



Outlawing Sprawl

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Presented by:

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Definition of sprawl

Urban sprawl, also known as **suburban sprawl**, is the spreading of a city and its suburbs over rural land at the fringe of an urban area.

Characteristics:

- Single use zoning
- Low density land use
- Car dependent communities

Source: Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_sprawl



Presenter's Comment:

Sprawl has been identified as one of the greatest threats to Pennsylvania's environment. (See *Report of the Pennsylvania 21st Century Environment Commission*, (<http://www.21stcentury.state.pa.us>.) What is sprawl? There are many definitions such as this one from Wikipedia. Most definitions of sprawl are based on the characteristics of the development form.

Responses to Sprawl

- Urban containment
- Mixed use/higher density zoning
- Regional zoning
- New Urbanism/Smart Growth
- Intermodal transportation
- Transportation choices
- Open space/Greenbelt Preservation

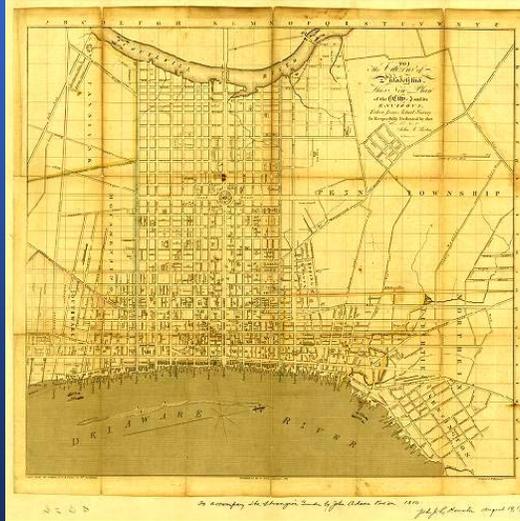
Presenter's Comment:

Dealing effectively with sprawl requires the application of multiple strategies—there is no one single solution or panacea

Urban Forces

- Centralization
- Decentralization

**Urban
Forces
Always
Present**



Presenter's Comment:

The important thing to understand about the use of any response to sprawl is that the forces that produce sprawl have always been, and always will be, present. At any given time, at any given location there forces tending to concentrate urbanization and forces tending to decentralize urbanization. For example, the City of Philadelphia was platted from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River at the end of the 17th Century. It took over 150 years for the “central city” to reach the Schuylkill. In the meantime the City “sprawled to the north and south in the Northern and Southern Liberties along the Delaware River. This map, dating to the first years of the 19th Century, shows that development sprawled to the north and south, long before City was built up as intended to the west.

Urban Containment

- 1st urban growth boundary adopted in Fayette County, Kentucky in 1958
- State urban growth boundaries created in Hawaii in early 1960's
- Oregon mandated counties to adopt urban growth boundaries in 1973



Presenter's Comment:

One of the basic strategies for stopping sprawl and encouraging a more sustainable form of development is to employ urban containment measure. Frequently this takes the form of "urban growth boundaries." Historically, the first application of growth boundaries was in Kentucky, followed by landmark legislation in Hawaii and Oregon.

Pennsylvania

- Brandywine Conservancy obtains conservation easements on King Ranch
- Lancaster County initiates farmland preservation program
- Commonwealth creates state program
- Chester County voters approve Open Space Initiative

Presenter's Comment:

In Pennsylvania urban containment is enabled by the State's planning enabling legislation, called the "Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code" (or PMPC for short.) Counties and municipalities are authorized to designate "targeted growth areas" as part of their comprehensive plans. The history of urban containment in the State began with the preservation of the King Ranch in Chester County. The Brandywine Conservancy secured conservation easements on the land when the ranch was subdivided, effectively limiting encroachment by sprawl. In the early 1980s Lancaster County initiated a program to purchase conservation easements on farmland. In 1988 the voters of Pennsylvania approved a bond referendum to establish a State Program based on the Lancaster County example. In the early 1990s the voters of Chester County approved a bond measure to finance the open space preservation through purchase of conservation easements and land purchases.

