

Commonly Asked Questions

Question: *What section of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code grants the right to establish growth and rural areas?*

Section 301.(d) of Article III states that “*The municipal, multi-municipal or county comprehensive plan may identify those areas where growth will occur so that a full range of public infrastructure services, including sewer, water, highways, police and fire protection, public schools, parks, open space and other services can be adequately planned and provided as needed to accommodate growth.*”

Question: *Why start with interim growth and rural areas?*

Interim growth and rural areas provide a sound basis from which to begin discussions with municipalities to establish jointly agreed upon growth and/or rural areas. The ultimate goal is to achieve general consistency between the County and municipal comprehensive plans as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The York County Planning Commission also feels that by working with municipalities to change the status of growth/rural areas from "interim" to "established," the needs of both the County and municipalities will be better identified and the use of growth/rural areas as a decision making tool will more likely be implemented.

Question: *Does this mean that no growth can take place outside of the growth area?*

The answer here is no. Areas outside growth areas are not “no growth” areas, but offer the potential for growth at densities that would not necessitate the need for an increase in infrastructure and services or disturb the natural resources a municipality is trying to preserve.

Question: *Can utilities be extended beyond growth areas?*

In the case of public health, safety, and welfare the extension of public utilities into rural areas without designating the area as a growth area may be justified. This is usually done to serve areas with failing on-lot systems with the purpose of the extension being to correct an existing problem and not to provide service for new development.

Question: *Can growth and rural area designations be adjusted or are they set in stone?*

Growth and rural areas are a land use decision making tool that summarizes the existing and future land use needs of a municipality. As these needs change and are identified through future updates to municipal plans and ordinances, the growth and rural area designations identifying those needs will also need to change.

Question: *How are growth and rural areas enforced?*

Growth and rural areas are implemented by municipal officials making sound land use decisions based on effective comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances, official maps, sewage facilities plans, and water supply planning. By implementing or enforcing these plans and ordinances which form the basis for the growth and rural area designations, municipal officials are likewise enforcing growth and rural areas.

Question: *How can my municipality start the process of establishing growth and rural areas?*

The York County Planning Commission staff is currently working with those municipalities involved in a planning process or those that have interim growth areas. The staff is interested in working with, and eventually will contact, every municipality about this process. If your municipality has an interest in participating, please contact the York County Planning Commission and staff will set up a time to meet with municipal officials to initiate this valuable process.



Planning Perspectives

A Newsletter from the York County Planning Commission

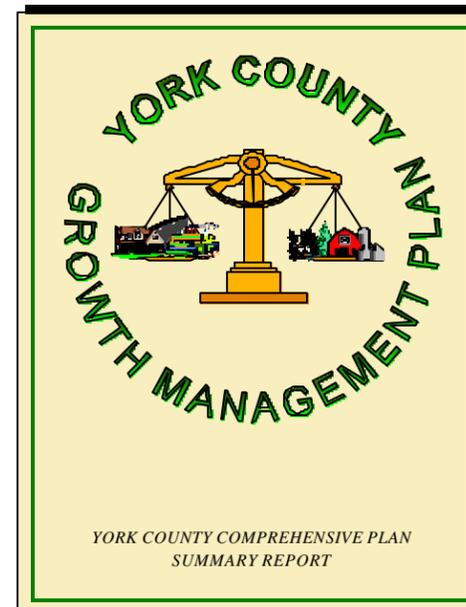
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The ABC's of Growth Management in York County, Pennsylvania

by Roy Livergood

Growth Management Plan

The Growth Management component of the York County Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a tool for coordinating land use planning activities throughout York County. The premise of this Plan is that municipalities should be directly involved in the delineation of future land uses and participate in discussions of regional concern. The delineations and discussions being predicated upon the need to direct growth to areas where it can best be accommodated, which in turn, helps to relieve development pressure on valuable resource or preservation areas.



