

OUTREACH

DEVELOPMENT



GROWTH



AWARENESS



VISION

**MUNICIPAL IMPLEMENTATION TOOL #4:
RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT**



Delaware Valley Regional
Planning Commission

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Infill development is the recycling of vacant or underutilized lands within cities and suburbs. Virtually every community has these types of properties, ranging from single, isolated parcels to surface parking lots to abandoned shopping malls. Infill development is a smart growth tool that tries to bridge "gaps" in neighborhoods and communities, while playing an important role in community revitalization and land conservation, by better utilizing existing infrastructure, increasing walkability and safety, and creating a sense of place. A majority of the infill that is taking place is residential, due to market demand. Integrating residential infill development into an existing community can be the catalyst for further retail and commercial development. At the same time, infill development should be done sensitively to avoid dramatic changes in community character, density, intensity, and design

Why Does DVRPC Care about Infill Development?

This brochure is part of a series being published by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) in support of the region's adopted long-range plan, Horizons 2025. The Plan provides an integrated land use and

transportation vision for the region's growth and development through the Year 2025, and specifically seeks to encourage core city revitalization, stabilization of older townships and boroughs, growth management in growing suburbs, and preservation of rural communities and natural areas. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, townships, boroughs, and cities have the primary authority and responsibility to implement these policies. This series of brochures introduces local officials and citizens to planning tools that may be useful in their communities and provides introductory information.

Various sources are available to provide additional information on residential infill development. This brochure provides a national perspective on residential infill development strategies. DVRPC has published several reports on residential infill development approaches to support revitalization and mixed-use development strategies in the region. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the sources listed on pages 10 and 11 for more details on the topics summarized in this brochure.



Varied housing types with different designs create a sense of place while allowing for efficient use of the land.

Residential infill development is a smart growth tool that can enhance the quality of life for a community by:

- Allowing for more efficient use of the land and infrastructure by re-absorbing growth back into existing communities
- Enhancing the community character through streetscapes and design elements
- Meeting the residential, commercial, retail, and economic needs of communities
- Introducing new housing types and designs into a community
- Increasing property values by creating or reinforcing a sense of place for its residents
- Enhancing the walkability of a community by replacing vacant sites with uses accessible without driving.
- Conserving open space and natural resources on the edge of the region

The challenges associated with residential infill differ with each project. Listed below are common barriers found in the process that communities can anticipate and prepare for.

Land Availability or Readiness. Sites chosen for residential infill development were either skipped over during the first round of development, are too expensive because they have physical constraints, or require environmental cleanup. These constraints become problematic during the infill process. In addition, developers are often not aware of all available land within communities.

Quality of Infrastructure. Often in older communities, the infrastructure is aging, under-maintained, and is in need of repair. This can apply to the streets, sidewalks, water and sewer pipes, or even the transit network. In addition, many municipalities have new codes that require developers to make improvements to these systems that will not be consistent with the higher density, more compact feel of infill development.

Available Financing. Residential infill is an innovative concept for many financial institutions, and securing funding can be more time consuming than financing for traditional

developments. In addition, many infill sites often have higher development costs related to environmental issues and permitting. In many cases, the funding comes from various public and private sources, making it difficult to rely on available cash flow.

Regulatory Issues. Many suburban communities zone for lower densities. Building residential infill housing in some communities may require re-zoning. Building codes may also be unrealistic for this type of development.

Community Acceptance. Many community members may relate higher densities to an increase in traffic, pollution, noise, and crime. In addition, community members often have a different perspective of the area than that of the developer.

Marketing the New Development. Analyzing how a new residential development will sell is difficult to measure in neighborhoods where no new residential development has occurred in recent years. It is often difficult to market new housing that costs higher than the existing residential units in the surrounding community.

Lantern Hill, Doylestown Borough, Bucks County

Lantern Hill is a residential infill development located in Doylestown Borough. While this borough is predominately built out, 117 units were built on this small parcel to create a dense, walkable neighborhood. The developer worked closely with the Borough to create a neighborhood that kept with the architectural integrity of the surrounding neighborhood but allowed for housing options through various materials, colors, and changing roof designs. For more information, visit www.gjdonovan.com.



