

PennDOT Connects Online Training: Adaptive Reuse of Land and Buildings

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Welcome

Welcome to PennDOT's Adaptive Reuse of Land and Buildings training. This course is part of the PennDOT Connects initiative.

PennDOT Connects

PennDOT Connects enhances community involvement in transportation planning through guidance and support, improved engagement processes, and specific procedures and tools for local government participation early in the planning stages. Be sure to visit the website for more information about the services provided by the PennDOT Connects initiative.

Comprehensive Planning and Land Use – Transportation Implementation Tools

The training component of the PennDOT Connects initiative combines relevant topics in such a way that transportation-related issues may be understood in light of associated issues. The intent is that complex issues might become less complicated for municipal officials to navigate. For example, understanding how site design standards might enhance the development of transit improvements. Another example might consider the use of impact fees for improving traffic operations.

Comprehensive Planning and Land Use – Transportation Implementation Tools (Cont.)

This training series will cover issues associated with Comprehensive Planning and Land Use – Transportation Implementation Tools, such as:

- Accommodating Growth,
- Enhancing Community Character,
- Encouraging Multimodal Travel,
- Identifying Funding,
- Improving Mobility and Efficiency, and
- Improving Safety.

Course Objectives

Before we continue, please take a moment to review the specific learning objectives for this training.

- Recognize the advantages of adaptive reuse strategies for land and buildings.
- Identify opportunities to implement adaptive reuse strategies.
- Know the kinds of issues that may arise when considering the implementation of adaptive reuse strategies.

Introduction to Adaptive Reuse

Many municipalities have underutilized properties that may detract from local aesthetics, community character, and overall positive sense of place. Such properties may affect local safety, decrease surrounding property values, or simply detract from the visual appeal of an area. Adaptive reuse may potentially improve a community through a process of identifying such properties and developing plans for their construction, rehabilitation, or reuse.

Underutilized property is often addressed in cooperation with economic development agencies including the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), chambers of commerce, and county or regional redevelopment or industrial development authorities. The role of the Comprehensive Plan in this process is to identify such properties and establish the most desirable development scenarios.

Purposes of Adaptive Reuse

Underutilized Land

Underutilized parcels of land and structures can negatively impact a community's character and may lead to blighted conditions in older communities. These properties vary in the level of effort and costs required for rehabilitation and reuse.

Brownfields

Properties containing historic buildings or abandoned industrial sites (known as "brownfields") may require special attention and incur additional costs to return the parcel to a productive use.

Smart and Sustainable Growth

Bringing appropriate uses to vacant structures and underutilized properties can provide a smart and sustainable growth approach to new development in existing communities while reinvigorating declining neighborhoods and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Example: Mount Washington

This photo shows a former high school in Mount Washington, a Pittsburgh neighborhood, that was in operation from 1917 until 1986, after which the building sat vacant for 20 years. The building has since been refurbished as a 106-unit senior housing center with space for community assets such as a day-care center.

When to Consider Implementing Adaptive Reuse Strategies

Consider implementing Adaptive Reuse strategies when:

- Your Comprehensive Plan identifies vacant or underutilized properties;
- Downtown or neighborhood revitalization is identified as a key community goal in your Comprehensive Plan; or
- Your Comprehensive Plan identifies "brownfield" opportunities in your municipality.

Your Comprehensive Plan is a good resource to begin identifying underutilized properties, but also consult your MPO or RPO, and any other county-wide plans.

As an example, the residential development depicted here is part of a multi-block waterfront revitalization in the City of Warren, with commercial, residential, and infrastructure improvements. This particular project provides 24 residential units for the elderly on the upper two floors as well as commercial space on the street level and the lower level facing the Allegheny River.

Advantages of Adaptive Reuse

There are several advantages to implementing adaptive reuse strategies, such as:

- Reducing the development pressure on “greenfield” areas;
- Increasing tax revenues in communities with vacant or underutilized properties;
- Enhancing and improving the economic conditions of blighted communities; and
- Enhancing and improving the quality of life and safety for the community around vacant or underutilized properties.

As an example, this photo depicts SouthSide Works, which is a 123-acre riverfront brownfield redevelopment of a closed steel mill along the Monongahela River. Located in Pittsburgh's South Side, this mixed-use project includes residential and commercial space, a marina, a riverfront park and five miles of new multi-use trails.

While this is a sizable project, its many facets illustrate the breadth of the concept. Adaptive reuse is a valuable strategy for smaller projects, as well. The examples presented shortly, as well as examples presented in the resource materials, will illustrate the breadth of application for adaptive reuse strategies.

Considerations When Implementing the Concept

There are several issues to consider before implementing the adaptive reuse concept, including:

- Implementation may require the use of financial or regulatory incentives; and
- Larger projects may generate additional traffic or create new traffic patterns.

As an example, the City of Bethlehem community rallied around the iconic, but closed, Bethlehem Steel Plant, working hard to bring new life to the former industrial giant. In 1999, the City of Bethlehem, Bethlehem Area School District, and County of Northampton—the three local taxing bodies—established a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) district on the property, dedicating any future tax dollars generated from new business on the site to helping revitalize the former steel plant.

Now, let's look at some additional adaptive reuse examples.

