



CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR OUR PLACES

THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDED THIS PLAN

Allegheny Places is a plan for the people of Allegheny County. We repeatedly heard from a diverse range of stakeholders that several key factors would be critical to the successful development of the plan. From these key factors we established the Guiding Principles, which directed and formulated the plan:



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- Provide options and choices
- Promote equitable and diverse development
- Help all people benefit from equal access to opportunity
- Protect environmental resources
- Coordinate consistency with local municipalities
- Plan for greenway connectivity throughout the County
- Optimize access to rivers
- Enhance recreational and cultural resources
- Preserve quality existing places, our historical legacy and community character
- Guide public investment to targeted areas through County development policies:

- Airport Area (including Future I-376 and I-79)
- Mon Valley Hubs (at Mon/Fayette Expressway Interchanges)
- Brownfields
- Downtown Pittsburgh
- Oakland with University and Hospital Initiatives
- Major Corridor Development (including Routes 8, 19, 28, 30, 50, 51, 65, 88, 837, and 910)
- Transit-Oriented Development

- Direct development to existing urban areas
- Encourage mixed-use and concentrated development
- Target investments for maximum return
- Maximize use of existing highways, transit and utilities
- Respond quickly and appropriately to the market

Allegheny Places was developed with a vision, one that recognizes and promotes Allegheny County as a vibrant community of places providing equitable opportunities for a diverse population. From the beginning, this comprehensive plan embraced equity and diversity as a cornerstone for our future.

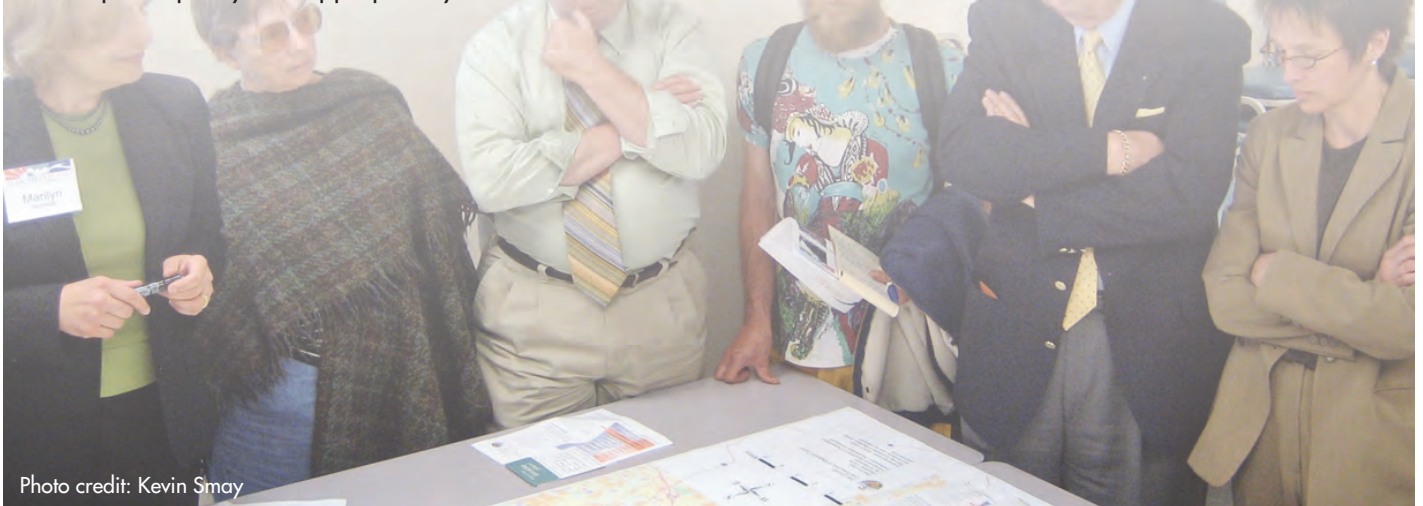


Photo credit: Kevin Smay



PROMOTING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Equity is the principle that every person deserves fair and ethical treatment. It is the foundation of American democracy. Diversity is the variety of ethnic and cultural groups in an area.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Many residents struggle with social and economic disadvantages. The Equitable Development Principles were established to help address these problems and guide plan development. Through *Allegheny Places*, we will strive to achieve a future where all residents benefit from

Equal access to:

- Decent, affordable housing
- Attractive neighborhoods
- Good paying jobs
- Public transit
- Amenities such as parks and trails, and
- High-performing schools.

