

## ***Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania—*** **Presentation for Local Officials**

Developed by The Conservation Fund in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Governor's Center for Local Government Services.

### **Format:**

35–45 minute PowerPoint presentation designed to help local government officials present the concepts of *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* to elected officials, civic organizations, or the public and to communicate in a compelling way, the rationale for better development in Pennsylvania. The presentation is designed to engage local leaders or community members about growth and progress in the community. The presentation might also be used by a range of other local or regional leaders such as a community organization director, business CEO, conservation group executive director, historic preservation expert, planning professional, and developer or builder. The presenter may tailor the slide show to a specific community by providing local examples or sharing local images to illustrate concepts relevant to the audience.

### **Guide for Presenter:**

This presentation introduces the concepts discussed in *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* and associated practices. You can use the presentation to acquaint your community – or specific interests within it – to the choices your community has for its future growth and development.

Local governments in Pennsylvania have the authority under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to put into place

comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances and other tools that will result in the type of development discussed in this presentation, and in the Better Models toolkit and guidebook. If a municipality does not use these tools, it loses its voice in what the community will look like.

The script provided is meant for a general audience. Suggestions in the script (shown in bracketed text) allow you to tailor the delivery of your talk to your own community audience and their specific concerns.

This presentation is a supplement to the *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* publication, written by Edward McMahon and Shelley Mastran and published by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and The Conservation Fund. It also draws upon numerous inspiring community talks that the publication's lead author, Ed McMahon, has given in communities around the Commonwealth.

This package provides exercises to help you prepare for the presentation and lead both the discussion and working sessions following your talk. It includes ideas for building support, understanding development choices, and engaging community members in new opportunities.

For more information on training, talks, and exercises related to *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*, contact:

- ✓ The Conservation Fund at 703/525-6300 or [postmaster@conservationfund.org](mailto:postmaster@conservationfund.org)
- ✓ The Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 888/223-6837
- ✓ The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources at 717/783-2658.

## *Better Models for Development* Presentation Slides and Script

1. Intro Slide: *Better Models for Development*
  
2. Our community—like so many in Pennsylvania—is a special place. We have some great community assets here such as.... [Talk about some of the local natural, cultural, scenic, and economic assets in the community].
  - IMAGE: Images of mix of people and community types. Clockwise from top left: Brookville, Jefferson County; Summerset at Frick Park, Pittsburgh; Mixed use development, location unknown; Jim Thorpe, Carbon County. Center photo unknown location.
  
3. But today our community—like so many across Pennsylvania—is changing. While these images are not from our community, they could be. Change doesn't have to be traumatic for communities, but it often is. But we can attract development that serves our community, rather than the other way around.

[Talk about some of the changes that your community has been experiencing. For example: Is downtown struggling? Are the region's traditional small towns and neighborhoods losing their charm due to traffic congestion and poorly planned development? Are farms being lost to subdivisions and unplanned development, sometimes called "sprawl" and water and air quality noticeably deteriorating due to land development, traffic, and stormwater discharges? Is your COMMUNITY losing its unique character? Are beautiful views marred by giant signs touting burgers and gasoline or strip development that looks like Anyplace, U.S.A. rather than your COMMUNITY? Are abandoned industrial sites (brownfields) an issue for your COMMUNITY?

Mention other changes as may be relevant to your community. These might include sprawling development on the edge or outside of town, loss of traditional jobs or industries, declining farming, forestry, mining, operations. You might also mention that YOUR COMMUNITY may need to change itself to attract new economic development rather than be victim to outside pressures.]

- IMAGE: Sprawl, downtrodden downtowns, Anyplace USA strip development, farms into subdivisions
4. The debate over how to accommodate new development is almost always cast in either-or terms. Progress versus preservation. Growth versus no growth. The truth is that development is inevitable, but the destruction of community character is not. *Progress doesn't demand degraded surroundings.*
- IMAGE: **Stegmaier Brewery** redevelopment, Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County. The Stegmaier Brewery was rescued from deterioration and disrepair and rehabilitated as a federal office building, with a high-tech Post Office operation inside. Reopened in 1998, the brewery now serves as a landmark and gateway into Wilkes-Barre.
5. Pennsylvania communities can grow without losing their beauty, history, or livability. Instead of debating whether growth will occur, we should be discussing the patterns of development: where we put it, how to arrange it, and what it looks like.

