

Many counties and municipalities face growth pressures that are putting undue strain on transportation and other public infrastructure as well as natural and cultural resources that are an integral part of a community's identity. Failure to identify and plan within such limiting factors is likely to lead to congestion, public sewer and/or water capacity issues, unwanted environmental impacts, and a loss of a municipality's character and sense of place.

The land use and transportation system controls presented in this tech sheet can be used to maintain adequate infrastructure and protect environmental resources by accommodating growth pressures in more compact areas, managing access to the transportation system, preserving key corridors, encouraging infill and reuse of existing buildings, acting regionally, and reducing sprawl.



Access Management and Coordinated Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) Processing

Access management hinges on balancing two concepts — vehicular mobility and accessibility to surrounding land uses. An effectively implemented access management program can have a number of positive impacts, including improving public safety and reducing traffic congestion, thereby helping to accommodate growth within the transportation environment. Failure to manage access adequately can lead to an increase in crashes and congestion and detract from a community's quality of life. Roadway incidents are responsible for nearly 25 percent of delays.

Additionally, PennDOT's highway occupancy permit (HOP) process is a critical component of any access management program. Municipalities are encouraged to participate in the review of HOP applications to provide input on mitigation strategies as well as concurrence on Alternative Transportation Plans through the HOP process.

ADVANTAGES

- Improves public safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- Reduces traffic congestion.
- Improves safe travel speeds and reduces delay.
- Leads to a more attractive roadway corridor.
- Can help preserve property values.

- Reduces fuel consumption and air emissions.
- Improves roadway efficiency.
- Allows PennDOT standards and municipal issues and concerns to be jointly addressed through the HOP process.
- Provides PennDOT with the municipality's goals for a corridor to enable coordinated planning of future access points.
- Provides for some off-site improvement needs to be addressed through the HOP process.
- Promotes better coordinated and managed access points, especially in congested or growth corridors.



PennDOT's Access Management Handbook provides model ordinance provisions.



Adaptive Reuse of Land and Buildings

Reusing land and buildings can help municipalities obtain infill and economic development, especially in communities without ample open space and those wishing to preserve open space for other uses. Redevelopment can also focus development where transportation and other infrastructure are already in place to accommodate growth. Successful redevelopment activities can keep the overall development footprint smaller, thereby helping a municipality to preserve natural resources.

ADVANTAGES

- Can reduce the development pressure on “greenfield” areas.
- Can increase tax revenues in communities with vacant or underutilized properties.
- Can enhance and improve the economic conditions of blighted communities.



Zoning for Mixed Uses and Higher Densities

The applicability of zoning for mixed uses and to accommodate higher densities within the transportation and natural environments is highly dependent on the future land use component of the municipal comprehensive plan. Municipalities with existing mixed-use development or clusters/nodes of higher density residential land and those wishing to accommodate future growth in compact areas with adequate infrastructure should seriously consider this implementation technique. Combined with the additional benefit of reducing the demand for vehicular trips through mixed-use zoning and accommodating a municipality’s fair share of development in smaller, higher density areas with multiple transportation options, mixed-use and higher density development can be a significant factor in accommodating growth within the transportation and natural environments over the long term.

Innovative zoning techniques such as traditional neighborhood design (TND), transfer of development rights (TDR), and transit-oriented development (TOD) can help direct development to appropriate areas while preserving the natural environment.

ADVANTAGES

- Mixed-use zoning provides for a mix of compatible uses within walking or bicycling distance of residential areas and reduces local automobile traffic.
- This zoning can accommodate a community’s fair share of uses within a smaller footprint, helping to preserve more open space.
- A higher percentage of the neighborhood is walkable.
- Bus transit tends to be efficient.
- Neighborhoods often develop strong sense of community.
- Significant public amenities can be accommodated.



Transit-oriented development is built in Spring Mill, Montgomery County, PA. Photo credit: Montgomery County Planning Commission.





Official Map

An official map, as enabled under Article IV of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), is actually the combination of a map and ordinance. It illustrates and regulates areas within a municipality that are projected to be needed eventually for public purposes such as parks, wellhead protection areas, and new road or road improvements. Official maps can be used to advance a number of public purposes, including accommodating growth within the transportation and natural environments by ensuring that the area needed for system improvements and important natural resources remains available. Areas can be reserved for future roads to address connectivity issues and to provide the opportunity for parallel access routes. Similarly, areas needed to address public park demands or preserve important natural resources can be kept open until they are acquired permanently for public use and enjoyment.

ADVANTAGES

- Official maps may help reserve the lands necessary for public purposes.
- Municipal plans for public improvements can be clearly presented to residents and developers.



The official map in Tunkannock Township, Monroe County, shows conservation areas and proposed road improvements. NOTE: Monroe County supports municipal official maps by doing the mapping and providing model ordinance language.

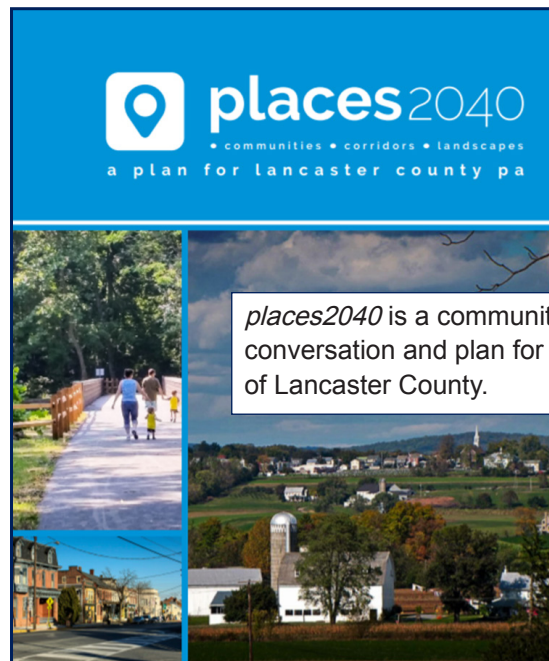


Urban Growth Areas/Rural Preservation

Establishing urban growth areas (UGAs) to define growth areas and preserve rural character can be an important component of a comprehensive plan. Although UGAs are not regulatory, they can be enforced through modifications to an existing zoning ordinance, effective water and sewer service boundary management, and other similar measures. When effectively implemented and regularly reviewed and updated, the UGA technique can result in economic development opportunities for areas well suited for new development and growth while preserving significant amounts of rural lands and resources.

ADVANTAGES

- Incorporating UGAs in a comprehensive plan can help guide the establishment of zoning district boundaries and planning for public sewer and water service.
- UGAs can encourage higher densities and walkable communities and minimize the need for new roads.
- UGAs can direct development to planned future growth areas and preserve the surrounding rural landscape.



places2040 is a community conversation and plan for the future of Lancaster County.

Urban and village growth boundaries are prominent in Lancaster County's comprehensive planning. As of 2015, UGAs account for 28 percent of buildable land; village growth areas (VGAs) account for 41 percent of buildable land in the county.

