

Urban Growth Boundary



Urban growth boundaries are used to demarcate where government intends to encourage and discourage land development. This guide provides links to resources about urban growth boundaries, as well as examples from Pennsylvania municipalities.

Governments use urban growth boundaries (UGBs) to demarcate where they intend to encourage and discourage land development through their public-infrastructure investments, land-use regulations, land acquisitions, and other actions. Within the urban growth boundary—called the designated growth area or urban growth area—government policy encourages relatively high-density development. Outside the UGB, government policy encourages conservation of agricultural lands and working forests and the protection of natural areas. UGBs are designed to accommodate growth for a specific period of time (often 20–30 years) and can be implemented on a local or regional scale.

Below are links to resources that provide more detailed information about UGBs, as well as examples from Pennsylvania municipalities.

Information about UGBs

[“Urban Growth Boundaries Overview”](#) (South Carolina Department of Environmental Control)

Explains the basics of UGBs, answers common questions, and includes a model UGB ordinance.

[“Urban Growth Boundaries”](#) (PlannersWeb)

Analyzes the effect of a regional UGB network in the Portland metro area that has been in place since the 1970s.

[“Building Invisible Walls: Urban Growth Boundaries”](#) (PlannersWeb)

Outlines key elements in effectively planning for and implementing UGBs and includes several examples of UGB use from across the United States.

[“Do Urban Growth Boundaries Work?”](#)

(American Society of Landscape Architects)

Studies UGBs in three different cities to understand what makes them effective.

Pennsylvania Examples

[Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan](#)

The section “Roadmap to the Future” includes maps and descriptions of urban growth areas.

[Pequea Township Comprehensive Plan Amendment](#)
Amendment to the township’s comprehensive plan that includes an expansion of its urban growth boundary.

[Hanover Urbanized Area Boundary Map](#)

Map of UGB with both original and expanded boundary lines.

[Williamsport Designated Growth Area Map](#)

Map of current and potential future designated growth areas in Williamsport.

[West Manchester Township Zoning Map](#)

Map shows how various zoning districts interface with a UGB.

The most recent version of this guide and related resources can be found online at <https://conservationtools.org/guides/48>

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