Carpenter Square, Gloucester City, New Jersey

Carpenter Square is an age-restricted residential infill development in Gloucester City, NJ. This facility plays an important role for the community in trying to retain its elderly population. Carpenter Square provides an urban setting with access to medical facilities, shopping, and recreation. This development gives seniors the option of staying in an urban area instead of moving out to more suburban locations that rely on the car for transportation. For more information, visit www.michaelsdevelopmentcompany.com



- Reach out to the community and identify the stakeholders: property owners, developers, community groups, and government officials. Because different groups will raise different concerns such as increased traffic congestion or "public housing" stigmas, educate them about various types of residential infill development. Involve the public through each stage of development.
- Conduct an analysis of existing vacant or underutilized sites within your community. Examine the sites in relation to the surrounding land use, existing infrastructure, and zoning. With this information, establish a "land bank" for use by the community to market to interested developers.
- Incorporate residential infill and mixed-income development into your local comprehensive plan. This will provide the policies needed to support this type of development such as flexible lot sizes, impact fee waivers or permit streamlining.
- Provide the legal framework for residential infill development through the local zoning ordinance. Establish areas within the community that can accommodate reduced lot and dwelling sizes and increased density to accommodate the type of quality and design variations needed for various housing types. Create zones for mixed-use development near transit that include residential components.
- Reach out to local financial institutions to lay the groundwork for financing options for developers. This type of development can be "risky". This will act as an incentive for developers by having needed financing in place.
- Test the market by inviting realtors and developers to your community to discuss the demand for higher density housing. Discuss what types of marketing are necessary to attract buyers, what types of accessory uses may be feasible, and what are realistic affordable market housing rates.



This "before" photograph of King Street in Gloucester City shows row homes with a large asphalt parking lot near the Delaware River waterfront. This is not an optimal use for this residential neighborhood. The retail and commercial corridor of this community is walkable from this location. This street provides spectacular views of the Walt Whitman Bridge and the Philadelphia skyline.



This "after" photograph shows infill housing on the asphalt parking lot site with an adjacent park. Since parking is a problem for this community, a garage is provided on the first two floors of the building. New higher density residential units have been constructed. Notice that they complement the architectural element and size of the existing homes. A bike lane has also been added to provide recreation near the waterfront.

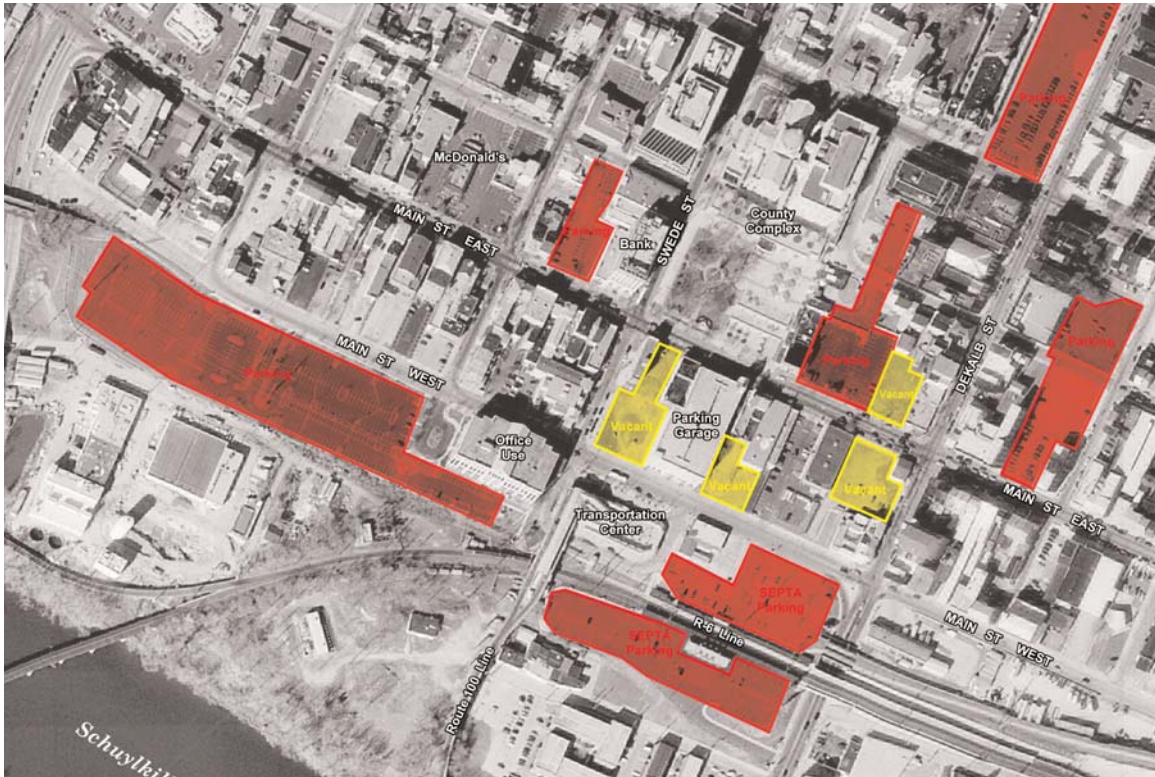
(photos provided by Brown and Keener Design)

Residential infill is most successful when built with a mix of uses, high density, walkable streets, and transit accessibility. While many suburban areas have the transit infrastructure in place, park-n-ride lots that try to attract commuters from further distances dominate the landscape. By placing residential infill, instead of large parking facilities, near transit stations, the chances of people using the transit network are greater because there is less of a need for a vehicle due to the higher density, walkability of the community.