To achieve our full economic potential, all residents must contribute to and benefit from our growth and development.

In addition, an Equity and Diversity Resource Panel, comprised of recognized experts from the region, convened at critical points during the development of *Allegheny Places*. Each Equity and Diversity Resource Panel member also served on the other plan element resource panels to ensure related issues were addressed comprehensively.

The panel provided technical and strategic guidance on potential issues and creative approaches to resolving equity and diversity issues. The panel also reviewed the goals and objectives of the twelve plan elements of *Allegheny Places* and provided insight into how each element could better address equity and diversity.

A national expert on equity and diversity additionally influenced the Plan's development. John A. Powell, the Director of Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, provided the keynote address at a regional equity conference sponsored by Sustainable Pittsburgh. He explained how isolation from opportunity creates inequality. In turn, this inequality results in a region that is unhealthy, inefficient and unsustainable, since it is unable to increase its population. He additionally advised how resources could be strategically targeted to key areas to reach diverse populations and provide an equitable benefit and return on that investment.

Allegheny Places supports sharing the benefits and burdens of development among all the communities in the County.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Allegheny Places followed Mr. Powell's recommendations by targeting areas in the Future Land Use Plan for future development. These areas were chosen to direct resources to key areas rather than trying to spread limited funds throughout the entire County.

Allegheny Places promotes healthy, sustainable communities by:

- Recognizing, respecting and valuing cultural and social diversity
- Recognizing that social and cultural inequities create environmental and economic instability
- Recognizing that a healthy, adaptable local economy is vital to the County's ability to provide a highly desirable quality of life, high levels of services and amenities
- Promoting a diverse and sustainable economy that supports the needs of all residents
- Targeting infrastructure that will encourage culturally and socially diverse communities to both prosper within and connect to the larger community

During development of *Allegheny Places*, a number of disparities concerning race, income, gender, the elderly and the disabled have become better understood. According to the National Association of Realtors, "growth planning in many communities can reduce the choices people have about where they live." Therefore, County resources will be targeted to key areas to provide opportunities to diverse populations and provide an equitable return on that investment.

Measurable progress will be achieved in the Plan's equity and diversity objectives through the Plan's implementation strategies and resulting actions. While no one initiative will resolve all of today's inequities, *Allegheny Places* provides a way for all residents to contribute to and benefit from Allegheny County's growth and development.

FOUR PHASES OF PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The development of *Allegheny Places* progressed through four phases:

■ Phase 1 – Analysis of Existing Conditions

During the first phase, we determined what the future would look like if recent development trends continued. We did this by projecting population and job growth in the County for the year 2025. This future growth was then mapped in terms of where development would occur if the same development trends continued. This map became our baseline for the Future Land Use Plan and was named the 2025 Trend Scenario.

■ Phase 2 – Development of Alternative Scenarios

Next we engaged in deciding between options and visioning different futures for the year 2025. Four alternatives to the 2025 Trend Scenario were identified, mapped and tested.

■ Phase 3 – Identification of Preferred Scenario

During the third phase of plan development a preferred scenario was chosen. The 2025 Trend Scenario and the four Alternative Scenarios were reviewed by the public, the resource panels and planning team members. Based on feedback we received, the preferred qualities of the alternatives were blended to create the 2025 Composite Scenario.

■ Phase 4 – Development of Implementation Strategies

During the fourth phase of plan development, the 2025 Composite Scenario was refined to become the *Allegheny Places* Future Land Use Plan. Goals and objectives and recommended implementation strategies were also finalized.

