



Certification of Annexations: Procedures

Office of Financial Management Assistance

OFM will assist you in meeting annexation certification requirements. 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.

OFM will provide manuals and census forms for all annexation censuses, and census administrator and enumerator training for large annexation censuses. To schedule a training session, please contact Diana Brunink at (360) 902-0597 (email: diana.brunink@ofm.wa.gov). A request for training should be received at least a week in advance of the intended training date. OFM conducts Census Administrator Training in February of each year. Any city intending to annex areas with large populations may send a representative to the training session. Cities should call or send a notice in advance to participate in the training.

The Census Administrator's Manual, Enumerator's Manual, and the Census Tabulation Manual are available upon request. Please contact Diana Brunink at (360) 902-0597 or the main reception desk at (360) 902-0599. These manuals are located on OFM's website at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/annex/forms/default.asp>.

Mail all the annexation documents to:

Office of Financial Management
Forecasting Division
318 General Administration Building
P.O. Box 43113
Olympia, WA 98504-3113

Annexation Filing Requirements

The following documents must be included with **three copies** of the annexation certificate (RCW 35.13.260 and 35A.14.700):

1. **Three copies of the final ordinance** containing the legal description of the annexed area;
2. **Three copies of a map clearly showing annexed area and existing city limits** on an 8½"x11" or an 8½"x14" size paper. Outline the annexation boundaries in **red**; outline former city limits in **green**. Maps should conform to acceptable engineering standards, including directional arrow, scale, street designations, rivers, and other relevant physical characteristics; and,

3. ***The original, handwritten Special Population Census Sheets*** used to enumerate the population and housing of the annexed area and all census summary sheets. Census procedures and definitions must follow the Office of Financial Management's (OFM) Enumerator's Manual. Duplicate copies of the census are not needed.

Verification of Annexation Boundaries

City boundaries must be recorded accurately. Municipal boundaries are used in the collection and distribution of revenues and in the administration of state, local and federal programs. Nearly 300 municipal annexations are now certified by the Office of Financial Management and recorded by the Washington State Department of Transportation each year. In the past, many of the annexation boundary descriptions had been difficult to decipher, incomplete, and sometimes incorrect. Not infrequently, incorporated areas have been included in the proposed annexation area. Sometimes the annexation description includes an area that is in another city. It is difficult and time consuming to correct these situations. Our goal is to obtain clear, concise, and accurate boundary descriptions that are easy to plot.

Annexations are now sent to the Cartographic Division at the Department of Transportation (DOT) for verification prior to approval and certification by the Office of Financial Management (OFM). Boundary description verification by the Department of Transportation usually adds one to two weeks to the certification process. This period may be longer due to a large number of annexations submitted toward the end of each filing period, or due to problems in deciphering the annexation boundary description.

Please plan for the additional delay when submitting annexations for approval and certification. This is particularly true for annexations that contain sizable populations. Delays in processing these annexations may result in a loss of revenues anticipated by the city. When large populations are involved, it is advisable to contact OFM staff and submit a copy of the legal boundary description and map in advance of submitting the completed certificate, census and other required information. This will allow an early identification and resolution of boundary description problems.

With assistance from DOT's cartographic staff, OFM is developing a guide to writing clear, concise, and accurate legal definitions for annexation boundaries. Until this guide is complete, the cartographic staff have several suggestions that will assist cities in preparing legal descriptions that can be readily plotted, verified and processed.

Suggestions for Preparing Legal Descriptions

1. 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.***

2. ***Documents needed to interpret and plot the annexation boundary description must be copied and accompany the annexation.*** For example, the portion of the boundary description shown below is legal, but cannot be used by Department of Transportation staff or anyone without access to the quoted documents stored in 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 of the following circumstances:

- If ***tax lots or plats*** are used in boundary descriptions, include a copy of the plat map or other needed documents with the annexation.
- If the boundary follows ***a circuitous right of way***, include a copy of the right of way plan map.
- If ***long abandoned rights of ways*** are followed, include a copy of the plan, map or right of way plan. “Following the East right of way of the Oregon Washington Rail & Navigation Co. abandon in 1897.” is not sufficient information—nor is a rail right of way description which has not been updated since the Oregon Washington Rail and Navigation Co. became a part of Union Pacific Railroad.
- If ***mean high or mean low water marks*** are used in a description, provide clear maps and sources.

3. ***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.

4. ***Tie the point of beginning to readily known 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.

5. ***Spell out words.*** Abbreviations slow the description reading and calculation process.

6. ***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.*

Census Requirements

The purpose of an annexation census is to enumerate all residential housing units and residents in the annexed territory. The count of population in annexed territory is conducted exactly the same way as in a standard city or town census. Annexations may include no residences, a few houses, or a large population. Regardless of size, cities and towns are required to file all annexations with the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for certification. ***Until the annexations are certified by OFM, population in annexed areas is not considered for determining the population of cities and towns, and hence are not used for revenue distribution.***

The accuracy and completeness of population and housing count in an annexation census is as important as in any standard special city censuses. ***Annexed population must be accurately determined because it impacts the revenue distribution to all cities and towns.*** Census procedures must meet the certification requirements set forth by OFM. These procedures are outlined in the Enumerator's Manual, which include:

- Complete systematic canvass of the census area by block;
- Contacting each household and listing the names of all persons meeting the census definition of resident;
- A listing of all housing units by structure type, both occupied and vacant; and
- Summary tabulation of population by structure type.

Timing of the Annexation Census and Meeting Filing Deadlines

An annexation census should be conducted within 30 days of the effective date of the annexation. Census mapping and preparation may begin prior to the annexation's effective date, but actual enumeration should not begin until the annexed parcel officially becomes a part of the city. Cities often want to begin the enumeration early, sometimes 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 all legal annexation requirements are completed. This is usually done when a quarterly filing deadline is approaching and there is a large population to be enumerated. ***Enumeration in an annexed area prior to the effective date of the annexation should be pre-approved by OFM.***

All censuses are office checked. Field checks are also done by OFM if considered necessary. On the basis of approved annexation censuses, OFM makes a quarterly adjustment of city populations for state revenue distributions. ***Any problems found in the census and other documentation need to be resolved prior to the certification.*** 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 filed 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.

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 and annexations with large populations may not be processed in time for the May 31 filing. 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 the 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 persons 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 the accuracy of the census is very important. 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 schedules, must indicate the source of the information obtained about the number of individuals in the uncooperative household. This supplemental information is subject to verification by OFM.

Large apartment complexes with difficult to contact residents and uncooperative apartment managers may also create count problems. Often, there is very little time to resolve unanticipated problems, given quarterly filing deadlines. 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 have to be utilized to get first-hand information from difficult to contact residents, whether in large apartment complexes or in houses. If a telephone notice is left at the door, the telephone needs to be attended by the staff or some other arrangements, like voice-mail or answering machine, have to be made for use by those residents who return home late.