



Certification of Annexations: Procedures

Reporting Annexations to the Office of Financial Management

Per state law (RCW 35.13.260 and 35A.14.700), the Office of Financial Management (OFM) is required to approve annexations for population purposes. All boundary changes (annexation and boundary line adjustment) must be reported whether population and housing are within the area or not.

Per agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB), OFM will submit boundary changes on behalf of Washington state's jurisdictions to the USCB. The USCB will not accept any annexation or boundary line adjustment that has not been certified by OFM. Timely submission of any boundary change to OFM is critical. Missed boundary changes can negatively affect the federal funding for local governments, population estimates for sub county areas, and the American Community Survey program. Please contact OFM if you have any questions.

OFM will assist you as much as possible in meeting annexation certification requirements. The law requires annexation documentation to be submitted to OFM within thirty (30) days of the annexation effective date. It is to your advantage to inform OFM of forthcoming annexations that contain large populations (1,000 or more) so the timing of the census can be arranged to meet quarterly filing deadlines.

All problems with the boundary change documentation, whether it is with the ordinance (or resolution), legal description, map, or census paperwork, must be resolved before OFM will approve an annexation for population purposes. This is true even if the delay causes an annexation to miss inclusion in a quarterly annexation filing.

Quarterly annexation filing occurs on the last working day of the following months: November, February, May and August.

Document Requirements

Per RCWs 35.13.260 and 35A.14.700 the following documents must be sent in for each annexation:

The Annexation and Municipal Boundary Change Certificate. This is a one-page [form](#) that is located on the OFM website. Upon approval, the original is kept by OFM, a copy will be sent to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and an email will be sent to the originating city/town to notify that the annexation has been approved and the final is located on the OFM website with appropriate coding. The original form must be mailed to OFM.

The final annexation ordinance. One copy of the final, signed ordinance must accompany the above-mentioned certificate. The ordinance must contain, in its text or as an attachment/exhibit, the legal description of the annexed area.

The map of the annexed area. One copy of a map of the annexed area is needed. The preferred size of the map is 8½”x11” or 8½”x14.” The map should show the annexed area outlined in red and the former city limits in green. Enough of the city should be included so that the area can be located on a master map. Maps should conform to acceptable engineering standards, including directional arrow, scale, street names, rivers, and other relevant physical characteristics. A plat map should not be used as the primary map because they generally do not show the annexed area in relation to the former city limits.

Census paperwork. A door-to-door enumeration of the annexed area is also required by RCW. The [forms](#) to be used can be found on the OFM website. These forms must be used to enumerate the population and housing of the annexed area. Alternate forms or electronic devices cannot be used.

OFM has created an [annexation/boundary line adjustment checklist](#) to assist you in reporting the annexation to OFM.

Transmittal of Documents to OFM

Do not make and keep duplicate copies of the census forms; specifically, the OFM Census Sheet A – Field Enumeration. A word of warning: make sure the census paperwork is sent to OFM using a method that tracks its progress. If it is lost in transit, you are required to re-do the census.

All documents should be sent to:

Office of Financial Management
Forecasting and Research Division
P.O. Box 43124
Olympia, WA 98504-3124

If using, FedEx, UPS or other delivery service use the following:

Office of Financial Management
Forecasting and Research Division
Insurance Building
302 Sid Snyder Ave SW
Suite 450
Olympia, WA 98501-1342

Electronic documents. Annexation documents and information (except census) can be transmitted to OFM at any time in the process. In the pre-council approval stage, OFM would like cities/towns to email us a preliminary copy of the legal description and map. Upon council approval and passage, please email a PDF of the final signed ordinance and map to OFM at pop.annexations@ofm.wa.gov. Also, an electronic copy of the ordinance is needed. These copies are independent of those needed with the *Annexation and Municipal Boundary Change Certificate*.

Confidentiality

Per RCW 42.56.615, all enumeration data collected during a census is confidential. Only those persons directly involved in the census can have access to the paperwork. Confidentiality means that copies cannot be made for any purpose. Also, per the above RCW, OFM must destroy the enumeration data after it is used. The forms with names will be put in a secure recycling bin. OFM only keeps the data as entered on the Summary Tabulation Sheet. Only OFM employees involved in the approval process will have access to the census forms.