Pennsylvania

- Lancaster County and municipalities create urban growth boundaries in 1990s
- MPC amended in 2000 to authorize designation of “targeted growth areas”
- Commonwealth adopts “Keystone Principles” in 2005 (<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/pkp.pdf>)



Presenter's Comment:

Concurrent with farm and open space preservation efforts, in the 1990s Lancaster County and its 60 municipalities adopted urban growth boundaries to contain sprawl. In 2000 the PMPC was amended to explicitly authorize the designation of “targeted growth areas.” And in 2005 the Secretaries of State Government Departments, such as DEP, PennDOT, DCNR, DCED, and others, signed the “Keystone Principles” to direct growth in the Commonwealth in sustainable ways.

Urban Containment Concepts

Premises:

- In any county there are areas appropriate for urban/suburban development and areas that are not appropriate for urban/suburban development
- In areas that are selected for target growth land must be used more efficiently



Presenter's Comment:

The premises of urban containment are based on common sense.

- Targeted growth areas are bounded by a “line” or permanent greenbelt.
- Targeted growth areas are part of a comprehensive plan
- Difference between a target growth area line and a zoning line is TIME:
 - Zoning tells what can be developed on property today
 - Targeted growth areas represent areas that will develop within 10 to 20 years in the future

Presenter’s Comment:

An important element of the line bounding a targeted growth area and a zoning line is **time**. A zoning ordinance tells you what you can do on a piece of property today. A targeted growth area, on the other hand, represents the area of land most suited for urban and suburban development within a specified period of time. It becomes, therefore, the area that needs to be planned for infrastructure investment and the area that should be developed at efficient densities through an interconnected land use pattern.

Keys to Implementation

- Urban/suburban level zoning needs to be confined to targeted growth areas
- Areas outside of targeted growth areas should be zoned for agricultural or rural uses
- Urban/suburban infrastructure should be built inside targeted growth areas, not outside



Presenter's Comment:

Once a targeted growth area has been designated on a comprehensive plan, the plan needs to be implemented by revitalizing existing communities, directing new growth to growth areas and limiting “suburban” style development outside of the growth areas.

Keystone Principles:

1. Redevelop first
2. Provide efficient infrastructure
3. Concentrate development
4. Increase job opportunities
5. Foster sustainable businesses
6. Restore and enhance the environment
7. Enhance recreational and heritage resources
8. Expand housing opportunities
9. Plan regionally; implement locally
10. Be fair

Presenter's Comment:

The Commonwealth's Keystone Principles endorse these concepts. This slide lists the Principles, which can be used and cited by local governments, as well.



Lancaster County Example

- Policy Plan (1991)
- Growth Management Plan (1993 & 1997)
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreements signed between the County and Municipal Governments
- With technical support from the County municipalities set urban growth boundaries
- UGB's define Urban Growth Areas (MPC Targeted Growth Areas)

Presenter's Comment:

How does all this work? Let's look at the Lancaster County example. With the adoption of the County's Policy Plan and Growth Management Plan, Lancaster County used intergovernmental cooperation agreements, signed by the governing board of the County and the governing bodies of the municipalities, to set in place a process for defining the areas most suited to development. With technical support from the County Planning Commission, each municipality drew the urban growth boundaries within their jurisdictions. These boundaries were then incorporated into the County Comprehensive Plan and the municipal comprehensive plans.

Tools used by Lancaster County for Growth Management

- Multi-municipal Planning
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Act
- Consistent Infrastructure Planning
- County Technical Support
- Smart Growth Toolbox for Municipalities
- Promotion of Sustainable Growth Principles

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Presenter's Comment:

As you can see from this list, Lancaster County has employed a variety of mutually supporting tools.