More details about the work that took place in each phase of plan development follow.



FORECASTING TRENDS

Plan development began by engaging the public and panels of experts and by evaluating existing studies; assessing environmental conditions; completing field views and examining aerial photography of the County. We also commissioned new reports to further our understanding of demographic characteristics and trends.

The 2025 Trend Scenario was developed using:

- Census data for municipal population and housing characteristics
- Population and employment projections generated by the University of Pittsburgh
- Data from the City of Pittsburgh Planning Department
- Data derived from recent land development activity in the County

The data was used to estimate the amount of new development that the County could reasonably expect over the next twenty years. By analyzing recent development patterns, we were then able to forecast where future development was most likely to occur if the recent development trends continued.

RESIDENTIAL GROWTH FORECASTS

Over the next 20 years only a modest increase in the number of residents is expected; the County's population is projected to be 1.3 million in the year 2025, a 4% increase over the 2000 population. If development trends of the last ten years continued over the next twenty, Allegheny County would see construction of 50,000 new residences. This corresponds to a medium rate of growth, or 2,500 new residences per year. Recent residential construction in the County has on average been at a density of about two dwelling units per acre of land. Therefore, new residential development could equate to 25,000 acres over the twenty-year period.

The forecast of 2,500 new dwelling units per year closely correlates with recent building permits issued: from 1994 to 2004, there were 2,700 permits per year issued for new residential units in Allegheny County.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH FORECASTS

Employment forecasts developed by the University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) formed the basis of our estimate of land needed to accommodate new non-residential development over the twenty-year planning period. The number of jobs in the County is expected to increase by 190,000 during that time.

We adjusted the acreage figures derived from the employment forecasts to reflect pending and proposed non-residential development. From these exercises and an analysis of local topography, we developed a forecast that shows Allegheny County will need the equivalent of 10,000 acres of land for new retail, office and industrial development over the next twenty years.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Existing land uses were mapped to assess the current pattern and intensity of development in the County. Maps 2.1 and 2.2 show the extent of land consumption and the extent and location of land potentially available for future development and redevelopment.

These patterns and trends helped to identify areas that may need infrastructure improvements to support an appropriate type and scale of development.

Today's land use pattern reflects the County's growth and development through history.

Significant development projects constructed between 1993 and 2005 were documented through the Major Land Development Map (see Map 2.1). This map was created using aerial photography from 1993 and 2004, in conjunction with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's Major Land Development Database. A survey sent to all of the county's municipalities was also used to verify major developments as well as to collect information on projects built after 2004. The Allegheny County Department of Economic Development staff, local municipalities, the public and other stakeholders reviewed the map for accuracy.

From 1993 to 2005 more than 14,000 acres were developed in the county. Most was residential development totaling 9,000 acres, or about 67% of the total land area developed during that time period. Most new home construction was single-family dwellings constructed on lots approximately averaging one-half acre in size. It occurred in typical suburban developments in the northwestern and western portions of the County, primarily in Marshall, Pine, Moon, Collier, North Fayette, South Fayette and Robinson Townships. The north-central and eastern portions of the County also experienced an increase in residential development.

Commercial land uses (including retail and office space) were the second most significant land use between 1993 and 2005. Commercial development took place on 1,400 acres, or 11% of the total acreage developed during that time period.

Industrial development and redevelopment took place on 1,000 acres throughout the County, including former brownfields.

The remainder of development was a variety of uses – office, community facilities, mixed use – scattered on 2,000 acres throughout the County.

If recent development patterns continue, growth would mostly occur as low-density development in the northern and western parts of the County, while core areas and older boroughs would continue to decline.

PENDING AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

To further understand current development trends, we examined where pending and proposed development is planned to occur. These are development projects that have been approved, but not yet built. We sent a survey requesting information about such developments to each municipality. The Pending and Proposed Development Map that was developed reflects municipal responses to the survey (see Map 2.2).