Verification of Legal Boundary

City boundaries must be recorded accurately. In the past, many of the annexation legal descriptions had been difficult to decipher, incomplete, and incorrect. A few times a year, already incorporated areas have been included in the proposed annexation area. Often mistakes in the legal description must be amended by another ordinance passed by the city/town council. This takes time and may result in missing inclusion in a quarterly annexation filing and the loss of tax monies based on population.

As a result of this experience, OFM has partnered with the GIS and Roadway Data Office at the WSDOT to verify preliminary boundary descriptions prior to ordinance adoption. OFM encourages cities to send OFM preliminary copies of the legal description and map. These are generally available in advance at the time the county checks for sufficiency of petition or required information is sent to utilities 60 days before the effective date. Any mistakes can then be corrected before going to council.

Boundary description verification by WSDOT can add one to two weeks to the certification process. This period may be longer due to many annexations submitted or due to problems in deciphering the annexation boundary description.

Suggestions for preparing legal descriptions. The DOT cartographic staff have several suggestions that will help cities prepare legal descriptions that can be readily plotted, verified and processed.

- Once a boundary description is written and typed and ready to be submitted for consideration to the city council or the electorate, have someone other than the person who wrote the description plot it on a map as it is written. This confirms that the description is written correctly and there is sufficient information to make it possible to plot. This boundary description—not the accompanying map—is the legal definition of the property annexed.
- Documents needed to interpret and plot the annexation boundary description must accompany the annexation. For example, the portion of the boundary description shown below is legal but cannot be plotted without the documents from King County.

“And also lots 1, 2 and 3 of King County Short Plat No. 880080 recorded under King County Recording No. 811040550, said short plat being a portion of tract 4, block 4, Terrace Park 10-acre tracts. According to the plat recorded in Volume 15 of Plats page 56 Records of King County.”

- Supplemental documents should be provided in all the following circumstances:
 - When *tax lots or plats* are used in boundary descriptions,
 - If the boundary follows a circuitous right-of-way,
 - If long abandoned rights-of-way are followed, or
 - When mean high or mean low water marks are used in a description.
- Whenever possible, boundaries should be described in terms of:
 - A true point of beginning with bearings and distances,
 - Portions of sections or lines within sections and,
 - Readily known features, such as “the North right of way line of 141st Street to the East right of way line of 53rd Avenue.
- Tie the point of beginning to readily know points such as quarter corners, intersections or intersecting rights of ways of major streets. Do not start a description on a tax lot, government lot or Donation Land Claim (DLC) line or corner. If possible, avoid using government lots anywhere in the annexation description. Government lots are usually difficult to plot.
- Spell out words. Abbreviations slow the description reading and calculation process.
- Do not define an annexation boundary by exclusion. That is, do not write a description that takes in everything, then excludes in small portions almost everything. Describe what is being annexed, not what is not being annexed, unless the description of the exclusion is shorter than that of the area being included.

Annexation Census Requirements, Timing, and Filing Deadlines

If an annexation contains population, the statutes require a door-to-door enumeration of housing and population in the annexed territory. Since the population counts are tied to the state’s funding allocation, the census must provide an accurate, and verifiable count of the residents. OFM, by law, must certify the census along with other annexation paperwork.

An annexation census is required to be conducted within 30 days of the effective date of the annexation. Census mapping and preparation can and should begin prior to the annexation's effective date. However, enumeration should not begin until the annexed parcel officially becomes part of the city. Cities often want to begin the enumeration early, before all county and city legal processing requirements have been completed. OFM will allow some cities to begin the enumeration a week or two prior to the annexation's effective date **if** the ordinance has passed city council and all legal annexation requirements are completed. Approval for an early census start is usually given when a quarterly filing deadline is approaching and there is a large population to be enumerated. Enumeration prior to the effective date of the annexation must be pre-approved by OFM.

OFM has provided detailed census [manual](#) and [training materials](#) for both the administrator and enumerators. Please read the manuals carefully and make sure to go over the training materials prior to conducting the census. A clear understanding of the procedures and definitions is key to a successful census. Please contact OFM if you have any questions. OFM will do its best to assist the cities in their census preparations.