Example: City of Lancaster

Resource Book

The City of Lancaster has compiled a resource book, *Adaptive Reuse Projects in the City of Lancaster*, identifying successful projects in the City. Examples include Armstrong World Industries as well as the Watt and Shand Building.

Armstrong World Industries

The Armstrong World Industries site was a 47-acre urban brownfield comprising a decommissioned, 100-year-old flooring manufacturing complex containing approximately 50 industrial buildings totaling over 2 million square feet. The site was demolished to build athletic facilities for Franklin and Marshall College, as well as a Health Services campus for Lancaster General Health.

Watt and Shand Building

Anchoring the southeast corner of Penn Square is one of Lancaster's most significant examples of commercial architecture, the Watt and Shand Building. With four imposing stories of buff brick with elaborate terra cotta and marble ornamentation, the oldest section of this Beaux Arts building, fronting on East King Street, dates back to 1898. The new facility, developed in private/public partnership, now contains a hotel and convention center.

Example: Mansfield Borough, Tioga County

The Mansfield Armory, located in Mansfield Borough, Tioga County, is a historic National Guard Armory, originally built in 1938 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. It is being converted into a YMCA Recreation Center.

Example: Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area

Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area (AOAA) in Coal Township, Northumberland County, is 6,500 acres of abandoned mining land that has been transformed into a tourist attraction for riders of all-terrain vehicles and other motorized and non-motorized vehicles. The major portion of the property was mined in the 1950s, and was not reclaimed until recently. For four decades, the land was used as a dumping ground. Since securing lease/ownership rights to the property, the AOAA has partnered with several organizations to make the property safe and clean. The AOAA has been named one of the top 10 destinations in the country for all-terrain vehicles, full-size vehicles, and dirt bikes.

Resources

Now, let's look at some helpful resources.

Resource: Preservation PA

Preservation Pennsylvania is the Commonwealth's only private statewide nonprofit organization committed to helping protect and preserve historic places.

The organization was established by the General Assembly in 1982 as the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania. Since then, Preservation Pennsylvania has fully developed its

role as a private, nonprofit membership organization with a statewide mission to protect and preserve Pennsylvania's historic resources.

Historic Preservation Resources

The protections afforded a building under the national Register of Historic Places only apply to those buildings that are part of projects with federal grants or tax credits. Local historic preservation ordinances are important. Typically, local ordinances are used to control exterior remodeling and demolition.

The 1961 Historic District act, also known as Act 167, and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, also known as Acts 67 and 68, gave municipalities the authority to zone for protection and preservation.

Cultural Recreation Resources

The range of types of recreational activities that can be developed is broad; however, a common recreational reuse is recreational trails. Examples of agencies that reused, or plan to reuse land for recreational purposes, include:

- The City of Pittsburgh developed a preservation plan that included development of trails and transportation networks, and
- The Rails to Trails Conservancy, an agency that focuses on reusing abandoned railroad grades as recreational trails, has many resources for trail planning on their website.

MPO/RPO and County Resources

As with most land use and planning issues, your MPO/RPO is equipped with planning tools and resources for adaptive reuse.

Further, your county may also have resources available specific to your region. For example, Chester County has an adaptive reuse toolbox available on its website. Other counties with notable tools available on their websites are Montgomery County and Warren County.

Summary

In summary, the overarching concepts of this training are that:

- Adaptive reuse of buildings and land can be achieved through planning;
- Many examples and resources are available; and
- The transportation impact is low—typically infrastructure is already in place.

Knowledge Check

Now, let's take a moment to see what you've learned.

1. True or False. One of the roles of the Comprehensive Plan in the adaptive reuse process is to identify underutilized properties.

Please pause.

The correct answer is True. While improving the disposition of underutilized properties is addressed in cooperation with economic development agencies, a Comprehensive Plan may be helpful for identifying such properties.

2. You should consider adaptive reuse of land when: (Select all that apply.)

- Your Comprehensive Plan identifies underutilized properties
- Neighborhood revitalization is identified as a key community goal in your Comprehensive Plan
- Your Comprehensive Plan identifies brownfield opportunities in your municipality

Please pause.

All three are indicators as to when you should consider the adaptive reuse of land or buildings.

3. Which of the following are advantages of implementing adaptive reuse of land and buildings in your community? (Select all that apply.)

- Reducing the development pressure on greenfield areas
- Finding the relationship between community goals for land use and transportation projects
- Increasing tax revenues with vacant or underutilized properties
- Enhancing and improving the economic conditions of blighted communities
- Identifying regional transportation issues that may conflict with local goals

Please pause.

Advantages of implementing adaptive reuse of land and buildings in your community include reducing the development pressure on greenfield areas, increasing tax revenues with vacant or underutilized properties, and enhancing and improving the economic conditions of blighted communities.

Next Steps

Now take a moment to review some steps you can take toward integrating the adaptive reuse of land and buildings in your municipality.

Integrate the adaptive reuse of land and buildings in your municipality.

- Use available resources as a start
- Coordinate with your planning partners
- Engage landowners and the public
- Work with your solicitor on the development of ordinances

Contact Information

Congratulations! You have completed this training.

The PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach, Training, and Technical Assistance program can assist municipalities free of charge. If you have questions or need assistance, please use the email address, or phone number on your screen.

Additionally, the PennDOT Connects website contains more information on Connects and contact information for the PennDOT District Planners.

Now, please go to [this website](#) to provide an evaluation of this training.