

ELEMENT 10 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS, CSA and PGA DELINEATION

Element 10 is composed of two components which articulate key planning problems, themes and assumptions identified by the Regional Plan Study Review Committee for consideration in the final policy plan development and the land classification and growth policy functional element.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

NEED FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

In the nearly 60 years of regional planning in the Tri-County Region, the need for a more coordinated, cooperative, participatory, strategic and thoughtful regional planning initiative has never been greater. It is an extremely ambitious challenge to inspire every elected municipal official and planner from 103 communities along with economic development groups and numerous other organizations toward a common regional plan effort. However, serving the regional community well, improving regional land use planning, protecting the natural environment and assisting to improve the delivery of services efficiently and in a manner that enhances the resident's lives is exactly what the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission has been asked to do.

The growing population brings with it a need for housing, jobs, transportation and other community services at a growing scale. In established community centers such as the City of Harrisburg, Carlisle and other boroughs, building and infrastructure renovation is essential to serve the growing community, while the most rural and environmentally sensitive areas have their own special limitations and needs in response to community growth. Compounding the effects of growth trends are the expectations of the citizenry for more amenities, services, and choices, as well as difficulties providing services the people need and demand.

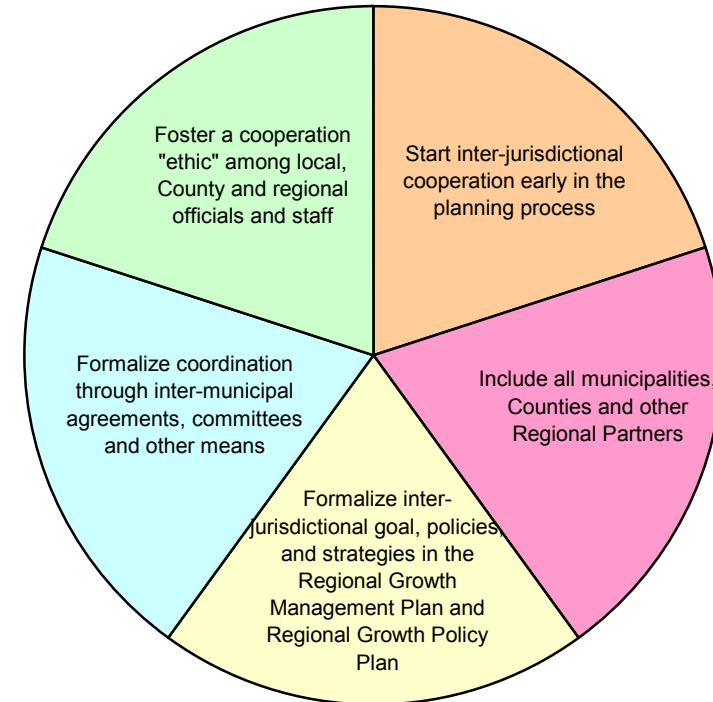
The Tri-County Region is at a critical point in its history and needs to examine its physical development options for the future in conjunction with natural resource protection, transportation planning, infrastructure networks, economic development and other public services. Problems and issues facing the Tri-County Region appear to be directly related to population size, composition, and urban/suburban development distribution that has occurred over the past thirty years.

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COOPERATION

TCRPC recognizes in order to successfully bring the regional community together to define development policies and delineate Planned Growth Areas, cooperation and coordination among municipalities, counties, the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study, economic development and environmental groups is critical. However, it also realizes that when "real world" issues are confronted with different jurisdictions with different agendas, ideals often fade and agreement among the parties can be difficult to achieve. TCRPC recognizes it is necessary to identify potential issues and conflicts, address them as part of the planning process, and include provision for continued cooperation and coordination. As municipalities, counties and the Regional Planning Commission collaborate on issues of mutual interest in their respective plans, a general awareness of each jurisdiction's needs and priorities will be much clearer.

For the purpose of the Regional Growth Management Plan effort, the term "Inter-jurisdictional cooperation" is defined as the act of establishing regular means of communication among two or more political or special purpose organizations for the purpose of establishing regional policies, resolving issues of mutual interest related to the operations and coordination of future physical development.

