

OUTREACH

DEVELOPMENT

GROWTH

AWARENESS

VISION

HORIZONS 2025 IMPLEMENTATION

MUNICIPAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

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This brochure describes the variety of tools and techniques available to local governments to implement the region's long-range plan, *Horizons 2025*, prepared and adopted by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). The plan provides an integrated land use and transportation vision for the region's growth and development through the year 2025. Key policies of *Horizons 2025* include:

- Revitalization of the region's core cities of Philadelphia, Camden, Trenton and Chester through maintenance and restoration of existing infrastructure systems, services, and capacity to support and attract new growth
- Stabilization of older townships, boroughs, and cities located throughout the region by maintaining or improving current infrastructure to support or enhance the social, economic, and physical character of these communities
- Growth Management of developing suburban communities by discouraging extensive growth and related infrastructure services and facilities outside designated growth areas and encouraging center-based planning and alternatives to conventional suburban design
- Preservation of farming and rural communities of the region by limiting the extension or development of major infrastructure systems in rural areas
- Conservation of sensitive natural areas and an open space network

Municipal governments have the primary authority and responsibility to implement these policies. This brochure is designed to introduce local officials and citizens to planning tools that may be useful in their communities.

The tools listed in this brochure are organized into several categories: Land Use, Economic Development, Natural Resource Preservation, Historic Preservation, Transportation, and Multi-Municipal Cooperation. Tool descriptions include an overview of the use of the tool and an example of some of its benefits. Where appropriate, after the tool description, common local planning documents that will need to be amended or adopted are listed in italics.

In future *Horizons 2025* implementation brochures, individual tools and techniques will be described at greater length, and case studies of their successful implementation in the region will be presented. In addition, the back cover of this brochure contains a list of sources that can be consulted for more information about the tools and techniques described here. For additional information about DVRPC and the *Horizons 2025* planning process, please visit DVRPC's website at www.dvrpc.org.

Capital Improvement Plans and Programs define municipal plans for future capital improvements, such as roads and other public facilities. The range and scope of these can vary, but most cover a five or six-year period. Capital improvement plans must include a capital program, with an implementation schedule and projected budget. If a capital improvement plan is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan, it allows the municipality to plan for future growth and improvements, lowering costs, predicting needs before demand arises, and facilitating the search for funding. A capital improvement plan also provides developers and the public with more certainty concerning future improvements, improving opportunities for participation and increasing accountability. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance.*

Growth Areas designate areas where growth will be encouraged, through the provision of necessary infrastructure and zoning for higher densities. Development can then be directed within the growth area, preserving land outside of it. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance.*

Traditional Neighborhood Development applies historic development patterns to new development, encouraging compactness and a mix of uses in a pedestrian-friendly, village type setting. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance.*

Transfer of Development Rights direct growth into designated areas, allowing conservation of natural or rural areas. Under this option, the rights to develop land are separated from the title to the land itself, and these rights may be sold to landowners in "receiving areas," or areas designated for growth. This allows denser development in these "receiving areas," compensating for land conservation elsewhere. Transfer of development rights is an important planning technique, but can also be a complex one. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance.*

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Districts encourage compact development patterns near transportation nodes such as train stations or bus stops. TOD mixes residential and commercial uses, creating a village-like land use pattern that is pedestrian-friendly and encourages the use of public transit. These areas may become or reinforce town centers, encouraging interaction and a sense of community. In turn, commercial uses, offices, or higher-density homes near a transit station can help to increase transit use, allowing more choice among transportation options. Often, TOD districts are adopted as overlay zones, rather than replacing the original zoning. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Agricultural Zoning allows municipalities to protect rural and agricultural areas by permitting agriculture as a primary use, and establishing large minimum lot sizes, usually of 10 acres or more. *Zoning Ordinance; Comprehensive Plan.*