Today we are here to talk about *Better Models for Development for [YOUR COMMUNITY]*. The focus of this presentation is on **choices** that our community has and how the decisions we make can help us take care of what we have and to think through what, where, and how we want to build.

The time has come for our community to look at the big picture and begin planning for the growth and progress of our community and region in ways that are thoughtful and add lasting value. This means listening to the public—sharing proposed projects and exploring all the available options.

➤ IMAGE: Community planning process

6. The first step in this process is recognizing that our community has choices. We have choices about the future of our community and its jobs and businesses, the way it looks, how people get around, where they live, work, and shop, as well as the legacy we leave our children. New development can shape and enhance the character of our community. The *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* publication is based on that idea.

➤ IMAGE: New development in **Brookville**, Jefferson County, that fits with traditional character

7. Today I want to introduce the six guiding principles of *Better Models for Development* and the “keys for success.”

➤ IMAGE: Cover of *Better Models* publication

8. Let’s start with a look at the six principles. (Image of List of six principles)

➤ IMAGE: List of six principles

**9. Principle #1: Conserve Farmland, Natural Areas and Scenic Assets.**  
*Do you want to grow crops, or subdivisions, on our area’s farmland? Do you want to save, or pave over, our area’s natural resources?* The first step toward better development is recognizing what is worth preserving. We want to take care of what we have. Successful communities always identify the areas that are the most important to protect—and are then able to accommodate growth in areas where it is most appropriate. Agreeing on what we care about can help us find ways to protect and enhance our

community's treasures with new development that respects their value to all of us.

Working farms, forests, historic sites and scenic landscapes can contribute to our community's economic vitality. There is a dollar value associated with the protection of open space, trees, and scenic views. Housing, hotels, and offices with scenic views command premium prices. People want to live and work near a scenic view. Tourists seek unspoiled vistas, charming towns, authentic historic experiences, and pristine natural settings. Businesses, residents, and visitors will pay for proximity to these assets.

There are other benefits as well: Natural systems serve as our "green infrastructure" by keeping our air and water and clean, at a much cheaper cost than technological treatment systems. Open space may save taxpayer money, as farms frequently require less in services than subdivisions, meaning a net gain in tax revenues.

[Cite examples of your "community treasures" that represent the "heart and soul" of your community. These might be scenic landscapes, town meeting places, farms, waterways, neighborhoods, historic sites, or cultural icons. (See Exercise)]

10. **IMAGE: Lancaster County farmland protection**
  - *Example:* Lancaster County's commitment to permanently protecting more than 50,000 acres of its farmland has made it one of the nation's leaders in farmland protection. Lancaster County is Pennsylvania's most productive farming county, generating more than \$649 million annually from about 5,000 farms. The county also maintains a high quality of life and is a desirable place to live. (Source: Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board Website, 2006 and Farmland Preservation Survey, Bowers Publishing, 2000.)

## 11. Principle #2: Maintain A Clear Edge Between Town and Countryside

*Do you want to live in a distinct town or simply be part of a mass of developed land?* All too often, the edge between town and countryside is lost with increased development. Existing downtowns are enhanced and vital rural character safeguarded by actions taken to maintain a clear edge between cities, towns, and countryside. This distinction can be achieved by protecting agricultural land and natural resources along with encouraging more compact building design, walkable communities, and infill development on vacant, underused or overlooked land near transit and on reclaimed former industrial sites. The developed areas can be linked with more rural areas through trails, river corridors and other natural linkages.

- *Example:* (no image since Lancaster was shown under Principle #1) Lancaster County supports its farmland protection and a clear edge by designating urban growth areas. Forty percent of the 11,000 acres developed in the county between 1998 and 2002 took place within the designated urban growth areas. Seventy-six percent of all new dwellings were built in the growth areas. (Source: Lancaster County Planning Commission. *Report on A Decade of Smart Growth Management*, June 2004.
- **IMAGE: Pennsylvania countryside; Cover of *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns* book by Tom Hylton,**  
<http://www.saveourlandsaveourtowns.org/Saveourland.jpg>

## 12. IMAGE: Photos of the Hanover Shoe Factory redevelopment: Before and After, Borough of Hanover in York County, PA

*Example:* The Residences at Hanover Shoe is an historic

rehabilitation project located in the former Hanover Shoe Factory building in Hanover, Pennsylvania. The site is situated two blocks from the center of town on 2.4 acres. The 142,000 square foot building was converted into a mixed-use building that includes commercial space, the Hanover Library, the Borough Fire Museum, 70 apartments, residential community rooms, and support space.