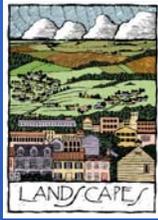
Lancaster County Example

- Lancaster Inter-Municipal Committee (LIMC) – 13 municipalities
- “Growing Together”
- Consistent with County Plan
- Consistent with MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan and “TIP”
- Consistent LASA Act 537 Plan



Presenter's Comment:

Encouragement by the County has led to even greater innovations by municipal governments. A tremendous example is found in the 13 municipalities that form the Lancaster Intermunicipal Committee. Twelve of these municipalities created and each adopted a multimunicipal comprehensive plan, called “Growing Together.” These plan was further supported by amending the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan to make both plans consistent, by developing and adopting a consistent Long Range Transportation Plan for guiding transportation programming and investment, and by creating consistent sewage facilities plans that were based on the Intermunicipal Comprehensive Plan.



Chester County Example

- Chester County adopts LANDSCAPES (1996)
- County funds Vision Partnership Program with grants to municipalities for consistency with LANDSCAPES
- County funds and implements Open Space Program to preserve open space & farmland, and define suburban limits

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Presenter's Comment:

Meanwhile, Chester County has also been working to contain urban sprawl. The County has instituted a Vision Partnership Program with municipalities to achieve consistency between the County Plan, *LANDSCAPES*, and municipal plans and ordinances. The County also has used its investment in open space and farmland preservation as a method of defining the geographic limits of suburban growth and to implement *LANDSCAPES*..

- \$3.6 million to 67 municipalities to date for planning
- \$18.7 million for revitalization projects to improve livability in 15 urban centers, including urban improvements, infrastructure upgrades, and landscaping.
- \$71.8 million to preserve farms (leveraging an additional \$121 million from the State and other public and private sources)
- \$35.6 million to non-profit conservation groups to preserve natural areas, greenways and farms
- \$40.7 million to municipalities to purchase 87 parks

Presenter's Comment:

The magnitude of the Chester County Commissioners financial investment, to date, in good planning, urban revitalization and open space preservation has been very substantial.



The foundation of Chester County's comprehensive plan is partnership with municipalities, utilities, state and federal agencies, and private non-profit organizations.



Presenter's Comment:

These actions and investments have all been built on the foundation of an on-going partnership between the County, municipal governments, non-profit organizations, and state and federal agencies. This partnership is predicated on the County collaborating with its partners, not attempting to dictate policies or actions.

The basis for Landscapes is characterizing Chester County into:

- Growth Areas — urban, suburban, and suburban center landscapes
- Rural Resource Areas — rural, rural center, and agricultural landscapes
- Overlay Features — natural landscape, village and protection areas of National Significance



Presenter's Comment:

The “genius” of the Chester County Comprehensive Plan is that it defines the area of the County into a series of “landscapes” such as the Urban Landscape, the Suburban Landscape, and the Suburban Center Landscape. These three landscapes are the targeted growth areas of Chester County. Lands outside of the targeted growth area are classified as a Rural Landscape, Rural Center or an Agricultural Landscapes, and are the focus for preserving large blocks of farm land, woodland or open space.

22 percent of Chester County is “preserved”



Presenter's Comment:

As a result of the County's efforts and partnerships 22 percent of the County is now permanently preserved. Large blocks of preserved land now define the limits of suburban expansion.

- 42% of the total land area projected to be built by 2030.
- Revitalizing and renewing older communities and increasing densities in certain areas could limit the developed land area to 35%.



Presenter's Comment:

At the same time that the County is limiting the extent of suburban growth, it is working with its partners to better utilize the lands that are targeted for growth. Based on past sprawl trends, 42 percent of the County will be “developed” by 2030. If the County is successful in changing the patterns of development and encouraging more efficient use of land and infrastructure the amount of land consumption can be reduced to 35 percent of the land area—leaving more opportunity for growth in the future.

- **Regional context**
- **Path of growth affecting Chester County**
- One of the reasons that growth is expected to continue at a high rate is Chester County's strategic location in the path of growth along the eastern seaboard.



Presenter's Comment:

It is important to understand why Chester County is so concerned about how growth is accommodated. Growth is not the result of what color you use on a zoning map, but is the result of market and demographic forces that extend way beyond individual municipal boundaries—and even beyond county and state boundaries. Chester County is located in the center of “megalopolis” that extends from Boston on the north to Washington D.C. on the south. Much of Chester County is part of either the Philadelphia or the Wilmington Metropolitan Areas. It has become one of the major employment centers of the Philadelphia region.