The pattern for development in the near future, as reflected in the Pending and Proposed Development Map, follows a pattern similar to the Major Land Development Map. Most of the development is proposed in the outer perimeter of the County, with the exception of a limited number of projects within Pittsburgh.

THE 2025 TREND SCENARIO MAP

The 2025 Trend Scenario map (see Map 2.3) was created from forecasts and analysis of development patterns and trends discussed above. It is a graphic representation of the total amount of land required to accommodate future housing and non-residential development. The future development has been placed in areas of the County that are supported by actual development activity in the recent past. Through the use of available data, an estimated 50,000 residential units and 10,000 acres of non-residential development is what the county can expect to experience over the next 20 years. The map uses “chips” of residential (yellow), retail (red) and employment centers (pink), which includes industrial and office development, to graphically depict the expected future development. The yellow chips represent 200 residential units, the red and pink chips represent 100 acres of development or 1,000 and 2,500 jobs respectively.

In addition to the new growth expected in the County, the 2025 Trend Scenario also depicts areas that are losing residential units. The blue “chips” represent 200 residential units and total 16,000 units to be lost or demolished during the 20 year time frame (based on US Census Bureau data). In terms of the City of Pittsburgh and other areas, these blue “chips” are also viewed as areas of opportunity for new development to take the place of older vacant or dilapidated structures.

The resulting pattern shows development spreading out in the northern and western portions of the County, while the core communities are experiencing decline. The 2025 Trend Scenario is by no means a recommended plan or set of policies for the county. The 2025 Trend Scenario is merely an informed assumption as to what the county could be like in 20 years assuming a continuation of recent land development trends.



CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

Throughout plan development through surveys and public meetings, we learned that the most important factors that people wanted to see reflected in *Allegheny Places* were:

- Affordable and quality housing
- Cultural activities
- Preservation of open space
- Entertainment options
- Efficient access to employment
- Recreational facilities
- Proximity to transit
- Better access to the rivers

Based on key themes that were important to participants, four alternative scenarios for the future emerged:



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

- **Good Old Places** – growth directed to older, established communities and existing neighborhood hubs (including those listed in the Mon Valley Economic Development Strategy) through revitalization of brownfields, infill construction and the rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures, roads and utilities. Commercial development would be directed to established downtowns and central business districts to assist with the revitalization of older communities.

- **Hot New Places** – growth is directed to two types of centers. The first type is adjacent to selected highway interchanges. Over the planning period, these locations are targeted for relatively high-density, mixed-use development, as well as relatively compact moderate-intensity residential development. The second kind of center responds to where the market is showing interest in areas around the County's perimeter, especially in the southwest and northwest.

- **River Places** – growth redirected toward the riverfronts of the Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio and Youghiogheny Rivers. The main thrust is to revitalize these communities on the rivers, which include many brownfields and established boroughs and villages. The River Places Theme also aims to provide improved visual and physical access to the rivers, which are one of the County's most important assets.

- **Transit Places** – growth directed to existing and future transit stations in the form of walkable clusters of mixed-use, high density development. The existing transit stations include the 'T' and the East, South and West busways. The Transit Places Theme also designates a significant number of new transit-oriented developments along proposed transit lines through the Allegheny Valley, Mon Valley and the Airport Corridor.

Using the same assumptions for growth as the 2025 Trend Scenario, the four Alternative Scenarios explored different and more positive alternatives for future development patterns.

DEVELOPING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

In reviewing the five initial scenarios in public meetings and other venues, the public expressed overwhelming support for:

- Revitalizing existing neighborhoods
- Walkable, mixed-use development
- Responding to market demands
- Riverfront development
- Concentrating development in areas with existing infrastructure

The four alternative scenarios and the Trend Scenario were blended together to incorporate these qualities. A shared vision for Allegheny County, the 2025 Composite Scenario, took shape.

The Composite Scenario (see Map 2.4) has the same amount of development as the Trend Scenario, but with a more clustered, mixed-use development pattern directed to existing communities and areas with access to existing infrastructure. To provide additional housing choices and respect the market, some development is located around the perimeter of the County where there are clear opportunities for growth.