Flexible Zoning and Subdivision Requirements provide developers with additional freedom concerning permitted uses, parking requirements, lot sizes, and many other requirements. These promote innovative site designs, and are especially useful for infill development. *Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Incentive Zoning encourages developers to provide amenities, such as open space, recreational areas, or affordable housing, in exchange for allowing a higher density of development. Incentive zoning is especially useful for providing affordable housing, and fosters more cooperation between public and private sectors through voluntary participation. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Overlay Zones provide additional regulations or guidelines on land use within their coverage areas. Overlay zones do not replace existing zones, and are often used to protect natural resources or historic areas, or to control access along major highways. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Performance Zoning regulates development based on the specific impacts of the development on the site, rather than the specific types of uses. For example, performance zoning

for an industrial development might consider vehicle traffic, air pollution, noise, and lot coverage, but not regulate what types of industry could locate in the development. Performance zoning provides municipalities with more control over the impacts of development while giving developers more flexibility in types of permitted uses. *Zoning Ordinance; Comprehensive Plan.*

Planned Residential Developments are zoning districts that provide developers with greater flexibility or higher densities if certain conditions are fulfilled, including open space preservation, provision of affordable housing, or pedestrian connections to other developments. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Suburban Center Zoning directs growth into identified centers, which contain a mix of retail, office, residential, public, and recreation uses, thereby creating community focal points and centers of activity. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Transit Design Standards can be used to influence design near transit stations. These design standards may provide guidelines for pedestrian access, human-scaled building design, landscaping, parking requirements, or other general aspects of site planning. *Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Brownfields Redevelopment involves the remediation and redevelopment of former industrial or contaminated sites. Brownfields redevelopment projects can revitalize urban areas, limit sprawl by facilitating development in existing communities, and improve the quality of the environment.

Business Improvement Districts (and similar tools such as Special Improvement Districts and Neighborhood Improvement Districts) allow the coordination of business improvement activities, usually by levying a special tax on businesses in the area that will be applied directly back into the district. These activities often include maintenance agreements, façade and streetscape improvements, security provision, and many others.

Economic Development Planning is the process of analyzing local business development and retention goals, and then defining strategies to meet these goals. Economic development incentives, such as grants, loans, or provision of public infrastructure, may be provided through an economic development plan. *Comprehensive Plan; Capital Improvements Plan.*

Enterprise Zones are areas in economically disadvantaged communities that receive state grants to undertake business development activities. Businesses located in a designated Enterprise Zone may receive tax credits, loans, or other incentives. In Pennsylvania, Keystone Opportunity Zones have a similar function.

Greyfields Redevelopment involves the redevelopment of abandoned shopping centers or strip malls. Often, this redevelopment can take the form of mixed-use centers, and can provide the opportunity to create town centers in communities formerly lacking them.

Land Value Taxation (also called two-tier or two-rate taxation) increases taxes on the value of land while reducing taxes on the value of buildings and improvements. This can encourage reinvestment in urban areas, by lowering the relative cost of improving a property, and raising the relative cost of allowing it to remain vacant.

Main Street Programs help communities to revitalize their downtowns by organizing redevelopment activities, improving design standards, and promoting or marketing efforts.

Tax Increment Financing allows public improvement projects to be financed by future tax revenues within a designated area. These future tax revenues are derived from the anticipated increase in land value that these improvements will create.

Conservation Easements are legal documents by which landowners maintain ownership but limit the development potential of their property in order to conserve natural resources, viewsheds, habitat, or farmland. The organization to which the land is eased, whether a private land trust or government agency, is responsible for monitoring deed restriction compliance with current and future property owners.

Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) require developers to inventory the natural resources of their site and the surrounding area and to measure changes the development may have on those resources. The EIS gives municipalities the opportunity to evaluate the impact of development in the site plan submission process, and to request changes or mitigation to lessen negative impacts. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Environmental Resource Inventories are compilations of factual narrative and mapped information about the natural characteristics of a municipality. They identify critical natural resources and provide a policy basis for the establishment of resource protection ordinances. *Comprehensive Plan.*

Open Space Plans are comprehensive documents that serve as guides for open space protection and preservation in a locality. Open space plans usually begin with the municipality's environmental resource inventory. The plans

examine the community's needs and goals, analyze protected and unprotected open space, and lay out priorities and strategies for preservation.