All censuses are checked by our office. Field checks are also done by OFM if considered necessary.

To allow sufficient time for processing, OFM must receive the completed census forms and other annexation documentation by the filing deadlines shown below. Please note that any annexations received after the recommended dates may not get processed in the same quarterly period. Such annexations will be processed in the next quarterly period.

Date Annexation Documents Need to be received by OFM For Processing by End of Quarterly Annexation Period

Quarterly Annexation Period	Population in Annexed Area				
	0—99 People	100—499 People	500—2,499 People	2,500—4,999 People	5,000 + People
Start Filing Date* September 1 – November 30	November 23	November 15	November 1	November 1	October 15
December 1 – February 28	February 21	February 15	February 1	February 1	January 15
March 1 – May 31	May 24	May 15	May 1	Call OFM	Call OFM
June 1 – August 31	August 24	August 15	August 1	August 1	July 15

*Note: The actual filing date is the last working day of the indicated month.

If possible, please avoid submitting annexations with a population of 2,500 or more for the May 31 filing date. Population staff are developing annual April 1 population estimates from April through June. This may cause annexations with large populations to not be processed in time for the May 31 filing. If you do need to submit a large population annexation, please talk with us in advance so that work schedules can be planned. Please plan accordingly.

Uncooperative Residents and Other Enumeration Problems

Annexation areas may contain uncooperative persons who are unhappy about becoming a part of the city. In such cases, uncooperative residents make the enumeration more difficult by refusing to provide required census information. Some of the hostility may be managed by carefully worded census publicity and enumerator training. The name and number of persons living in an uncooperative household may often be obtained from a neighbor. Sometimes it is only possible to obtain the number of people living in the house from the neighbors (not the names). This is permissible for a limited number of houses. Obtaining the names of residents is a census control tool and verifies accuracy. For the census to be considered acceptable, names must be obtained for the residents in at least 95 percent of the occupied housing. In addition, supplemental census information, entered on the census sheets, must indicate the source of the information obtained. This supplemental information is subject to verification by OFM. You are welcome to give residents Forecasting and Research’s name and phone number to the residents so they can verify legitimacy.

Large apartment complexes with difficult to contact residents and uncooperative apartment managers may also create count problems. It is advisable to contact the managers of large apartments in advance of the enumeration to identify problems. It is sometimes necessary to contact the owner(s) of an apartment building to secure the manager's cooperation. All suitable methods must be utilized to get first-hand information from difficult to contact residents. If a telephone notice is left at the door, the telephone needs to be attended to by the staff. Using a voice mail system is not allowed as the residency questions included on every Census Sheet A cannot be asked and answered.

Office of Financial Management Census Training

OFM has posted [training manuals and presentation materials](#) on our website. We have different presentation training depending on the size of the census. OFM has an abbreviated set of training presentations for small censuses (less than 50 housing units, with no group quarters, or special circumstances). Larger censuses are more complicated and often involve the city hiring an administrator to oversee the census and to hire the enumerators. The training presentations aimed at the larger censuses discuss some of the logistical issues regarding hiring process and scheduling that smaller censuses often do not encounter.

If you would like to request an in person training at our office in Olympia or you have any questions regarding the online training, please contact us at 360-902-0599 or email at pop.annexations@ofm.wa.gov. A request for training should be received at least a week in advance of the intended training date.

Central Annexation Tracking System (CATS)

All boundary changes (annexations, de-annexations, boundary line adjustments) received by OFM are posted on our [Central Annexation Tracking System \(CATS\)](#) website. They are posted by calendar year received, ordinance numbers, and submitting city/town name. The minimum needed to be posted is a copy of the legal ordinance (signed) and a map of the annexed area. Other information is posted upon receipt.

CATS starts with the 2009 calendar year. Sometimes an original ordinance and its amendment are posted in separate years. If you need a copy of an earlier annexation ordinance, please contact us or you might be able to get it off the Secretary of State's digital archives website.

If you have questions or need assistance, please call us at 360-902-0599 or email at pop.annexations@ofm.wa.gov.