



Lancaster County Planning Regional Meetings

Growth Area Boundaries – Round 1

March 2023

Following the places2040 workshops, Lancaster County Planning began a series of regional meetings focused on recalibrating growth area boundaries. These boundaries were first established in partnership with municipalities over 30 years ago.

Growth areas were established adjacent to historical centers of development. These are areas that also have the public services and infrastructure to accommodate future population growth. Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) include a city or borough(s), while Village Growth Areas (VGAs) include a village located outside of UGAs.

This first round focused on the process we will be using to review existing boundaries and recommend potential changes.

Growth Area Boundary Realignment

- Soil quality should be considered when determining new boundaries. (East Planning Area)
- Broadband infrastructure should also be considered when determining new boundaries; current infrastructure is struggling to meet demand. (Paradise Township)
- There is concern about preserved farmland located inside current growth area boundaries. \$4 million is spent annually to preserve farms, and this sets the stage for future land use competition. (Commissioner Trescot)
 - Preserved farms in existing UGAs are a legacy issue. Preservation efforts in these areas are unlikely to occur in the future. (Lancaster County Planning Department)
- Most of the 12 steps in the growth area recalibration process will be completed prior to a series of meetings scheduled in October, but some steps (i.e. Character Zone reclassification and implementation) will likely occur in late 2023 or early 2024. (Lancaster County Planning Department)

Growth Management

- There is a lack of industrial land. (East Planning Area)
- There are few 10+ acre buildable parcels left; the township is mostly built-out. (Paradise Township)
 - Higher density is required to accommodate growth, but it is controversial with residents.
 - A few opportunities for redevelopment remain, but these are not enough to accommodate projected growth.

- The presence of the PA Turnpike/US 222 interchange continues to attract new development to the region, especially industrial development. (Northeast Planning Area)
- West Cocalico Township will likely grow faster than the projections made by county and regional plans. (West Cocalico Township)
 - A new sewer plant will be completed in May, which will create expanded opportunities for development/redevelopment, especially in the Reinholds area.
 - The township has already received calls from developers who want to take advantage of the new development opportunities created by improved infrastructure.
 - Growth is happening faster than the township can effectively handle it.
- There are environmental limits to growth, like air and water quality. (Clay Township)
 - Air and water quality is poor in Lancaster County.
 - We can only pave over so much land before stormwater issues become significant.
 - Developers fight landscaping requirements and do not want to include trees or other plantings in new development.
- The township is built out and done growing. (West Hempfield Township)
 - Growth is inevitable but it must be managed.
 - By not accommodating growth, some people who are local to the area are forced to seek more affordable housing outside of Lancaster County.
- The boroughs want to accommodate growth, but they need support with infill development and infrastructure; they don't want to be forgotten. (Elizabethtown Borough)
- Available land for infill in existing growth areas should be cataloged. Due to the higher costs associated with retrofitting and infill (versus greenfield development), funding incentives or assistance should be provided to help such developers with utility tapping fees and other costs. (Columbia Borough)
- Oversized parking lots designed to meet ordinance requirements instead of actual parking needs create a lot of wasted space. (Columbia Borough)
- Industrial/manufacturing businesses and warehouses aren't being built close to workers' homes, which increases demand for additional transportation options. (Columbia Borough)
- There is a need for more industrial land. This should be considered when evaluating remaining buildable land in growth areas. (Columbia Borough)

Regional Planning

- Boroughs and surrounding townships are struggling to communicate and coordinate the impacts of new development. (Northeast Planning Area)
- Boroughs should connect with neighboring townships to encourage better communication and coordination. (Ephrata Borough)
 - There is a lot of development happening in Ephrata Township, but Ephrata Borough must provide the necessary infrastructure (water and sewer), while also absorbing many other impacts (road congestion).
 - How do we get townships with significant growth on board with planning regionally?