Parkland Dedications / Fee-in-Lieu Provisions require developers to provide public open space within their developments, or to contribute a fee-in-lieu of dedicated land, to be used to improve parkland elsewhere. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Sewage Facilities Planning analyzes existing sewerage treatment methods within a community and recommends a process to satisfy current and future sewerage needs to meet water quality standards. The sewage facilities plan should be consistent with other local planning documents. *Act 537 Plan or 208 Plan; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Stormwater Management Planning allows municipalities to prevent flooding, decrease the amount of pollutants reaching the waterway, and recharge groundwater. Stormwater management planning is best conducted at the watershed scale, and is implemented through Best Management Practices. These emphasize preventing runoff through planning and site design that is compatible with natural features, designing and maintaining stormwater facilities properly, limiting the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and retrofitting developed areas to control runoff. *Act 167 Plan (in PA); Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Floodplain Ordinances control the amount and type of development in the 100-year floodplain or designated flood hazard areas to prevent property damage and loss of life from flooding. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Landscaping Ordinances promote site-appropriate native plants which require less watering, pesticides, and fertilizers, are more disease resistant, and provide habitat for wildlife. *Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

"Net Out" of Resources is the technique of deducting environmentally constrained lands from development density calculations. Netting-out is intended to protect and preserve environmentally constrained areas by reducing or eliminating the credit given for these lands toward the amount of development permitted on a given site. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Open Space Zoning / Cluster Development allows residential units to be concentrated on a small portion of a parcel, rather than spread evenly throughout. This type of development can preserve natural areas, farmland, and scenic views, and result in lower environmental impacts and infrastructure requirements. A similar technique is lot averaging, which permits individual lot sizes to vary as long as overall site density meets certain requirements. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Slope Management limits development on steep and moderate slopes to reduce erosion and slope collapse. *Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Stream Corridor Protection Ordinances ensure that vegetated riparian buffers are maintained by requiring development to be set back from stream banks, floodplains and wetland areas and by limiting the use and intensity of activities within the corridor. Buffer widths typically range from 25 to 300 feet, depending on the community's goals. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Water Supply Planning ensures an adequate quality and quantity of water supplies by considering groundwater protection and recharge. For example, wellhead or aquifer protection maintains clean, safe groundwater supplies by minimizing sources of pollution in environmentally sensitive areas.

Wetlands Management Ordinances / Wetlands Mapping protect environmentally sensitive wetland areas. In Pennsylvania, Wetlands Ordinances typically prohibit any disturbance of delineated wetlands for residential, commercial, or industrial development. In New Jersey, Wetlands Mapping requires that wetlands be mapped as part of the site plan submission process.

Certified Local Governments are recognized by Federal or State preservation agencies, and are eligible for various forms of technical assistance, training, and participation in statewide preservation programs.

Demolition Ordinances require that structures be examined for historical significance before their demolition is permitted. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Historic Overlay Zones provide additional regulations for the development of land and modification of buildings in the area which they cover. Historic overlay zones are often applied to historic town centers to protect their unique architecture and character. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Historic Preservation Planning allows municipalities to identify goals, inventory historic resources, and formulate and implement strategies for historic preservation. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Historic Resources Design Standards help to ensure that the visual characteristics that make a historic district unique are conserved. They can be useful tools if adopted as part of a historic overlay zone or in a local historic district. *Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; Historic Preservation Ordinance.*

Historical Commissions or historic architectural review boards are local government bodies that oversee historic preservation planning and decision making in their community. Establishing historical commissions is often necessary to implement any other local historic preservation efforts.

Local Historic Districts can be created by municipalities to preserve significant historic areas. Local historic district ordinances can preserve character by regulating the erection, alteration, restoration, and demolition of buildings within the district. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. The list recognizes properties of national, state, or local significance, gives added consideration in the planning for federally assisted projects, and makes properties eligible for certain tax benefits and grant programs. Listing in the National Register does not prevent properties from being altered or demolished.

Village Protection Programs can serve to preserve historic villages by ensuring that future development, as well as modifications to existing structures, are consistent with the historic context of the village. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Access Management Provisions improve safety and efficiency on roadways by limiting and controlling access points. Access management can reduce congestion and accidents without major capital improvements by linking land use and transportation planning strategies. Access management tools may involve shared driveways for local businesses, improved signage, parallel access roads, or similar techniques. Access management can often be accomplished in conjunction with the state Department of Transportation's Highway Occupancy Permit process.

Official Maps legally establish the location of existing and proposed streets, multi-use trails, parks, and other public lands and facilities. Creating an official map, and thereby planning the future locations of public facilities, notifies landowners and future developers of the location of future public improvements. The official map allows municipalities to have the option to purchase or obtain easements on land designated for future public facilities, in the event that development is proposed on this land. Official maps are also useful for right-of-way preservation.