The Composite Scenario is the basis for the Future Land Use Plan. It focuses on future development and redevelopment at key locations. The Future Land Use Plan is a further development of this concept, describing all future land use across all parts of the County.

PERFORMANCE OF THE 2025 COMPOSITE SCENARIO

The 2025 Composite Scenario combines the best characteristics of the alternatives examined and is the basis of the Future Land Use Plan. Using computer software called CommunityViz, we found that the 2025 Composite Scenario offers significant benefits over the 2025 Trend Scenario. The 2025 Composite Scenario would:

- Use a third less land (or 12,000 acres) than would be developed by the 2025 Trend Scenario by clustering development.
- Target substantially more opportunities for our neediest residents to live and work in the same community by allocating 150% more acres of development in low income communities.
- Target more housing and jobs in low performing school districts, which translates to a higher tax base. By increasing the tax base, more resources will be available to assist struggling school districts. The issue of whether or not development can realistically be expected to invest in areas with low-performing schools must be aggressively addressed.
- Use existing infrastructure more efficiently, including roads and utilities.
- Direct almost 50% more acreage to brownfield sites.
- Locate more housing units closer to regional parks and trails.
- Increase transit ridership by 25,000 passengers a day by locating more work and housing options within a quarter mile of transit stations.
- Result in 3 million fewer vehicle miles traveled on the roadway network per average weekday.



DIRECTING GROWTH TO PLACES

Allegheny Places is comprised of twelve planning elements. The Future Land Use Plan ties all the other elements together and illustrates the plan’s vision. It provides an efficient and economical way to accommodate new growth and revitalization and protects open space and environmentally sensitive resources.

The Future Land Use Plan presents the recommended distribution and desired character of future land uses consistent with the Composite Scenario. It describes types of ‘Places’ that are strategic locations for development and redevelopment to occur over the next 20 years.

- Most Places are generally close to major road and transit corridors, existing infrastructure, and community facilities and services.
- Most Places are mixed-use and mixed-income centers that include residences, shopping, employment, community facilities and open space.
- Most Places are located primarily in existing communities, although some are in new locations or ‘greenfields’.

Future development has been allocated to designated Places as shown in Table 2.1.

The Future Land Use Plan directs major development and redevelopment to the Places to maximize the value of current and prospective investments. Areas outside the designated Places are intended primarily for infill developments or for resource conservation. The Plan responds to a housing market that is increasingly demanding more options and choices for Allegheny County residents.

The Future Land Use Plan is flexible. Rather than being a strict representation of the 20-year ‘build-out’, it illustrates where particular land uses can be supported with public funds as recommended in *Allegheny Places*. The Future Land Use Plan strategically targets funds so that the highest result can be achieved with limited resources. You can read more about the Future Land Use Plan in Chapter 4.

TABLE 2.1 – Growth Allocated to Places

Place	Residential Development (Units)	Non-Residential Development (Sq. Ft.)
Airport	0	17,500,000
Core	1,800	2,625,000
Corridors	10,600	19,250,000
Neighborhoods	9,400	12,375,000
Community Downtowns	17,600	23,125,000
Villages	7,400	5,125,000
Rural Places	3,200	0
Total	50,000	80,000,000

IMPLEMENTING PLACES

We envision that the Future Land Use Plan will be implemented through independent and collaborative actions – not through coercion – and through a desire to see its Places come to life for the benefit of all. The Plan will be implemented cooperatively through regulations crafted and adopted by local municipalities; through the actions of State agencies in awarding grants and permits; and through strategic targeting of resources by the County and others. Developers and property owners are important partners in this future collaboration. As they work to develop, redevelop,

and conserve their land in consistency with the Plan, they will be supported by and benefit from municipal, State and County involvement.

Allegheny Places is more than just a document disclosing past and present land use trends and recommending a proposed course of action. It is an organized way of thinking about our future, a blueprint for the land use patterns of tomorrow. Understanding the past helps us plan for the future.

