

Chapter 05: Community Scorecard

Score every community the same way — schools, taxes, commute, builders, and resale factors — so charm doesn't beat math.

LEVEL 1 · BEFORE YOU VISIT A BUILDER · CHAPTER 05 OF 16

05. Community Scorecard

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Why a scorecard

Model homes are designed to make you feel something. A scorecard makes every community answer the same questions in the same order, so the comparison happens on paper instead of in the parking lot. Score each category 1–5, weight what matters to your household, and keep the sheet — it becomes your negotiating memory.

The nine categories

School district: rating, the specific zoned campuses (not just the district), distance, and whether rezoning is possible as the community grows. New communities frequently rezone as schools open.

True tax rate: the combined rate for the exact section — including MUD, PID, or ESD layers. Two communities with identical prices can differ by hundreds of dollars a month here. Verify with the county appraisal district, not the flyer.

HOA cost and scope: dues, what they cover, special assessments history, and rules that affect you (rentals, fences, solar).

Commute, tested: drive your actual route at your actual time — once in the morning, once in the evening. Map estimates at noon are fiction.

Builder lineup: how many builders, their reputations, and whether the one you like is in the price band you can afford there.

Amenities — built vs. promised: pools and trails that exist score higher than renderings. Ask for completion dates in writing for anything promised.

Surrounding land use: what's planned on every adjacent parcel. A quiet field today can be apartments, retail, or a widened arterial in three years. Check the city's planning department, not the sales office.

Phase position: early phases get lower prices and years of construction; late phases pay more for a finished community. Neither is wrong — know which trade you're making.

Resale factors: lot quality, floor plan appeal, and what you'd compete against if you sold in year three (usually: the builder's newer homes).

Reporting note: The Explorer on newhomedispatch.com pre-fills several of these fields — verified tax rates, HOA ranges, school districts, and builder rosters — for every tracked community, updated on a weekly reporting cycle.