Smart Codes, Smart Process Checklist
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)
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

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

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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