

Master Plan Fact Sheet

Master Plan (Conceptual Plan) – Definition and Purpose

A Master Plan (Conceptual Plan) is a planning-level tool used to illustrate the overall vision and development framework for a property or area prior to detailed design or regulatory approvals. Unlike a Planned Unit Development (PUD), a Master Plan is **non-binding and illustrative**, and does not establish zoning or enforceable development standards.

It is the purpose of the Master Plan process to provide a clear understanding of how a property is intended to develop over time, while allowing flexibility for refinement as additional engineering, design, and regulatory review occurs.

The objectives of the Master Plan process are to:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of land use, layout, and development intent
- Promote coordinated planning of infrastructure, access, and circulation
- Support efficient and logical development patterns
- Identify potential constraints and opportunities early in the process
- Ensure consistency with the Town's Master Plan and adopted policies
- Improve communication between applicants, staff, and decision-makers
- Guide future development applications such as subdivision, site plan, or PUD

What a Master Plan Is Used For

A Master Plan is typically used to:

- Evaluate annexation proposals
- Review large or multi-phase developments
- Understand mixed-use or coordinated development patterns
- Establish a long-term vision for undeveloped or transitioning land
- Guide future subdivision, site plan, or building permit applications
- Provide a framework for infrastructure planning and phasing

Key Characteristic

A Master Plan is **not regulatory**—it illustrates what is intended, but does not establish binding requirements.

🏠 Big takeaway:

A Master Plan = guidance

A PUD = law

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Key Differences Between Master Plan and PUD

1. Legal Authority

Master Plan

- Non-binding and illustrative
- Does not establish zoning or development rights
- Can be refined over time

PUD

- Adopted by ordinance
- Becomes binding zoning for the property
- Establishes enforceable standards

2. Purpose

Master Plan

- Shows overall development vision
- Used for early-stage planning and evaluation

PUD

- Establishes site-specific zoning and standards
- Used for final development approval and regulation

3. Flexibility

Master Plan

- Highly flexible
- Can evolve as the project develops

PUD

- Limited flexibility once adopted
- Requires formal amendment to change

4. Level of Detail

Master Plan

- Conceptual and high-level
- Does not require detailed engineering

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PUD

- Detailed and comprehensive
- Includes enforceable development standards

5. Timing in Development Process

Master Plan

- Early stage (annexation or pre-development)

PUD

- Later stage (post-annexation or when seeking flexibility)

What a Master Plan Includes

A Master Plan typically includes:

- General land use layout
- Approximate lot configuration or density
- Conceptual circulation (vehicular and pedestrian)
- General open space and amenity areas
- Identification of natural features or constraints
- Conceptual infrastructure and utilities
- Phasing strategy (if applicable)
- Relationship to surrounding properties

Purpose of a Master Plan

The purpose of a Master Plan is to:

- Provide early-stage evaluation before significant design investment
- Ensure alignment with the Town's Master Plan and zoning framework
- Identify potential issues or improvements early
- Establish a clear development vision
- Guide future applications and approvals

When a Master Plan Is Appropriate

A Master Plan is appropriate when:

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- A project is large or complex
- Development will occur in phases
- Infrastructure planning is required
- Mixed-use or coordinated development is proposed
- The Town needs to understand the “big picture” before approvals

When a Master Plan Is Not Necessary

A Master Plan is generally not required when:

- Development is small or straightforward
- The project fully complies with zoning
- No coordinated or phased development is proposed
- A simple subdivision or site plan is sufficient

Best Practice (Modern Approach)

Most modern development codes:

- Require Master Plans when:
 - Evaluating annexations
 - Reviewing large or phased developments
 - Understanding overall development intent
- Do NOT require Master Plans when:
 - Projects are simple or compliant with zoning
 - No coordination or long-term planning is needed

Final Takeaway

A Master Plan allows the Town to understand **what is being proposed** without prematurely regulating **how it must be built**.