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)
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 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**

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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

Or contact Claire Worshtil at cworshtil@nahb.org or Debbie Bassert at dbassert@nahb.org

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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