The apartments are a combination of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units ranging in size from 700 square feet to 1,500 square feet. The building is the largest historic building in the Borough and was completed as a historic tax credit project.

A market study indicated a high demand for apartments in the area. The demand was met in-town, rather than in a new development in the suburbs. The apartments were leased within six weeks of the opening and retain a waiting list of over 200. The project was completed using a mix of financing sources including Historic Tax Credits, Housing Tax Credits, Federal Home Loan Bank Financing, and State Department of Community and Economic Development. (Source: 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania Web site, 2003 Commonwealth Design Award Winners, [www.10000friends.org](http://www.10000friends.org))

13. **Principle #3: Build and Maintain Livable and Attractive Communities**

*Do you want your own special town or anytown?* Maintaining attractive and livable communities is the flip side of protecting rural character. Livable communities balance a mix of jobs, homes, services, and amenities and provide connections among these elements. Livable communities provide housing choices, are both walkable and affordable, and feature vibrant downtowns that appeal to all ages and promote a distinctive and memorable image of the community. Even undesirable existing development—such

as strip development—can be reshaped to become more appealing and functional. Wherever new development or redevelopment occurs, location, scale, siting and design decisions should be carefully considered.

We have great models for this in Pennsylvania: it's called our traditional towns. Small towns and downtowns are not just anachronisms but a model for future development.

➤ **IMAGE: Streetscape Improvement, Keswick, Montgomery County**

*Example: Keswick Commercial District, Montgomery County.* The commercial district of Keswick was revitalized with a variety of streetscape improvements, including pedestrian crosswalks, a traffic circle, unified signage and lighting, landscaping, and a cohesive street tree program. (Source: *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*, p. 71.)

- 14. IMAGE: 3 slides of **Summerset at Frick Park: Before,**
- 15. IMAGE: **During Planning,** and
- 16. IMAGE: **After.**

*Example: Summerset at Frick Park,* Redevelopment of a brownfield site—Located on a former 238-acre slag dump, this neighborhood is now one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. The traditional neighborhood design has attracted young families to the heart of the city: fifty percent of the buyers are families with young children. The development now has more than 700 homes and retail space. (Source: Mark Schneider, Summerset Land Development Associates; and *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*, p. 44)

## 17. Principle #4: Preserve Historic Resources

*Do you want to watch our historic resources fade away or keep them? Or stated another way, if you don't know where you've been, how do you know where you're going?* Pennsylvania has a wealth of historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes. These historic assets should be identified and protected, and developers should be encouraged to rehabilitate and reuse historic structures. Protecting historic main streets is also vital; these thoroughfares are a powerful tool for economic revitalization—generating jobs and attracting tourists, residents, and investors.

- **IMAGE: Venango County Courthouse, Franklin; former Berks County Conservancy building in restored mill; Main Street, Wellsboro, Tioga County, along the Route 6 Heritage Area.**

## 18. IMAGE: Main Street Façade Improvements, Ridgway, Elk County

*Example: Ridgway.* From 1998 to 2003, the Ridgway Heritage Council (RHC) oversaw 80 facade projects and disbursed \$147,000 in grants that leveraged total investment of about \$500,000. RHC's work — the basis of three state awards in 2004 — has helped business recruitment. Since 1997, 21 new businesses have located in downtown Ridgway, including a regional candy company, a coffee and pastry shop, and antique and other specialty shops; the majority has been successful.

Ridgway's success in downtown revitalization has sparked a surge in historic home restoration in adjacent residential neighborhoods. Since 1997 more than 47 homes have been restored through private investment estimated at more than \$5 million. Retiring baby boomers seeking summer homes and professionals working in nearby Elk County communities have been attracted to Ridgway by the availability of stately older homes and the community's overall ambiance. Most residential projects received a free

consultation but did not get any funding. (Source: Article by Keith L. Rolland, “Leadership and Enthusiasm Fuel Small Town’s Turnaround”, *Cascade*, Community Affairs, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Spring 2005, p. 1.)