Keys to successful inter-jurisdictional cooperation in the context of the Regional Growth Management Plan are recognized as follows:



A PLAN FOR THE REGION

The Regional Growth Management Plan is intended to be a functional plan that focuses on guiding physical development to areas connected with public investment in public services, as well as protecting existing natural resources. The studies and policies of the Regional Growth Management Plan and the resulting development policies will serve as an umbrella policy framework for use by the Region's Counties and municipal governments.

The Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247, gives municipalities, not Counties or Regional entities, the power to implement land use controls. Therefore, it is recognized that in order for the Regional Growth Management Plan to be a useful policy framework for the Regional community and effectively supported and implemented, Counties and municipalities must work together and play an integral part in the planning process.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission recognizes that the MPC, Act 247 **requires** all counties in Pennsylvania to have a comprehensive plan, although for municipalities comprehensive planning is **optional**. When considering the regional planning process, a County is an important vehicle for regional growth management policy because they are large enough to address regional issues, such as land use, water resources, farmland preservation, storm water and solid waste management, and transportation services. However, Counties are also small enough to relate to and reflect local municipal concerns. While a County plan does not supercede a municipal plan, it is important that county and municipal plans be compatible so that the goals of each can be achieved. As well, the MPC, Act 247 requires that Municipal comprehensive plans be generally consistent with County comprehensive plans.

A "regional" context must be taken into consideration in order for the Tri-County Region to establish a planning process that links transportation and land use planning. It is also recognized that implementing regional policies will take a much higher level of intergovernmental and inter-jurisdictional cooperation than currently exists.

PLANNED GROWTH AREAS

The Planned Growth Area (PGA) strategy is a process where local and County officials participate in an organized effort to delineate areas already provided with public services such as water, sewer, transportation facilities, emergency services, parks and schools establishing the most practical development areas. The process attempts to guide and coordinate land use densities and intensities where there is existing and available capital infrastructure. The PGA planning approach provides recommendations by establishing target areas appropriate for more intense economic activity, urban and suburban development and areas most suitable for rural development and agriculture and environmental conservation areas.

In 1994, a concerted effort was made to examine three previously recommended land use policies established by the TCRPC and evaluate the viability of these policies in a revised land use plan. This information was summarized in the 1994 Regional Growth Strategy report.

In 1996, a basic work program was established to begin data collection activities necessary for defining Planned Growth Areas. The project was accepted and supported by the County Commissioners of the Region and the Regional Growth Management Plan was underway.

Similar to other planning policies, the Planned Growth Area does not mean development is not planned to occur in non-PGA areas. Rather, the housing and commercial activity in PGA's will typically support higher densities and intensities of development, due to the proximity to available public services.

In examining the PGA policy approach, the Regional Plan Study Review Committee recognized that there are both benefits and barriers to this form of planning that need to be considered and assumed in this planning approach. During a review of planning literature on the subject of growth management, benefits and barriers to this approach were compiled and summarized below:

Benefits

- ❑ Community Revitalization - encouraging more intense or compact development in areas served by public services, developers seek available sites for development, infill development, or redevelopment.
- ❑ Improved Tax Base in Community Centers - The tax base of the Region's urban centers, community centers and inner suburbs can be improved through the redevelopment of underutilized sites.
- ❑ Efficient Utilization of Public Services - Infill and redevelopment promotes the use of existing public services and the more cost-efficient use of existing infrastructure. Improves the economical use of tax dollars by locating development and additional infrastructure near public service delivery systems.
- ❑ Infrastructure Costs Savings - Guiding growth to areas already served with infrastructure offers savings to the community, developer and reduced home prices for home buyers.
- ❑ Improved Infrastructure Planning - Knowing where development may be thoughtfully expanded allows local governments, authorities, utilities companies and HATS to engage in effective long range capital improvement planning. Public investment to new or improved infrastructure will be more cost effective.
- ❑ Incentive for Reinvestment and Preservation of Community Identity - A PGA focuses development activity toward existing community development centers suitable for reinvestment, historical site analysis and preservation which may lead to economically and physically more revitalized communities, while also preserving neighborhood and community identities by clearly defining their edges and preventing them from sprawling together.
- ❑ Reduce Traffic Congestion - More compact development patterns and mixed-use development promoted by PGAs can reduce vehicle trip lengths and enhance highway use.
- ❑ Opportunities to Enhance Transit and Alternative Forms of Transportation - More concentrated development and increased densities can have a positive effect on the transit ridership and improve the viability of bicycle, pedestrian networks and transit systems.
- ❑ Natural Resource and Agriculture Lands Conservation - If fully implemented, PGAs can protect farmland and natural resources. They can also inhibit "hop scotch" land speculation in prime farming areas by creating two separate markets for land, one rural and the other urban/suburban.
- ❑ Urban Residential Development Provides More Housing Options - Through encouraging increased residential development densities, multi-family housing and smaller lots for homes offers more variety of housing options for lower income families seeking affordable housing.

