most cases. Within the City of Laredo, the property must be platted in order to secure a sign, building, plumbing, electrical, or heating/ventilating/air conditioning permit. In order to be official, the plat instrument must include a description of the property by metes and bounds, must be signed by the owner, approved by the City of Laredo Planning & Zoning Commission, and recorded in the Webb County Plat Records. Even though your property may have been platted at one time, a new subdivision or the realignment of lots may require that it be replatted.

How do I know if my property is platted?

If your deed or contract for sale identifies the property by lot number and block within a subdivision the property is probably platted. If your deed describes the property by metes and bounds, or you own a portion of a lot, even though you also own a full lot, the property is not platted. The only exceptions to the platting requirements are:

1. The dimensions of the lot were reduced because a portion of the property was acquired by the City of Laredo or the State of Texas for street right-of-way; or
2. The property was formerly a street right-of-way which you purchased from the city; or
3. The property is a qualified Lot of Record.

What qualifies as a "Lot of Record"?

A Lot of Record is property whose boundaries were established prior to September 9th, 1979. A property owner may convey the ownership of a Lot of Record to another person as long as no further subdivision of

property occurs without violating city ordinances or Texas law. No building or other permit may be issued unless all of the following conditions apply:

1. Evidence that the boundaries of the property were established prior to September 9th, 1979; and
2. The intended use is for single or multi-family residential purposes; and
3. The property is NOT located along an arterial street identified on the city's Major Thoroughfare Plan; and
4. The property is located in the Eastern Division (E.D.) or Western Division (W.D). of the City of Laredo.

Platting Your Property

Contact a registered land surveyor or engineering firm to survey your property. A registered professional engineer will need to advise you concerning what improvements may be required in order to plat your property, including water and wastewater line extensions, paving, and right-of-way dedication. Part of their services include identifying adjacent property ownership. If you intend to plat or replat only a portion of your property, you will be required to also prepare a master plan which shows how you will provide access and service to all of your property. You may be required to dedicate right-of-way, if the existing right-of-way is deemed inadequate based on the city's adopted standards.

We recommend that you or your engineer review the plat before it is filed with the Planning Department for preliminary presentation to the Planning & Zoning Commission. If the property is being replatted, and is or has been zoned for residential purposes during the last five years, or if it was deed restricted to not more than two residential units, the city must provide notice to all property owners within two hundred feet, notifying them of your intention to replat. The Planning & Zoning Commission will provide all persons the opportunity to comment at a public hearing before any action is taken on the plat.

The Planning & Zoning Commission may limit curb cuts, deny rear access on arterial streets, require traffic studies for commercial projects, or impose other provisions which are consistent with the city's adopted standards. The standards which apply are found in the Laredo Land Development Code, the Subdivision Ordinance, the Code of Ordinances, and in the standards established by the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The staff of the Planning Department are always available to assist you or answer questions concerning the city requirements. Be advised that no plat can be processed until and unless all property taxes are paid!

LIMIT OF APPROVAL

Plat approval is valid for a period of 18 months. If not recorded within that

time a single six months extension must be approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Variances to Subdivision Standards

Variances to the subdivision standards may be requested as part of the platting process if:

1. Strict compliance would create an undue hardship by depriving the owner of the reasonable use of his land;
2. Unusual physical characteristics exist; or
3. Unique design considerations warrant; or
4. Mitigation of noise, dust, vibration or excessive traffic requires it.

How do Zoning Regulations affect my property?

Zoning regulations control the use, building setbacks, height of structures, fencing, and signage within the city limits of Laredo. Unless superseded by limitations established by an official plat or building code, the zoning requirements will apply to your property. You may consult the Planning Department to find out what zoning rules apply.

AG	Agricultural District	B-1	Limited Business District
R-S	Residential Suburban District	B-1R	Limited Office/Residential District
R-1	Single Family Residential District	CBD	Central Business District
R-1A	Single Family Reduced Area District	B-3	Community Business District
R-1-MH	Single Family Manufactured Housing District	B-4	Highway Commercial District
RSM	Residential Suburban Multi-Family District	M-1	Light Manufacturing District
R-2	Multi-Family District	M-2	Heavy Manufacturing District
R-3	Mixed Residential District	MXD	Mixed Use Development District
R-O	Residential/Office District		

In general, R districts do not allow business uses, while residential development is not permitted in B-4 Highway Commercial or industrial zoning districts. Only the R-3 Mixed Residential District and R-1MH District permit manufactured housing.

ZONE CHANGES

Check to be sure that a zone change is required to use the property as you intend. It is advisable to check with the Planning Staff concerning the feasibility of what you propose, since your neighbors must be notified of any proposed zone change, and have the right to object to any change at a public hearing. If you choose to proceed, you will need to complete an application and to pay filing fees. Once property owners within 200 feet have been given notice of your intentions, your proposal will be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission with recommendations from the Planning Staff. Unlike the preparation of a plat, which requires the services of a professional engineer and registered surveyor, you may complete all the requirements for rezoning yourself. The Planning Department staff are prepared to assist you in every aspect of your application. In order to complete the application, you will need to know the intended use, and will need to prepare a site plan, drawn to scale, of your property. Access, parking, the present and proposed zoning classification, and adjacent land uses will affect the success of your efforts.

The Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing and approve or deny your application. If approved, their recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for action. If Planning & Zoning denies the zone change you may appeal the denial to the City Council. This appeal must be filed with the Planning Department in writing within thirty days of the decision. Where the decision is appealed, property owners must again be notified of the time and date at which the Council will hold a hearing on your case.

