



Master Planned Communities

Master planned communities are grand-scale projects for developing new neighborhoods under a central, guiding plan. They are designed to incorporate the full range of land uses needed to establish a complete neighborhood including residential, commercial, office, civic/institutional and open space. Development is often designed around a network of public spaces, parks and recreational amenities. As a condition for approval, master planned projects frequently include an allotment of affordable units, which can be encouraged through the use of an inclusionary requirement or [development agreement](#).

BACKGROUND

Master planned communities (MPCs) allow developers flexibility and creativity by establishing whole neighborhoods on large tracts of land. A master plan establishes a conceptual layout of residential tracts, streets, recreation, open space, commercial centers and other features. Because of the complex and multi-faceted nature of the projects, MPCs are often phased over many years. Design review and public participation processes, including meetings, feedback, and visioning sessions specifically related to the MPC are appropriate at the time of project development and can provide a framework for establishing neighborhood-specific regulations and desired components.

[Development agreements](#) operate with MPCs and establish neighborhood-specific land uses and development standards. Affordable housing and diverse housing types are often mandated in the agreements. Including a development agreement with an MPC can greatly assist the development of affordable housing in expensive housing markets. Incorporating an [inclusionary zoning](#) requirement can further reinforce the development of affordable housing.

TOOL PROFILE

Objectives

[Housing Options in Expensive Markets](#)

[Missing Middle Density](#)

Type of Tool

Development types

Project Type

Single family

Multifamily

Ownership

Rental

Affordability Level

Market-rate incentives and tools

MPCs are generally treated differently than traditional neighborhoods. Rather than having many different zones, the entire MPC might have only one zone or its own specific zoning. The residential development standards may be allowed to differ from what would ordinarily be prescribed for a given housing type. Small lots, [cluster development](#) and other [missing middle density housing choices](#) are common components and may be easier to facilitate in an MPC.

The number of permits needed for the development is likely to be large. It can be helpful to establish a special review process or team devoted to the development of the entire neighborhood. Coordination between utility and land use planners and staff will be necessary.