Barriers and Issues

- ❑ Restricts the Amount of Land Available for Development - If effectively implemented, Planned Growth Areas can redirect and encourage the amount of land for development away from low value lands and cause unwanted shifts in land speculation markets.
- ❑ Housing Prices may be affected by market shifts and influences - Limitations on land area may, in fact, increase the cost of land for development and the increased costs may be passed on to home buyers in the form of higher home prices.
- ❑ Opposition to Higher Densities - When fully implemented, PGA development encourages higher residential densities and mixed uses that residents and governing bodies of conventional suburbs in the Tri-County Region may oppose in their communities and neighborhoods.
- ❑ Lure of Low Density Suburban Living is Too Great - There is a common theme among developers and planners in the Region that people simply have no incentive to move from lower density residential areas to higher density places and that people generally desire and choose life in the suburbs.
- ❑ Effectiveness Requires Political Commitment - To be effective, the Regional Growth Management Plan will need to have the full support of all local government entities and partners over a period of several decades. County and municipal plans and ordinances will need to reflect this commitment. TCRPC recognizes that there is a question as to whether the level of commitment will be present in the Tri-County Region to accomplish an effective PGA initiative for 2020.
- ❑ Values and Benefits of Planned Growth May be Difficult to Recognize - With such a diversity of Boroughs and Townships in the Region, the values of Planned Growth may not be supported and implemented in many communities of the Region.
- ❑ Costs of Enhancing Transit - The environmental benefits and cost savings of reducing vehicular trips for increases in bus service and transit based transportation systems may be offset by dramatic increases in public investment needed for upgrades and additional transit facilities and services to serve the new users.

FUTURE LAND NEEDS FOR PLANNED GROWTH AREAS

Inventories provide factual information about the present situation, but analyses and forecasts are necessary to provide estimates for future needs of land and resources. Analyses of the information provided by the inventories are required to provide an understanding of the existing situation, the future trends in that situation, and the factors influencing those trends.

TCRPC recognizes that although the preparation of forecasts is not planning, the preparation of all plans requires some type of forecasting. Forecasts and projections are required for all future events and conditions which are outside the scope of the plan but will affect the plan or its implementation. To effectively plan forecasts and projections are a necessity.

Population and economic forecasts are typically prepared at the County or Regional level because they are usually more accurate and absorb many of the "site specific" or "micro" variations that are difficult to predict in smaller areas. However, TCRPC recognizes that when considering population and economic projections and forecasts, no entity can predict the future and all projections and forecasts involve some uncertainty. Forecasts can have biases and either understate or overstate expectations. Forecasts are often no better than the assumptions on which they are based.

Nevertheless, the Regional Growth Management Plan Study Review Committee recognizes that forecasts and assumptions should be used as a common planning tool. It is important to know as much as possible about future expectations for the region. Because the Regional Growth Management Plan is part of a planning process, TCRPC also recognizes that forecasts and projections will need to be reviewed and examined cooperatively on a formal basis with its planning partners. The most useful and accurate forecasts can evolve through an interaction between the TCRPC staff, local planners, elected officials, leaders and residents who know their communities well.

The following sections summarize the key planning assumptions used in determining “land needs” for the Region’s Planned Growth Areas.

1. Plan Time Horizon

The Regional Growth Management Plan is being prepared for a time horizon to the year 2020. The time period was chosen: (1) to utilize the Commonwealth’s County population projections for the same period of time, and (2) to contribute to the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study’s Regional Transportation Plan (time horizon 2030).