19. **Principle #5: Respect Local Community Character in New Construction**

*Would you rather have the character of the community shaped by new development or community character shape new development?*

Eighty percent of everything built in America has been built since the end of World War II. Much of this development has been cookie-cutter, off-the-shelf generic building. But new buildings can, through attention to their design, complement the character of the community rather than making it look like “Anyplace USA.”

Communities that set no standards compete to the bottom. To avoid this happening, communities need to do more to ensure that new construction—particularly that involving chain stores, shopping centers, and franchise operations—respect local character. By identifying what makes each community unique, and what harms that uniqueness, localities can develop standards that foster distinctive, attractive communities with economic vitality and a strong sense of place. Being or looking the same, from an economic point of view, is not a plus.

Our public buildings—such as courthouses, libraries, municipal buildings, post offices, public schools—used to be the most beautiful buildings in town, demonstrating pride and setting the standard. In the last 50 years, however, public buildings were often designed to be cheap, utilitarian boxes. Frequently, many public buildings were moved from the downtown to locations on the strip outside of town. More recently, some towns are

recommitting to creating high-quality public buildings that demonstrate community pride.

- **IMAGE: City Hall, Pottstown, Montgomery County**  
*Example:* The parcel at High and Hanover streets in downtown Pottstown had sat vacant since 1973. Adjacent to it, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Security Trust Building had been empty for 20 years. The Borough's decision to locate its new municipal building and town square in the heart of downtown demonstrated its faith in the community's potential for regeneration.

The new three-story, 28,000-square-foot Borough Hall houses government offices, council chambers, and the police department. The Borough Hall is credited with sparking economic development, including renovation of the Security Trust Building. The Town Center was completed in 2002 with the opening of the Smith Family Plaza, which created a place for socializing, festivals and performances. The Plaza created a pedestrian-friendly environment for transit-oriented development connecting the High Street corridor and the proposed Schuylkill Valley Metro. (Source: 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania Web site, 2006 Commonwealth Design Award Winners) [www.10000friends.org](http://www.10000friends.org))

- 20. **IMAGE: Typical McDonald's followed by**
- 21. **IMAGE: McDonald's restaurants in New Hyde Park, NY**
- 22. **IMAGE: McDonald's in Annapolis, Philadelphia, Sedona, and Key West.**

*Example:* Experience shows that if you accept standard look-alike corporate design, that is what you'll get. But when communities insist on customized, site-specific design, chances are, you can get it. This example of McDonald's (and more under Keys to Success section)

show what can happen in a community that works successfully to have franchises and chain stores fit in.

- 23. IMAGE: **Poorly placed and designed signs** followed by
- 24. IMAGE: **Examples of effective, well-designed signs**
- 25. IMAGE: **More examples of effective, well-designed signs**

*Example:* Sign control is one of the most important and powerful actions a community can take to make an immediate visible improvement in its physical environment. Almost nothing destroys the distinctive character of a community or region faster than uncontrolled signs and billboards.

We need signs. Signs provide us with direction and needed information. A business sign can be colorful, decorative, even distinguished. But too often signs are oversized, poorly planned, badly located, and altogether too numerous. What's more sign clutter is ugly, costly, and ineffective. And it degrades one of Pennsylvania's greatest economic assets: its scenic landscapes.

- 26. **Principle #6: Reduce the Impact of the Car and Promote Walkability**

*Do you want to get in the car and drive to everything and for everything or would you like the option of walking?* Reducing the impact of the car means providing more transportation options. Transportation facilities that are attractive as well as functional meet the needs of people and respect and enhance local communities. Design standards for neighborhoods streets, roads, bridges, parking lots, and other transportation facilities should be reexamined to make them more human-scale and community-friendly.

Communities should encourage better public transportation as well as more sidewalks, trails, and bike paths that can create a network of non-motorized transportation options within and between

communities and allow residents to increase their physical activity close to home. Communities can also consider walkable, mixed-use development to slow traffic and traffic-calming measures like roundabouts, curb extensions, and narrower streets to slow down traffic and make walking and biking more appealing.

