



Public Information

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Planning Division
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What is Merger?

What is “merger”?

“Merger” is the combining of two or more lots into one lot.

When does “merger” occur?

Prior to July 1, 1984 two contiguous lots “merged” at the moment all three following conditions were simultaneously met:

1. At least one of the lots was not developed with a principal structure;
2. At least one of the lots did not meet the minimum parcel size as established by Zoning or the Open Space Element of the General Plan and;
3. Both were owned in whole or in part by the same person or entity.

Existing state law contains provisions which limit continued unrecorded mergers to certain “resource areas” and other criteria.

What are contiguous lots?

Lots are considered to be contiguous if they share a common boundary or if they are only separated by a narrow strip (such as a road or canal) but can reasonably be developed as a single project.

How did the County find out that my lots are “merged,” since it’s such a large county?

There are a number of information sources which lead to the discovery of “merged” lots. The County has specialists who are trained in title searching and other facets of determining “merged” parcels. The status of “merged” lots is often discovered when a property owner seeks County permits related to sale, development, or change of use of the property.

When did the County enact the “merger” ordinance?

The County’s Merger Ordinance was effective from March of 1965 through June 30, 1984, causing contiguous lots to automatically “merge” whenever they simultaneously met the conditions listed in “When does “merger” occur?”

Can I still utilize my lots, even though they are “merged”?

Yes. However, two or more lots which have “merged” into one will be treated as only one lot.

For example, if the applicable zoning permits only one dwelling per lot, two vacant lots that have merged could have only one dwelling built on it. If one of the two “merged” lots already had a dwelling on it, no additional principal dwellings could be added.

Can I convey off the “merged” lots separately?

No. “Merged” lots can only be conveyed together as one entity. If one of the “merged” lots is conveyed as an entity separate from the other lot or lots with which it has merged, the conveyance is an illegal subdivision.

What can I do to re-subdivide my property?

In some cases, lots which have “merged” can be separated again by a new subdivision of the property. Such subdivisions are regulated by state law and local ordinance.

Why didn’t the title company tell me my lot(s) merged?

Title companies insure ownership. They may ask the County for verification that a title transfer meets requirements of Subdivision Laws, Zoning, and the General Plan. This, however, has not been a common practice in the past. Recorded Notices of Merger are disclosed in title reports.

What can a buyer do to detect a “merged” lot?

Buyers or their real estate agents can verify whether a lot has merged by contacting the Ventura County Planning Division.

Whom can I contact on these matters?

Property owners or their real estate agents may contact Ventura County Planning Division staff for information on “merger.”

Phone: 805/654-3635 **Web site:** www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning **Address:** County of Ventura Planning Division, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#1740, Ventura, California 93009.