

Analysis

2

Rural Residential Development

Related Policy: *Limit large-lot suburban development in rural areas*

Why Focus on This Topic?

During our fall 2019 planning area meeting series, partners in one of our planning areas emphasized the importance of this policy. In our online planning area survey conducted from Nov. 2019 to Jan. 2020, participants in every planning area also agreed with that emphasis.

Low-density residential development frequently occurs in areas that are zoned rural residential, which typically allows for development at densities ranging from 1 dwelling per 10 acres to 1 dwelling per 2 acres. *Places2040* tells us that about 17,000 acres of land are zoned for large-lot suburban development outside of Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) in Lancaster County. However, only about 8,400 acres are needed to accommodate estimated rural population growth. We need to reduce the amount of land where large lots are allowed and not provide more land than needed to accommodate the expected rural population growth. A maximum of 15% of new dwelling units countywide should be accommodated in rural areas and it is recommended that we reduce the rural portion of the county's total population growth by 3%, redirecting that growth into UGAs.

The purpose of this analysis is to show us 1) where current rural residential zoning exists, 2) what percentage of land within these districts is undeveloped, and 3) where rural residential zoning might conflict with preserving large, contiguous areas of agricultural and natural lands.

Purpose of Discussion

- Evaluate rural residential development and zoning;
- Identify conflicts with preserved & priority ag / natural land and existing rural residential zoning;
- Recommend how *places2040* catalytic tools can be implemented to achieve the results we want to see.

Desired Outcomes

Places2040 provides some ways to measure our progress in achieving this policy:

Growth Countywide

Total acres developed	▽	Reduce acres developed per year
-----------------------	---	---------------------------------

Growth Inside / Outside Urban Growth Areas

Outside UGAs:

New dwelling units	▽	Reduce % of new dwelling units outside of UGAs
--------------------	---	--

Total acres developed	▽	Reduce acres developed per year
-----------------------	---	---------------------------------

Maps

A more detailed discussion of the analysis undertaken for this topic appears in a separate “Methodology” handout. In general terms, Maps 2A and 2B illustrate the following:

Map 2A – Rural Residential Development & Zoning

- Rural residential zoning districts (percent developed) – Locations of rural residential zoning districts and percentage of each that is currently developed.

Map 2B – Rural Residential Development & Zoning

- Rural residential zoning districts (percent developed with ag / natural land and rural residential zoning conflicts) – Locations of rural residential zoning districts and percentage of each that is currently developed. On the lands highlighted with the yellow dotted overlay, a conflict exists between preserved and priority ag and natural areas and rural residential zoning.

Note: Lancaster County Planning staff will be analyzing the ratio of current rural residential-zoned acreage to the residential acreage needed to accommodate projected rural population growth in each planning area by 2040. This analysis will help identify how much land is “overzoned” residential and will inform the follow-up work that regional planners will do with our partners in each planning area.

Results of the Analysis

Countywide, our analysis identifies:

- About 51,900 acres of land are zoned Rural Residential according to the Zoning Lexicon.
 - Approximately 38,100 acres of the land within these areas (about 73%) is undeveloped.
- About 11,300 acres of land are areas where a conflict exists between existing rural residential zoning and preserved and priority ag and natural land. Of that number, about 3,600 acres are priority areas for ag and natural preservation.

Applying the Catalytic Tools in *places2040*

Analysis: Topic 2 – Rural Residential Development

Here's how our partners can use these tools to reduce rural residential development:

Municipalities / Regional Entities

- Place-Based Planning - work with LCP staff to identify character zones and landscapes in which rural residential-zoned land is located and plan accordingly to achieve consistency in policy and regulations throughout planning areas. Evaluate whether rural residential zoned areas should be brought into adjacent growth areas (and rezoned) by using the “Suitability for Development” analysis/maps from the Fall 2020 Implementation Workshops.
 - Reduce the amount of land where large lots are allowed and utilize Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) to maximize the protection of prime agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas with valuable natural resources (sending areas) by transferring the rights to develop to other zoning districts (receiving areas) where development is appropriate.
- Simplify Zoning – Align zoning districts with landscapes and character zones.
 - Rezone areas identified as preserved and priority ag and natural lands to effective agricultural or conservation with subdivisions limited to one per 20 to one per 50 acres.

Partners for Place

- Align Resources
 - Coalition for Sustainable Housing, Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership, Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities should collaborate with the Coalition for Smart Growth to strategize on incentives for redirecting residential growth to *places2040* growth areas.
 - Agricultural Preserve Board, Lancaster Farmland Trust, and Lancaster Conservancy can target agricultural and natural lands preservation efforts within areas where rural residential zoning and ag and natural preservation priority areas overlap.

School Districts

- Align Resources – School districts can communicate with municipalities regarding changes in enrollment to help inform policy decisions and zoning regulations that dictate the location, pattern, and timing of residential development.

Questions for Workshop Discussion

1. Now that we've shared some information about rural residential zoning in the county, do you see areas in your Planning Area and/or municipality that are currently zoned that way?
2. Do you believe that these areas primarily allow for new residential development or do you think these are mostly areas of existing residential development?
3. Do you see any conflicts between land that has been identified as priority agricultural or priority resource areas and these areas of potential future rural residential development?
4. How much residential development do you expect, or would you like to see, resulting from farm subdivisions in agricultural-zoned areas versus how much from these rural residential areas?
5. Have you had any infrastructure problems such as failing on-lot systems in these rural residential areas?