The Process

In order to implement a countywide growth management strategy, the Growth Management Plan provides a process, known as the Municipal Consulting Program. County planning staff work with municipalities to jointly delineate and identify growth and rural areas. The purpose of these delineations is to differentiate between areas suited for development as compared to those better used as resource areas. The basis for the delineation includes a review of development, community facilities, infrastructure (utilities, roadways, etc.), environmental resources, and municipal plans and ordinances. This information is examined from a past, present, and future point of view. Once a determination of existing and future growth needs of the municipality are made, areas within the municipality are classified as either growth or rural areas. These designations then become a tool for making land use decisions at the municipal, county, and state level.

Planning Perspectives is a newsletter created by the staff of the York County Planning Commission. It covers current topics of interest in the field of Urban and Regional Planning. If you have a suggested topic for future issues, contact Felicia Dell at

Terminology

In order to better grasp this process, an understanding of the terms associated with growth management is needed. The following terms are used in discussions about growth management. These definitions should help to render a better picture of this concept.

Municipal Consulting Program - The approach taken by the York County Planning Commission to work with municipalities, either through a series of meetings or participation in a planning process (i.e. comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, sewage facilities plan, official map, well-head protection, etc.), towards consistency in planning efforts and to finalize the location of growth and/or rural areas.

Growth Area - As defined by the York County Growth Management Plan, a growth area includes lands appropriate for future urban and suburban development requiring a full range of public services and facilities, such as public sewer and water, police, fire, and schools. Land uses within a growth area would include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, and recreational. These areas are sized based on population projections, potential and available public facilities and services, regional land use needs, and the protection of important resource areas. The planning period for these areas is usually 20 years. There are three types of growth areas.

Primary Growth Area - Contains a full range of services that would be necessary for a fully self-contained community.

Secondary Growth Area - Does not contain the full range of services that would be necessary for a fully self-contained community. For example, residents may need to travel outside of the area for services, such as hospitals or libraries, or the area may be served by public water, but not public sewer or vice versa. These areas are mainly focused on boroughs and adjacent areas and provide for a lesser intensity of development than a primary growth area.

Future Growth Area - Areas designated to accommodate development that may exceed projected growth or for development planned to take place beyond the 20 year planning period. When developed, this area would be a reasonable extension of an existing primary or secondary growth area.

Rural Area - Resource lands, villages, and agricultural lands that are not included as part of a growth area.

Resource Land - Includes conservation and preservation areas such as aquifer recharge and wellhead protection areas, 100-year flood plains, public parks and open space, steep slopes, streams and drainage ways not in a 100-year flood plain, surface waters, preserved farms, wetlands, woodlands, areas that have

poor soils for on-site septic systems, scenic vistas, and other historical and cultural resource areas. These areas provide a natural break or boundary line for development.

Villages - Smaller boroughs and settlement areas which historically have provided some level of community identity and a limited amount of services. These areas provide an important alternative for people who choose to live in rural areas. Rural townships are encouraged to direct projected growth to these areas while taking into account the traditional function of the community and encouraging a greater mix of uses that are pedestrian oriented.

Agricultural Land - Land that is or could be engaged in or supportive of operations dealing with the production, harvesting, and preparation of livestock and crops due to lot sizes and soil properties. These areas are recommended to be protected through implementation of some form of agricultural preservation, such as effective agricultural zoning techniques, the transfer of development rights, or the purchase of agricultural easements.

Interim - A term used to describe growth and rural areas designated by the York County Planning Commission. They are to serve as a starting point for discussions with municipalities and will be finalized through the Municipal Consulting Program. Interim growth and rural areas were based on existing developed areas, existing public water and sewer service areas, existing zoning delineations, natural features, and preserved farms. These areas are shown on Map 6 of the York County Growth Management Plan.

Established - A term used to describe growth and rural areas that have been jointly agreed upon and incorporated into the York County Comprehensive Plan and adopted by a municipality either through a resolution or as part of a comprehensive plan. The establishment of growth and rural areas is tracked via Map 8 of the York County Growth Management Plan.

