

# Smart Codes, Smart Process Checklist



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**NAHB**  
National Association  
of Home Builders

## *Communities can enhance housing affordability with a comprehensive planning and development framework.*

- **Prepare a truly comprehensive plan**
  - ▶ Include a housing and economic development element in addition to land use and transportation
  - ▶ Integrate the different elements of the plan and understand their interdependency
  - ▶ Ensure affordability and availability of both housing and lots
- **Link implementing regulations to the plan**
- **Allow a mix of land uses, including open space**
- **Allow "as of right" a variety and mix of housing types, including:**
  - ▶ Attached/multifamily
  - ▶ Manufactured homes/modular
  - ▶ Accessory dwelling units
  - ▶ Live-work units
  - ▶ Accessible units
- **Allow innovation and flexibility in site planning and design, including:**
  - ▶ PUD (planned unit development)
  - ▶ Cluster
  - ▶ Small lots
  - ▶ Pocket neighborhoods/bungalow courts/cottage clusters
  - ▶ Higher density
  - ▶ TND (traditional neighborhood design/development) option
  - ▶ Zero lot line
  - ▶ Reduced setback requirements
  - ▶ Reduced street widths
  - ▶ Multimodal streets and connectivity
  - ▶ Alternative street and sidewalk surfaces
  - ▶ Alleys
- ▶ Shared parking/access
- ▶ Alternative stormwater and septic system approaches
- ▶ Altered utility installation
- **Allow and encourage infill and redevelopment**
- **Offer incentives for providing community amenities/affordable housing/sustainable features**
  - ▶ Density bonuses or transfers
  - ▶ Tax credits
  - ▶ Reduced fees/rebates
  - ▶ Expedited permitting
  - ▶ Reduced parking requirements
- **Limit scope and duration of moratoria**
- **Plan for and fund infrastructure/capital improvements program (CIP)**
- **Coordinate CIP with comprehensive plan**
- **Use fair and broad-based funding mechanisms**
- **If fees and exactions are imposed, ensure they are properly set (proportionality, nexus, dedication)**



*Ensure an efficient land development review and approval process. Certainty, stability, predictability and presumption of approval should be guiding principles.*

- **Streamline/consolidate the review process**
  - ▶ Designate an interdepartmental review coordinator
  - ▶ Conduct pre-application conferences
  - ▶ Provide ordinance approval process checklists and flow charts
  - ▶ Specify timeframes/limits for review and approvals (including public hearings) to ensure clear process and timely decisions
  - ▶ Consider a “deemed approved” provision
  - ▶ Conduct concurrent, not sequential, reviews wherever possible
- **Create a process for expedited review**
  - ▶ Minimize reliance on rezonings and special approvals
  - ▶ Uses allowed by right should receive administrative approval
  - ▶ Expedite desirable housing projects such as affordable housing (120 percent of AMI and below), infill, redevelopment, cluster
- **Have a one-stop permitting/central permit information desk**
- **Implement online permitting, online submission of building plans, and real-time permit tracking and inspection status**
- **Increase capacity by maintaining appropriate staffing levels, hiring specialized staff, and providing training and cross-training**
- **Have clear submittal requirements with appropriate level of detail**
- **Allow broad and inclusive public participation in formulation of plans and ordinances but more limited participation at site-specific permit stage**
- **Eliminate multiple hearings and reopening of settled issues**
- **Allow and use vesting and development agreements**
- **Use remediation/mediation as alternatives to appeals**
- **Allow self-certification of plans and/or inspections by engineers**
- **Specify timeframe for inspection of constructed improvements and release of performance bonds/guarantees, and combine inspections**



Zan Maddox



## *Evaluation and accountability – Shine a light on the process.*

- Implement a land market monitoring/buildable lot inventory system to ensure land availability and achievable densities and to examine effects on affordability
- Inventory vacant/publicly owned land for possible public-private partnerships
- Update/evaluate plans and regulations regularly
  - ▶ Simplify and reduce the number of zoning districts
  - ▶ Define key terms and use simple, clear, direct, objective language
- Regularly evaluate the process (especially length and complexity), content, and consistency of regulation
  - ▶ Prepare annual report, including statistics such as average approval time
  - ▶ Customer satisfaction surveys

*For more information on land use and housing affordability strategies, please visit [nahb.org/lu101](http://nahb.org/lu101)*

### *Related NAHB resources include:*

- How Did They Do It? Discovering New Opportunities for Affordable Housing, 2016
- Inclusionary Zoning Primer, 2016
- Development Process Efficiency: Cutting Through the Red Tape, 2015
- Land Development Checklist, 2013
- Research on State and Local Means of Increasing Affordable Housing, 2008

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