

PUD Fact Sheet

Planned Unit Development (PUD) – Definition and Purpose

A **Planned Unit Development (PUD)** is a zoning and development tool that allows a tract of land to be planned and developed as a unified project under a single, coordinated plan, rather than under the strict application of standard zoning regulations. Once approved, a PUD establishes a **site-specific regulatory framework** governing land use, design, and development standards for the property.

It is the purpose of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations to promote the most beneficial and creative development of land within the Town. Through the use of the PUD process, greater flexibility and innovation in site design and development are intended, while ensuring consistency with the Town's adopted plans and policies.

The objectives of the PUD process are to encourage development that:

- Promotes greater flexibility in the type, design, and placement of structures to take advantage of the unique features of a site
- Improves the overall design, character, and quality of development
- Promotes more efficient use of land, public facilities, utilities, and governmental services
- Supports and encourages affordable housing opportunities for Town residents
- Preserves open space to the greatest extent practicable
- Ensures compatibility of land uses within the development and with surrounding properties
- Encourages preservation of natural and scenic features
- Enhances landscaping and site amenities
- Promotes safe and convenient pedestrian, vehicular, and transit access and circulation
- Maintains consistency with the Town's Master Plan and other adopted plans

What a PUD Is Used For

A PUD is typically used to:

- **Allow flexibility from base zoning requirements**
(e.g., clustering, mixed-use, alternative layouts)
- **Encourage coordinated, site-specific design**
(integrating land use, infrastructure, access, and open space)

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- **Facilitate larger or phased developments**
(master-planned communities, mixed-use projects, etc.)
- **Secure public benefits in exchange for flexibility**
(e.g., workforce housing, open space, infrastructure improvements)
- **Establish binding, site-specific regulations**
adopted by ordinance that govern future development of the property

Key Characteristic

A PUD is not just a plan—it becomes a custom zoning framework for a specific property once approved.

A **PUD (Planned Unit Development)** is not just a plan—it is a **regulatory tool that replaces or modifies zoning**, whereas a **conceptual/master plan** is typically **advisory unless tied to an approval mechanism**.

Key Differences

1. Legal Authority

- **PUD**
 - Adopted by ordinance
 - Becomes **binding zoning for that property**
 - Enforceable (layout, uses, standards, phasing, etc.)
- **Conceptual / Master Plan**
 - Usually **non-binding or loosely binding**
 - Guides future decisions but **does not regulate by itself**
 - Can be changed more easily

Big takeaway:

A PUD = **law**

A concept plan = **guidance**

2. Flexibility vs. Control

- **PUD**
 - Allows deviation from base zoning (lot sizes, setbacks, uses, density)
 - In exchange, the Town gets:

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- Public benefits
- Better design
- Site-specific standards
- **Conceptual Plan Only**
 - Doesn't actually grant flexibility unless paired with rezoning/variances
 - You're still stuck enforcing underlying zoning

👉 **Without a PUD, flexibility = legally shaky**

3. Negotiation Tool

- **PUD**
 - Functions as a **negotiated zoning agreement**
 - You can require:
 - Workforce housing
 - Open space
 - Infrastructure upgrades
 - Phasing commitments
 - **Concept Plan**
 - You can *ask* for these things...
 - But you **can't enforce them long-term** without another mechanism
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4. Long-Term Certainty

- **PUD**
 - Locks in:
 - Layout
 - Density
 - Uses
 - Infrastructure plans

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- Protects both:
 - Town (gets what was promised)
 - Developer (predictability)
 - **Concept Plan**
 - Can drift over time
 - Each phase may come back slightly different
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5. Phasing & Large Projects

- **PUD**
 - Designed for:
 - Multi-phase development
 - Large acreage
 - Allows:
 - Infrastructure timing
 - Coordinated buildout
 - **Concept Plan**
 - Good for vision
 - Weak for **enforcing phased execution**
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So Why Do Some Towns Move Away from Heavy PUD Use?

Because PUDs can become:

- Overly **bureaucratic**
- Required even when **no flexibility is needed**
- A **one-size-fits-all hammer** (🔨 sounds like Alpine right now)

Best Practice (Modern Approach)

Most modern codes shift to:

- ☑ **Use PUD when:**

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- Developer wants **flexibility from zoning**
- Project is:
 - Complex
 - Mixed-use
 - Phased
- Public benefit is being negotiated

✗ Don't require PUD when:

- Project complies with zoning already
- It's straightforward subdivision/site plan
- No deviations are requested

Conceptual Plan – Definition

A **Conceptual Plan** is a preliminary, high-level plan that illustrates the general layout and intent of a proposed development prior to detailed engineering or final design. It is used to communicate the overall development vision and evaluate consistency with applicable zoning regulations, the Town's Master Plan, and other adopted policies.

A Conceptual Plan is not a construction document and does not authorize development. Rather, it serves as a **planning and review tool** to guide future applications and decision-making.

What a Conceptual Plan Includes

A Conceptual Plan typically includes:

- General site layout, including proposed land uses
- Approximate building locations and development areas
- Preliminary circulation patterns (vehicular and pedestrian access)
- Conceptual lot layout or density (if applicable)
- General open space, landscaping, and amenity areas
- Identification of major site constraints (topography, drainage, natural features)
- General location of utilities and infrastructure (conceptual only)
- Relationship to adjacent properties and surrounding land uses

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Purpose of a Conceptual Plan

The purpose of a Conceptual Plan is to:

- Provide an **early-stage review opportunity** before significant design investment
- Ensure the project aligns with the **Town’s Master Plan and zoning framework**
- Identify potential issues, constraints, or required improvements early in the process
- Guide subsequent applications such as:
 - Planned Unit Development (PUD)
 - Subdivision
 - Site Plan Review

Key Characteristic

A Conceptual Plan is **illustrative, not regulatory**—it guides development but does not establish binding development standards unless incorporated into a formal approval (such as a PUD).

Best Practice (Modern Approach)

Instead of a vague “narrative,” require a:

“PUD Development Standards & Narrative”

Keep it structured and concise, such as:

- Project overview
- Consistency with Master Plan
- Land use + density summary
- Deviations from base zoning
- Public benefits
- Development standards (the important part)
- Phasing (if applicable)

👉 Think of it as:

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Part explanation + part rulebook