Residential infill developments designed for pedestrians will encourage alternative modes of transportation for daily activities such as work, school, shopping, or recreation. In addition, children and the elderly are able to have more independence and not rely on the car as much. Because there will be less car trips, there is less noise and pollution as well as a lower demand for roads and parking lots to accommodate cars.

Communities can link infill residential development with transit by:

- Working with officials from the transit agency, county, and state to provide a list of available sites near transit stations.
- Designating certain sites in your community near transit stations and rezone them for mixed-income residential and higher densities.
- Creating design criteria for infill developments that shares the same characteristics as the surrounding neighborhood.
- Establishing a faster more efficient approval process for residential infill development near transit stations.
- Investigating federal and state grant programs, subsidies, or loans for infill development near transit stations.



Surface parking, underutilized lots

Vacant lots

The downtown area of Norristown, Pennsylvania is a prime example of where residential infill development should be targeted. There is an existing transit center, highway access, existing employment, retail and commercial businesses, and vacant or underutilized lots in the area within walking distance of the transit center. Higher density housing could allow for retail on the first floor with residential uses above.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	USEFUL INFORMATION	SUPPORTIVE POLICIES
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Population ▪ Forecasted Population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage mixed-income neighborhoods in our community
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Employment ▪ Forecasted Employment ▪ Analysis of current skill level of labor pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain existing employers ▪ Market new employers by emphasizing quality of life factors
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maps of extreme slopes, soils, floodplains, wetlands and other unsuitable land ▪ Maps of green space and bodies of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect sensitive area and open space ▪ Encourage cluster development
Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current capacity of schools, libraries, public transportation, and infrastructure ▪ Capital Improvement Program (CIP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain current facilities while planning for future population and transportation needs
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current Housing Stock ▪ Fair Share Allocation (NJ) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage mixed-income housing developments ▪ Encourage new housing near public transit
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maps of Current land use ▪ Maps of Future land use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage higher density development around transit and existing areas of retail
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Circulation Maps ▪ Maps of Future Transportation Improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage development in areas of existing road infrastructure and transit ▪ Encourage alternative modes of transportation

Smart Growth Gateway

This website is a one-stop resource for NJ government officials, community groups and citizens where information can be accessed about sustainable development, smart growth and environmental issues related to sprawl. For more information, visit www.smartgrowthgateway.org

NJ Future (NJF)

NJ Future is a non-profit organization working to promote smarter land use to improve the quality of life for New Jersey residents. NJF promotes sustainable development, recognizing the balance of economic, environmental, and social goals to enhance the quality of life in communities throughout New Jersey. For more information, visit www.njfuture.org or call 1.609.393.0008.

American Planning Association (APA)

The APA is the leading organization for planners across the nation. They publish several periodicals each month to keep planners and other professionals up to date with new trends in the planning field. For more information, visit www.planning.org or call 1.312.431.9100.

Governor's Center for Local Government Services

The Governor's Center provides a range of technical and financial assistance to Pennsylvania local government. Located in Harrisburg, the Center is responsible for land use planning technical assistance. For more information, visit www.inventpa.com or call the Southeastern Regional office at 1.215.560.2374.

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania is an alliance of various organizations and individuals working to promote sound land use policies and planning in Pennsylvania in order to reduce sprawl and its negative impacts. For more information, visit www.10000friends.org or call 1.877.568.2225.

Association for the New Urbanism in Pennsylvania

The Association works to promote the adoption of comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances in support of Traditional Neighborhood Development and to educate the public about the benefits of this type of development. For more information, visit www.anupa.org or call 1.717.295.3632.

SOURCES

Atlanta Regional Commission, Infill Development Strategies: Quality Growth Toolkit. www.atlreg.com

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Implementation Tool #1: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), August 2002.

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New Jersey Office of Smart Growth, www.state.nj.us/dca.

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Schuman, Diane, Developing Successful Infill Housing, Urban Land Institute, 2002.

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Created in 1965, the **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)** is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



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