Population forecasts

2005 population estimate	473,000
2030 population projection	605,000
Percent change 2005–2030	28%



Presenter's Comment:

Projections for population growth in Chester County outstrip any other County in the Commonwealth. "Conservative" projections call for the County to add more than 130,000 residents in the next two decades. Less conservative projections suggest that the County will need to accommodate as much as a quarter of a million additional people in the next twenty years.

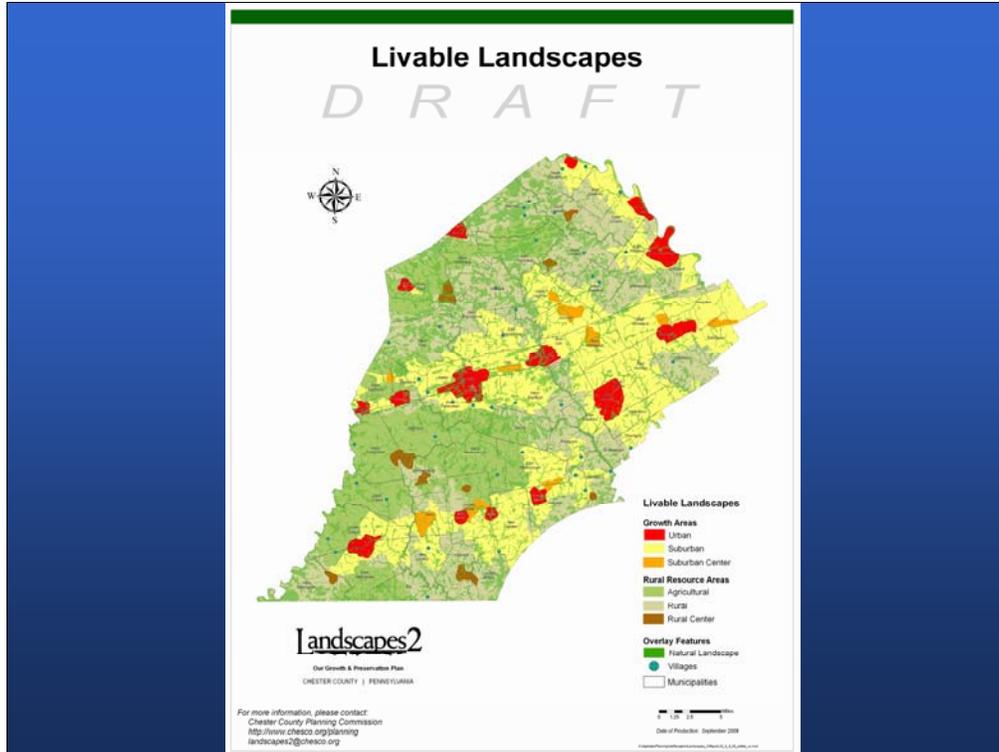
Survey results

- Most important issues facing Chester County:
 - Managing new growth and development
 - Preserving open space/farmland
 - Improving transportation systems



Presenter's Comment:

It is also important to understand that in the United States we “govern with the consent of the governed.” Chester County’s plans and actions are not accomplished in a vacuum. For instance the County recently polled County residents using the internet, obtaining almost 9,000 responses. The County has also recently conducted scientific polls of residents in the six geographic “communities” of the County. The priorities of Chester County residents are absolutely clear.



Presenter's Comment:

Chester County's Comprehensive Plan, *LANDSCAPES*, is a plan for both growth and preservation.

Landscapes vision statement

“Preserve and enhance the unique character of Chester County landscapes by concentrating growth in the most appropriate areas.”

Presenter’s Comment:

The vision of *LANDSCAPES* is explicitly clear.

www.landscapes2.org



Presenter's Comment:

LANDSCAPES and all the research and material that have gone into the latest update can be found online. Readers can also elect to sign up online for a free monthly email service that will keep subscribers up to date on developments in the plan and related matters in the County and the Commonwealth and innovations in the field of planning nation-wide.