2. Population Forecasts

Element 2 presents a detailed set of data regarding the Region’s population characteristics, trends and projections.

3. Dwelling Unit Forecast

Element 3 presents a detailed set of data regarding the Region’s dwelling unit characteristics, trends and projections.

LEVELS OF SERVICE

An important part of any land use planning process involves an analysis of the location, amount and quality of specific community facilities and services such as fire and police protection, water supply, sewerage service, park and recreation, solid waste and public utilities. The extent to which an analysis of these systems can be conducted and incorporated into the physical land policies varies from community to community and by the size of planning area.

In the case of the Tri-County Region and the RGMP process, the level of detail and analysis conducted related to the provision of services was limited. Data regarding service quantity or quality was non-existent or very general in nature and actual standards and technical specifications for satisfactory levels of service simply do not exist.

Although the TCRPC recognizes performance and level of service standards as a potential tool for implementing local, County and Regional Plans, further study and investigation is needed to determine what these standards could be in the Tri-County Region. Instead, the TCRPC recognizes and has focused on locational information related to the Region’s transportation facilities and certain community facilities and services critical to locating future development. The locational considerations for defining and illustrating the Region’s Community Services Areas are discussed in more detail at the end of this Element.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE PGA

Throughout the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission’s history, it has been consistently accepted within Regional and County planning policies that the stewardship and preservation of natural environment is one of the most important considerations within the planning process. The natural environment is a significant component of the region’s quality of life. Clearly, because most environmental systems and issues transcend the boundaries of any County, City, Borough or Township, the TCRPC is uniquely positioned and qualified to assist the Regional community nurture cooperation, coordination and solutions to regional environmental issues.

Element 4 compiled and mapped a series of environmental features to be protected. While the land area totals and physical location of these features are not utilized heavily in this phase of the planning study, they will be critical in the plan design phase of the PGA Delineation at the local and county levels.

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE CONNECTION

In the early 1990’s, transportation and land use planning at the County and Regional levels began to receive renewed attention due, in part, to (1) the requirements of the PA Municipalities Planning Code for County Comprehensive Planning, (2) a new revival in regional cooperation and regional thinking promoted by county and municipal leaders, and (3) a strong interest denoted by HATS and TCRPC to improve linkages between transportation and land use planning in accordance with ISTEA’s transportation planning factors. As TCRPC reviews and revises its growth management policies and strategies in more detail, and as new transportation legislation continues to stress land use and transportation linkages, it is likely that maintaining consistent regional land use and transportation plans which are mutually supportive will remain a high priority at TCRPC and HATS. TCRPC recognizes this and has considered both transportation access points and various bus and transit alternatives in the development of community services.

BENCHMARKS

Limitations of some of the traditional planning tools are well known in the Tri-County Region. In particular, historically more generalized comprehensive plans of the Region, County and local communities set forth goals and visions in broad terms but provide little clues for measuring the distance or rate of change from current to future conditions. Similarly, the community visioning initiatives experienced during Envision Capital Region, Region at Risk and in County and municipal governments provide an excellent educational opportunity and preface to creating community goals and objectives for the citizenry.

TCRPC recognizes that growth management and land use planning are important parts of the solution to many issues in the region. It recognizes land use planning as a continuous effort of the community leadership and citizenry and that in the final stages it will be important to begin effectively monitoring implementation of the plan policies and objectives. Municipal, County and Regional leaders and decision makers will benefit from less general, more specific guidance as well as more predictable results from this type of planning.

In the Tri-County region, linking growth management policy with appropriate performance benchmarks would be a new approach to plan monitoring. Establishing benchmarks offers all levels of government in the Region a more operational approach to achieving public goals and objectives. With the mosaic of policy and regulatory tools adopted within the Tri-County Region, and the lack of measurable results of Regional, County and local planning, there appears to be a growing awareness among public officials of the need to establish measurable benchmarks for monitoring plans and managing growth and development.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AREA DELINEATION

In the RGMP process, TCRPC recognized the need to determine the extent of public facilities and services as areas to focus future development and growth. Community Services Area (CSA) delineation is the first step in the PGA delineation effort by addressing the question - what areas of the Tri-County Region are best suited for PGAs?