Park-and-Ride Programs encourage the use of transit and car-pooling, thus lowering congestion on roadways, by providing parking areas near transit stops. Sometimes, park-and-ride facilities are located in the parking lots of

businesses or institutions, and are based on negotiations between the municipality, the transit provider, and the landowner. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Safe Route to School Programs provide safe routes for children to walk to school, and may focus on engineering improvements, education, or enforcement of existing laws.

Traffic Impact Fees allow local governments to levy fees on developers to pay for improvements to the transportation system made necessary by their new developments. According to law, there must be a rational nexus or clear linkage between the new development and the need for transportation improvements for traffic impact fees to be legally defensible. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Trip Reduction Ordinances are used to manage transportation demand, and are typically designed to reduce traffic at peak hours by changing the driving habits of commuters. Trip reduction ordinances require businesses to reduce vehicle trips-to-work among their employees. To make this reduction, businesses may use tactics such as employee subsidies for the use of transit, preferred parking for car-poolers, parking fees for employees who drive alone, flex-time, telecommuting, and similar measures. *Comprehensive Plan; Township Code.*

Community Shuttle Programs can complement existing public transit service by providing services to special populations, such as senior citizens, or by circulating within neighborhoods that are not served by transit. Community shuttles can be operated by transportation management associations or other non-profit organizations, and are often funded through welfare-to-work or elderly programs.

Parking Management Programs manage parking within a municipality, ensuring that parking supply and demand are compatible. Inadequate parking supply near commercial uses and employment centers can cause a decline in business, while an oversupply of parking results in the inefficient use of land, unnecessary financial responsibilities, and an increase in the amount of impervious coverage.

Pedestrian/Bikeway Facilities Design standards make local roadways more hospitable places for bicyclists and pedestrians, reducing reliance on motor vehicles. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Residential Street Design addresses issues of livability and community character by setting reasonable street design standards. Currently, many low-speed residential streets are designed using highway standards, which do not account for the function of the road and are often inappropriate. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; Zoning Ordinance.*

Right-of-way Preservation allows municipalities to reduce the future costs of transportation improvements by limiting development in the right-of-way of existing and future roads. *Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; Official Map.*

Traffic Calming techniques can reduce traffic speeds by incorporating certain design features, such as speed humps, narrow lanes, wide sidewalks, diagonal or parallel street parking, and central medians with landscaping, into roadway design. These are most desirable on residential streets, commercial streets, or areas with high pedestrian traffic.

Traffic Signal Systems use timing and signal coordination to manage the flow of traffic volumes along a corridor. In municipalities where congestion is a serious concern, the possibility of implementing closed-loop traffic signal systems should be explored in coordination with the pertinent state Department of Transportation.

Corridor Planning allows municipalities along a transportation corridor to develop a coordinated plan for the entire corridor. This allows municipalities to develop a coherent vision for the corridor, establishing priorities for transportation improvements and land use change. Corridor planning works best with multi-municipal cooperation. *Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

Greenway Planning promotes greenways, or linear corridors of open space, following streams, ridge lines, or abandoned rail corridors, which typically cross municipal boundaries. Greenways provide environmental, recreational, cultural, and economic benefits.

Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans are agreements between neighboring municipalities to allow formalized cooperation to coordinate on various planning issues. Participating in multi-municipal comprehensive plans, can help to protect municipalities from curative amendments, provide funding incentives, require state agencies to consider local plans in decision-making, and other benefits. *Comprehensive Plan.*

Multi-Municipal Zoning Ordinances coordinate zoning between participating municipalities. This approach can serve to reduce discrepancies between neighboring zoning ordinances, provide protection from curative amendments, and address planning issues that cross municipal boundaries. These zoning ordinances must be based on a multi-municipal comprehensive plan. *Zoning Ordinance.*

Shared Municipal Services, such as fire and police protection, can allow small municipalities to reduce the cost of providing these services. Often, a multi-municipal service sharing arrangement, or a joint purchasing arrangement, is more cost-effective and efficient.

Voluntary Agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding, can help municipalities to implement multi-municipal projects.

Watershed Planning allows municipalities to coordinate planning efforts within watersheds to promote water quality and general environmental health. Often, natural features such as watersheds are more appropriate areas for environmental planning activities than political boundaries.

SOURCES

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Created in 1965, the **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)** is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



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