

Many communities struggle with issues associated with maintaining local character and sense of place as development pressures, out-migration, or other factors threaten to change residents' perceptions of their neighborhood and/or municipality. Effective land use management and infrastructure planning are both critical components in maintaining or improving a community's sense of place as defined through a comprehensive planning process.

The ideal approach is to adopt integrated land use and infrastructure management controls that serve to maintain the desired sense of place. Once the desired sense of place are established through a comprehensive plan, the land use tools presented in this tech sheet can be used to maintain or improve the desired character through specific actions, such as reducing the potential for adjacent but conflicting use types, providing for transitions in lot sizes or development density, and/or generating neighborhood identity for new development.



## Site Design and Roadway Standards

Site design and roadway standards are almost always regulated in Pennsylvania through a county or municipal subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO). Effective site design and roadway standards can have unexpected effects relating to community character by providing safe, non-motorized access to residences, public facilities, and employment/shopping opportunities. Such design features — part of the “complete streets” concept — can help residents feel more connected to neighbors and businesses, thereby improving their overall quality of life.

### ADVANTAGES

- Helps establish consistent, safe road conditions.
- Typically minimizes problems associated with stormwater flooding on roadways and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
- Can provide for uniform standards in residential and commercial settings and minimize visually unappealing maintenance issues through improved design.
- Can provide for transportation system design standards that are matched closely to land use context.



Complete street design simulation shown for Carlisle Pike in Hampden Township, Cumberland County (Land Logics Group). Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation agencies routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users. Places with complete streets policies are making sure that their streets and roads work for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.



## Adaptive Reuse of Land and Buildings

Although most commonly located in Pennsylvania’s boroughs and cities, all types of municipalities can have underutilized properties that may detract from an overall positive sense of place. Such properties may affect local safety, decrease property values, and/or simply detract from the visual appeal of an area. The comprehensive plan should identify these properties and establish the most desirable development scenarios. By working with economic development entities, municipalities can bring appropriate uses to vacant structures and underutilized properties, thus providing a sustainable and smart growth approach to reinvigorating declining neighborhoods and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

### ADVANTAGES

- Can reduce 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.



This former manufacturing facility and tobacco warehouse in downtown Lancaster was renovated by Landis Communities as loft apartments for adults aged 55 and over. Three retail shops occupy the first floor. The project used a New Market Tax Credit and a federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit.

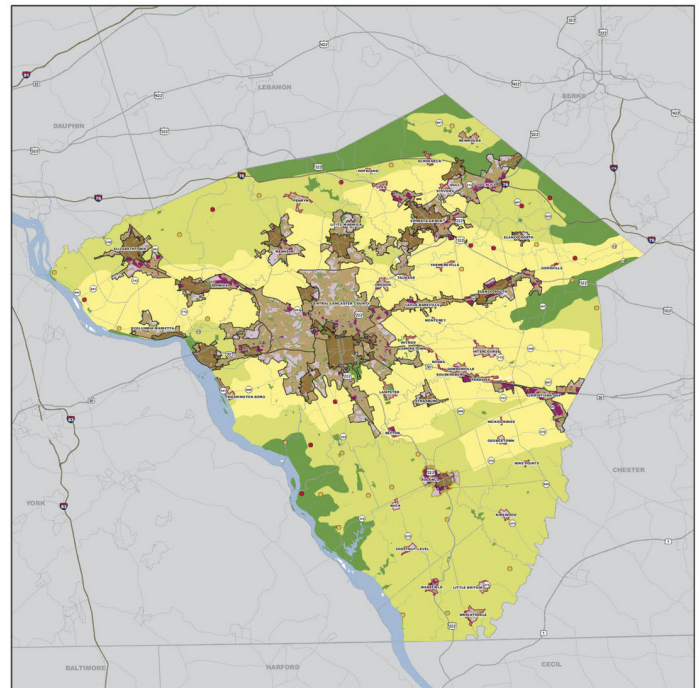


## Urban Growth Areas/Rural Preservation

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. This approach can enhance both the urban and rural environments and therefore help improve or maintain the existing community character.