- LCPD could help by creating a countywide database which would track the location and timeline of regionally significant projects. (East Cocalico Township)
- With several large residential and industrial development projects currently in planning phases, an online database (see above) to share details with other municipalities and coordinate the impacts would be beneficial. (East Cocalico Township)

Housing

- The lack of affordable housing is becoming an issue, to the point that it is significantly impacting businesses and school districts. (Northeast Planning Area)
- There is conflict between the need for more housing (especially affordable housing), increased tax revenue (from commercial and industrial development), and the desire of residents to retain the low density, rural character of the area. (Northeast Planning Area)
- Generally, residents are not in favor of apartments and other denser development types. (West Cocalico Township)
 - Most residents want single-family detached homes on 4-to-15 acre lots.
 - Some apartments have been built, but only because they met township ordinance requirements and did not require additional approvals.
 - “We are at war” – the public is upset and pressuring township supervisors to limit development.
- Moravian Manor employs many nursing assistants, but they are unable to increase assistant salaries and keep pace with high housing costs. (Lititz Borough/Warwick Township)
 - Despite a housing assistance program, employees cannot find affordable housing options within 10 miles of their location. Many employees must find affordable housing in more distant communities, such as Wrightsville.
- School district needs, inadequate infrastructure, and traffic concerns make it difficult to justify adding more residential units. (West Hempfield Township)
 - Growth is good for the local economy and schools, but it is challenging to accommodate.
 - More investment should be made in infrastructure.
- Many families find work outside of the area to be able to afford housing costs in the region. (Cocalico School District)

Schools

- The district is down 1,000 students; this is partially due to demographic changes, but also because families cannot afford to live here. (Warwick Area School District)
 - 55+ communities comprise most new housing constructed in the area. There are few new housing options for families with children.
 - Teachers, and especially substitute teachers, cannot afford to live in the area.
- Administrative staff at schools often live in neighboring counties because the cost of living is cheaper. (Cocalico School District)
- Many kids attend schools in Ephrata Borough, despite living outside of the borough. (Ephrata School District)

- Overall attendance for the school district is the same. However, school attendance is rising within the borough, and dropping outside of the borough.
- Busing may be a solution to rebalance the number of students.
- Creek Corner Apartments opened on Meadow Valley Road, but the school district only gained 7-10 students from this new community. (Ephrata School District)
- Attendance numbers are fluctuating based on demographic changes. Many farms in the region are no longer owned by families with children who attend public schools. (Cocalico School District)

Transportation

- Existing options for public transportation do not serve the needs of residents. (East Planning Area)
 - Low frequency of service (1 bus/hour) in some areas means it is not a viable transportation option for employees or businesses.
 - RRTA lacks the funding needed to improve or expand services.
- Working with PennDOT is frustrating and one-sided; they often “hinder” things at the local level. (East Planning Area)
- Dense development can be a challenge as it often comes with additional traffic issues that lead to more pushback from residents. (Strasburg Township)
 - There are few resources to help address traffic when creating denser development.
 - Denser development introduces many additional vehicles, and traffic is often directed onto rural roads, which creates congestion.
 - Residents are concerned about congestion as it directly impacts their daily lives.
 - There was transit service in Strasburg until the 1970s, but RRTA is unable to restart services.
- Existing truck traffic is already overwhelming; the township doesn’t know how to handle capacity now, let alone accommodate future changes. (West Hempfield Township)
 - Recent warehouse development in East Hempfield Township has dramatically increased truck traffic in West Hempfield Township, which strains the road network.
- We need better transportation options, or we will continue “piling on the miles” and increasing transportation costs. (Cocalico School District)

Natural / Agriculture

- Because the timing of watershed project submissions and Pennsylvania’s expectations for watershed improvements are sometimes mismatched, municipalities are forced to guess at prioritization. (Northwest Planning Area)
- There are no hard rules, but buy-in from relevant municipalities is a factor in getting watershed projects approved. Collaboration is important when completing this type of project. (Northwest Planning Area)
- Effective farm preservation relies on properly planning our growth within the boroughs and surrounding townships. (Northwest Planning Area)

- Growth area boundaries may not adequately prevent development from creeping into agricultural areas. Municipalities should consider using topographical features, public parks, and/or preserved farms along growth area edges to create boundaries that would help limit unwanted expansion. (Columbia Borough)
- Effort should be made to close the five-mile gap between the Northwest River Trail and Enola Low Grade Trail. (Columbia Borough)

Emergency Services

- Stevens Fire Company will become the site of a medivac helicopter, which is encouraging other medical services to be offered in the township. (East Cocalico Township)
- Emergency services (EMS and police) aren't matching population growth, and there is a decline in the number of volunteers. (Columbia Borough)
 - Providing emergency services as a region could help address this issue. (Lancaster County Planning Department)