In either case, the Council will also hold a hearing on the merits of your proposal before taking action. If approved, an ordinance will be introduced changing the zoning classification for the property, and at a second meeting a final and second reading of the ordinance is required. If your application is denied, the action of the City Council is final. You may not reapply for a zone change on the same property for six months.

What else should I know about zoning?

Legal Non-conforming Uses - If you have sought a zone change to expand a use, the changing of the zoning requires that you conform to all the requirements of the new zone, including screening residential uses from a commercial zone, and meeting all parking regulations. If you did not have sufficient parking in the past, you will be required to provide all parking in the new zone. If a legal non-conforming use is discontinued for

more than six months, your right to continue that use is lost.

Setback Requirements - Your plans must conform to the building setbacks of the new zone.

Parking - If you used head-in parking as a non-conforming use, your parking will need to be modified to conform to requirements which prohibit this type of parking arrangement.

Special Use Permits - Some uses require a Special Use Permit. These include mobile home parks, salvage, junk and used appliance yards, oil and gas drilling operations, flea markets, and electronic displays. You should consult the staff in the Planning Department to ascertain what provisions may apply.

Airport Noise and Height - Property located in the vicinity of the Laredo International Airport is subject to height and use restrictions. Even if your property is platted, residential development requires avigation and noise easements in areas affected by airport noise.

Alcoholic Beverages - If your intended use requires a state permit to serve alcoholic beverages, the premises must be more than 300 feet of a school, church, or park. In B-4 Highway Commercial Districts, night clubs, bars, and cantinas must be located more than 300 feet from any residential district.

Fire Hazard Zone - If you are located close to the downtown, construction standards intended to limit your risk from fire will apply. Check these requirements with the Building Official.

Flood Hazards - The City of Laredo participates in the National Flood Insurance Program which imposes important restrictions on building and development in flood prone areas. You should consult the Planning Department concerning the location of these flood prone areas to ascertain the requirements.

Zoning Variances and Appeals - The Zoning Board of Adjustment considers appeals to the enforcement of zoning regulations. In order to seek an appeal, you must file a written application with the Planning Department. In seeking an appeal, you must establish a hardship arising from a physical condition which affects the property, and the variance sought must not adversely affect the purposes for which zoning regulations were established.

Platting and Zoning Fees

ZONING FEES

1. Change to Zoning narrative: \$50.00

2. Change to Zoning map (Commercial and Industrial):
 - Less than one acre \$250.00
 - One to five acres \$300.00
 - Over five acres \$400.00 plus \$50.00
for each acre over five acres
but not more than \$2,000.00
3. Change to the Zoning map (Residential):
 - Less than one acre \$200.00
 - One to five acres \$250.00
 - Over five acres \$400.00 plus \$50.00
for each acre over five acres
but not more than \$2,000.00
4. Special Use Permit \$100.00
5. Appeals to the Zoning Board of Adjustment
 - Administrative Appeals \$50.00
 - Substantive Appeals \$75.00

PLATTING FEES

1. Residential lots less than 20,000 square feet in area
 - Preliminary Plat \$50.00
 - Final Plat \$25.00
2. Residential subdivisions greater than 20,000 square feet and other subdivisions
 - a. Preliminary Plat Base fee \$300.00 and \$7.50
per single family residential lot and/or
\$40.00 per acre or fraction thereof
 - b. Final Plat base fee \$300.00 and \$5.00
per single family lot and/or \$40.00
per acre or fraction thereof
3. Vacating plats \$60.00/acre or fraction thereof
4. Street dedication plats \$60.00/acre or fraction thereof
5. Amending plats \$100.00
6. Extension of approval \$125.00
7. Plat name change \$50.00
8. Master or General Plan \$300.00
(filed separately from preliminary plat)
9. Recording fee payable to Webb County \$41.00

RELATED ORDINANCES & MISCELLANEOUS

Platting

To obtain a building permit, your lot must be properly platted and zoned for the appropriate use.

Historic District Zoning

Laredo has three designated historic districts: the San Agustín Historic District, the Old Mercado Historic District, and the St. Peter's Historic District. If your property lies within these districts, you will need the permission of the Historic District/Landmark Board to build, alter, restore, move or demolish any exterior portion of the building. This includes walls, fences, light fixtures, steps, pavement, or signs. This is required, whether or not a building permit is required. Specific questions about the historic districts should be obtained from the Historic Preservation Officer in the Planning Department.

Fencing and Screening

Opaque fencing of not less than seven feet in height is required between any commercial use and any residential district or residential property. Some materials may not be used for fencing, and masonry walls which exceed 30 inches in height require a building permit. Check with the Planning Department concerning fencing requirements.

Landscaping

New construction requires tree planting within or adjacent to the street right-of-way. A single family home will require two trees. The Planning Department has a list of trees which are both heat and drought tolerant and well-suited for the Laredo area. Please consult this list.

Sprinkler and Landscape Irrigation Systems

Permits are required for these systems, and specific authorization is required if the system is to be located within the public street right-of-way.

Building Codes

The City of Laredo has adopted the Standard Codes and the National Electrical Code. Please refer to these codes for building requirements.

Sidewalk Construction

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sidewalk construction is a requirement for all commercial construction and for all new residential subdivisions. Sidewalk width will depend on the type of street providing access to your property. Please check with the Planning Department or Building Division for more information.

SEEKING ASSISTANCE

City Hall	791-7300
Building Inspections	795-2990
Planning Department	791-7441
Engineering Department	791-7346
Health Department (Environmental Services)	723-2051
Tax/Utility Collections	791-7402
Fire Marshall	722-3979
CP&L Customer Service	1-800-274- 2611
Southwestern Bell Telephone	727-6703
In San Antonio	1-800-499- 7928
Entex	723-6351