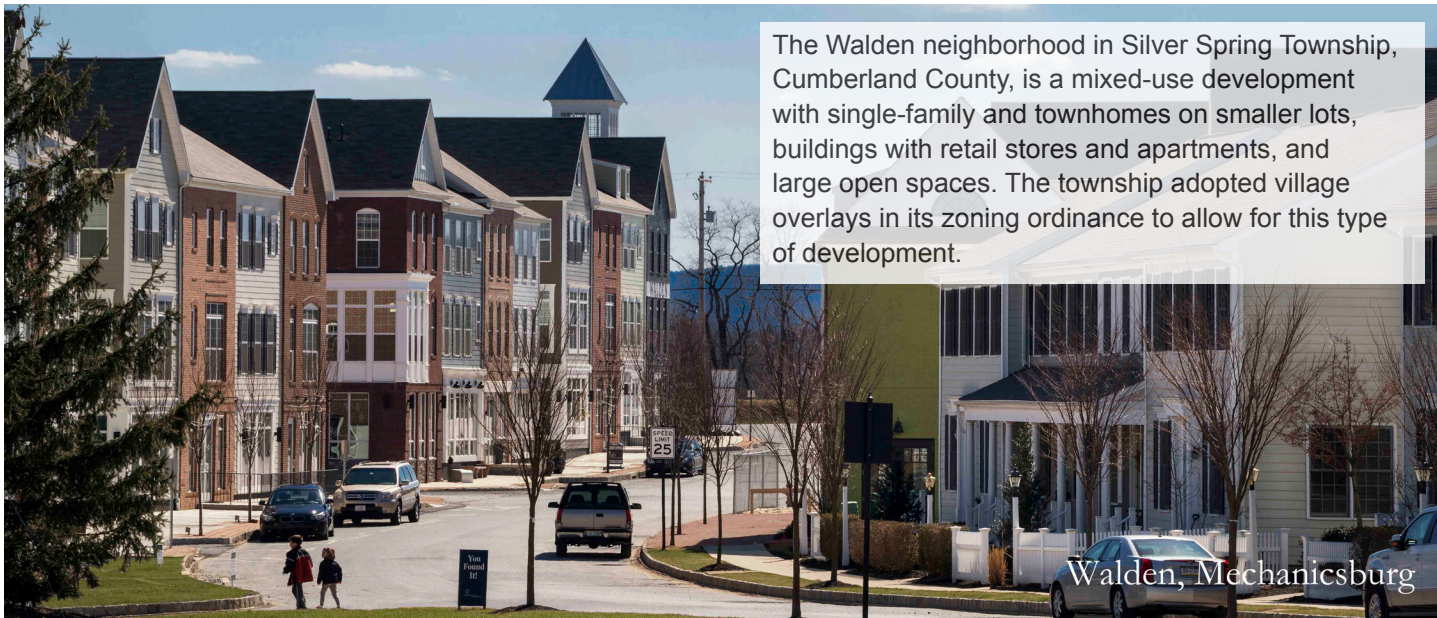
### ADVANTAGES

- 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 surrounding rural lands.



Lancaster County’s urban growth strategy includes the adoption of 13 urban growth areas involving 43 municipalities. UGAs focus growth where services currently exist or are anticipated in the future.





The Walden neighborhood in Silver Spring Township, Cumberland County, is a mixed-use development with single-family and townhomes on smaller lots, buildings with retail stores and apartments, and large open spaces. The township adopted village overlays in its zoning ordinance to allow for this type of development.



## Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)

This tool provides for a range of residential densities and a mix of residential and non-residential uses, often within the same building. When appropriately developed, TND can be a very effective means of connecting new developments with areas of existing mixed use development; providing for urban infill; and creating new development in a condensed area that encourages walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized travel. As such, TND regulations can help a municipality maintain a sense of place by requiring that new development be consistent with traditional development patterns that may already be in place.

### ADVANTAGES

- A high percentage of the neighborhood is walkable.
- Bus transit tends to be efficient.
- Center is typically not bisected by major thoroughfare, improving its social integrity.
- Growth may be accommodated in smaller areas than contemporary development patterns.
- Neighborhoods often develop a strong sense of community.
- TND can be easily linked to adjacent higher density or urban areas.
- Significant public amenities can be accommodated and maintained.



## Zoning for Mixed Uses and Higher Densities

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 maintaining or enhancing community character over the long term.

### ADVANTAGES

- Mixed-use zoning can provide for a mix of compatible uses within walking or bicycling distance from residences and help to reduce local automobile traffic.
- Bus transit tends to be efficient.
- Neighborhoods often develop a strong sense of community.
- Zoning can be easily linked to adjacent higher-density or urban areas.
- Significant public amenities can be accommodated and maintained.

