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## **REDUCED MINIMUM LOT SIZES / SPECIFIED MAXIMUM LOT SIZES**

### **Description:**

Residential lot sizes are established in municipal zoning codes. Codes can set the minimum and/or the maximum acreage or square footage on which a residential unit can be built.

*Minimum lot sizes:* By setting minimum lot sizes, many municipalities effectively preclude (or "zone out") the possibility of providing smaller, more affordable homes and lots. Relaxing zoning restrictions to reduce or eliminate minimum lot-size requirements gives developers the flexibility to build smaller, more affordable homes on smaller, more affordable lots for a variety of consumer groups who need and desire such options, including empty nesters, elderly adults, younger individuals with disabilities, young single workers, childless couples, and others.

*Maximum lot sizes:* In response to restrictive minimum lot-size requirements and a growing demand for smaller, more affordable residential options, some communities have enacted "maximum" lot sizes; that is, land parcels cannot exceed a certain size for individual housing units, which allows smaller, less expensive homes and higher-density development. A maximum lot size requirement can be used to achieve a community development goal/purpose for designated areas, such as a Planned Unit Development, a senior housing overlay zone, a transit-oriented walkable community, or a mixed-use development project.

### **Benefits:**

#### *For residents:*

- Greater zoning flexibility in specifying lot sizes allows more alternatives in housing types and housing affordability, which:
  - Responds more effectively to the diversity in housing needs and preferences that characterizes a community's resident population.
  - Supports the ability of older adults and individuals with disabilities to successfully age in place in their own communities.
  - Supports the substantial efforts of family caregivers of older adults and younger people with disabilities by providing much greater housing choices from which to organize the living environment that works best for both the caregiver and the individual needing on-going care.

#### *For communities:*

- Greater zoning flexibility in specifying residential lot sizes allows much greater development innovation, which:
  - Stabilizes the community's residential base by providing residents with greater choices for successfully remaining in the community instead of relocating to other communities or states to find housing choices that better meet their needs.

- Improves the overall well-being of the community by promoting the development of alternative housing choices, which is a critical element of a *livable community*.

**Impediments or barriers to development or implementation:**

- Reducing minimum lot sizes or specifying maximum lot sizes changes familiar development codes (and familiar community design), which can elicit fear among residents of density, overcrowding, reduced property values, and altered neighborhood character.

**Resource—examples and ordinances:**

- City Council—Downtown Action Team (2000), *Downtown 2010 Sector Development Plan*. Albuquerque, NM: City of Albuquerque, Planning Department, Downtown Action Team.  
<http://www.cabq.gov/planning/publications/down2010/preface.pdf>.
- Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (2001), *Onondaga County Settlement Plan*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse-Onondaga Planning Agency.  
<http://syracusehenandnow.org/SettlementPlan/SettlementPlan.htm>.  
<http://www.esf.edu/la/resources/TNDCode/TNTCode.PDF>.