



# Flexible Single-Family Development Regulations

Flexible single-family development regulations refer to strategies that allow lot size, setbacks, sidewalks, street widths, height and other development standards to vary from what is otherwise prescribed by the zoning code. Flexible standards allow for denser and more diverse development and more economical use of available land while retaining the look of a single-family neighborhood. The cost savings realized from lower land, infrastructure, and other development outlays can translate into lower per-unit housing costs.

## BACKGROUND

Adjusting development regulations to permit varied setbacks, reduced street width and varied building height measurements in certain zones may reduce development costs and provide more diverse housing options. Flexible standards can be implemented through planned unit development (PUD) ordinances, overlay zones, or other amendments to development standards.

### Setbacks

Narrower setbacks may increase the number of lots available for development and reduce infrastructure costs for developers. Flexible setback requirements can also help protect natural resources by allowing homes to be built in clusters, on smaller lots or closer than zoning permits (see also [Lot Size Averaging](#)). Adjustments to front yard setback requirements can reduce the cost of driveways and utility lines. Reducing required side yard setbacks can save additional land costs and allow more efficient infrastructure servicing. These cost savings to developers can, in turn, be passed on to homebuyers or renters.



## TOOL PROFILE

### Objectives

[Housing Options in Expensive Markets](#)

[Missing Middle Density](#)

[Addressing Racial Inequities](#)

### Type of Tool

**Other Regulatory Tools**

### Project Type

**Single family**

**Ownership**

### Affordability Level

**Market-rate incentives and tools**



## Transportation Infrastructure

Street design and construction standards can account for significant development costs, so some jurisdictions have sought to reduce the cost of housing by revising their street development standards. Narrower street widths can decrease costs for construction, maintenance, and land. Similarly, [parking reductions](#) or grouped parking can also cut down development costs.

To maintain the existing look of single-family neighborhoods, local jurisdictions may retain some standards for curbs, planting strips, and sidewalks, but reduce pavement widths of travel lanes, allow sidewalks on one side, allow rolled curbs instead of vertical curbs, and reduce overall right-of-way widths.

## Height Measurement

To encourage varied roof forms, some jurisdictions measure building height to the mid-point of a pitched roof rather than to the top of the roof. This may also accommodate additional living space.