Community Service Area essentially encompass areas of the region where a variety of services and facilities presently exist or may be reasonably expanded over time based on current plans and policies. As County and local planning partners begin to consider these areas, it will also be important to discuss the desirable levels of service and development densities and land uses anticipated to 2020.

MAP 10-1 graphically illustrates areas served with services i.e.: sewer, water, transit, and highway access. These services led to the development of Community Service Areas. TCRPC mapped each service to: (1) establish a target area for the vacant land parcel study, and (2) identify the core areas and most optimal locations for Planned Growth Areas.

Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry Counties each have their own distinct characteristics and this was evident in the determination of Community Service Areas. For instance, Cumberland and Dauphin Counties each have areas in which water, sewer, transit and transportation influence services currently exist. These areas were of first choice for delineation of Community Service Areas. Other areas were determined to have majority of the services and these areas too were drawn as CSA’s, transit was the service most frequently absent. Perry County on the other hand is very rural in nature and many areas were fortunate to have more than one of the services that TCRPC looked at in determining CSA’s. These areas were delineated as Perry County’s Community Service Areas. Service Areas within Perry County also consisted of places with a single service, due to the nature of the county and the development patterns.

PLANNED GROWTH AREA DELINEATION

As a preliminary step to examining available land for 2020, the CSA delineation provided a target area for more detailed vacant land parcel studies to be completed. The projected housing need for the 2020 population (Elements 2 & 3) and the minimum densities (Element 6) of the various planned growth areas linked with the vacant land study described in Element 5 and the Community Service Areas were key factors in determining the polygons that will be considered as Planned Growth Areas for the Tri-County Region. The vacant land acreage within a given Planned Growth Area, as determined by TCRPC’s geographic information system, multiplied by the minimum density of the PGA determined the number of dwelling units that could potentially be developed. TCRPC assumed that non-

residential development would follow, where appropriate, the future residential development.

MAP 10-2 graphically depicts the Planned Growth Areas in which infrastructure could be utilized to the fullest capacity to accommodate the projected population in 2020 in the region. **TABLE 10-1** shows the number of dwelling units that could potentially be developed within the Urban Cores, Rural Cores, Growth Areas and Reserve/Conservation Areas for each county by 2020. If the region were to strive to attain a 5% vacancy rate, there would be minimal development in the reserve/conservation area.

TABLE 10-1 Potential Dwelling Unit Development within Planned Growth Areas of the Tri-County Region

Area	Total Acres within PGA's	Total Acres within Urban Core Designated PGA's	Total Acres within Growth Area Designated PGA's	Total Acres within Rural Core Designated PGA's	Total Vacant/Buildable acres within Urban Core	Total Vacant/Buildable acres within Growth Areas	Total Vacant/Buildable acres within Rural Cores	Number of Dwelling Units that can be built within Urban Core at density of 7.0 units/acre	Number of Dwelling Units that can be built within Growth Areas at density of 3.0 units/acre	Number of Dwelling Units that can be built within Rural Cores at density of 2.5 units/acre	Total Number of Dwelling Units that can be built if built at recommended density	Number of Dwelling Units needed by 2020 with 2000 vacancy rate	Total Number of Dwelling Units that will be built within Reserve and Conservation Designated PGA's	Number of Dwelling Units needed by 2020 with 5% vacancy rate	Total Number of Dwelling Units that will be built within Reserve and Conservation Designated PGA's
Cumberland	85,044.50	0.00	81,560.20	3,484.30	0.00	7,753.10	418.00	0.00	23,259.30	1,045.00	24,304.30	23,970.00	-334.30	24,923.00	618.70
Dauphin	36,333.80	21,413.70	12,245.80	2,674.30	534.90	844.70	92.70	3,744.30	2,534.10	231.75	6,510.15	8,959.00	2,448.85	6,605.00	94.85
Perry	15,546.60	0.00	10,224.30	5,302.30	0.00	1,340.09	259.68	0.00	4,020.27	649.20	4,669.47	4,925.00	255.53	4,813.00	143.53
Region	136,532.70	21,413.70	103,722.20	11,396.80	534.90	9,938.30	770.40	3,744.30	29,814.90	1,926.00	35,485.20	37,854.00	2,368.80	36,341.00	855.80