Design of our communities shapes the community's character, transportation options, our interactions with others, the number of trips we take, and resources we use. Walking for pleasure is the most popular form of outdoor recreation in the U.S. yet in many of our communities it's nearly impossible to walk safely to a store, job, or even a friend's house.

Certainly we see a connection between the rise in obesity rates among Americans, especially our children, the associated increasing health problems such as early-onset diabetes and communities that make walking difficult and orient themselves exclusively to motor vehicle access. One-third of American children are obese or at risk of being obese. Certainly a host of other issues factor into the obesity crisis, but the community design is a critical factor in encouraging regular walking and other physical activity.

In 2002, only 18 percent of children walked or biked to school compared with 71 percent of their parents who walked or biked as children. According to the Centers for Disease Control, almost 85% of children's trips to school are made by car, school bus, or other modes of motorized transportation. Health and children advocates are now urgently calling for improving sidewalks and community walkability.

- **IMAGE: Walkable Downtown Brookville, Jefferson County**  
*Example:* Traditional downtowns are more walkable and promote a sense of community with increased opportunities for social interaction.

27. **IMAGE: Development for Cars, Not People.**

*Examples: Overly wide streets* encourage speeding, generate runoff, are more expensive to build, and increase the cost of housing. *Strip development* separates shopping from homes. Residents of conventional auto-dependent subdivisions typically make 10 to 12 car trips per household per day and walk less than people in more compact communities. *Lack of sidewalks, speeding cars, and long distances between service establishments* often make commercial streets unsafe for pedestrians, even though some try. (Source: *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*, p. 118.)

28. **IMAGE: Trails and Greenways. Pine Creek Gorge Trail**, in Tioga and Lycoming Counties (upper right); **Clarion/Little Toby Rail Trail**, Elk, Jefferson and Clearfield Counties (lower right); Allegheny Trail Alliance guide to *Trail Towns*

*Examples: Greenways* provide numerous recreational opportunities for residents and visitors; they also increase nearby property values, allow safe alternative options for transportation and recreation; create a sense of community, improve health and fitness, and may attract spending from tourists and residents at trail-related businesses.

Business owners near the **Pine Creek Gorge Trail** report more visitors, who visit in larger groups, stay longer, and spend more than traditional recreational visitors. The season for the trail use from such activities as biking, walking, and bird and wildlife watching is also longer than traditional recreation like hunting or fishing.

Residents of Ridgway pushed for the creation of the **Clarion-Little Toby Rail Trail**, an 18-mile rail-trail to Brockway, to provide safe opportunities for recreation and social interaction, but found it also

attracted tourists, drawn to the trail for biking and walking and other recreation as well as the access to nature, wildlife watching, and opportunities to explore Elk County's lumber heritage.

*Trail Towns* is a guide to help Pennsylvania's communities capture trail-based tourism opportunities and its benefits. To access this publication go to Allegheny Trail Alliance website: [www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org).

29. **IMAGE: Places Designed for People and Cars.**

*Examples:* Images show **Main Street** both **old** (Wellsboro, Tioga County) and **new** (Pewaukee, Wisc.); the **Harrisburg** (Dauphin County) **Greenway**; the new beautifully designed context-sensitive **Germantown Ave. Bridge** in Philadelphia; and the new **traditional neighborhood development of Eagleview** in Chester County.

30. These six guiding principles of *Better Models of Development* help focus our thinking and guide decisions we need to make about OUR COMMUNITY's future. What determines a community's success? Better Models for Development helps to identify Keys to Success.

Each decision is an opportunity to make our community a better place to live, work, shop, learn and raise a family. We can start working towards building a more successful community with one decision. And build on that small success with another, and another, and another.

Nothing succeeds like success. By starting with something small and easy, we can achieve something early and build momentum for other changes.

- **IMAGE: KEY TO SUCCESS: Start with something small, something easy. Ridgway signs, chainsaw carving in town's**

O.B. Grant Park, **façade improvement, Clarion/Little Toby Trail.**

*Example:* **Ridgway's** transformation started with small things to make the place better: residents decided to tackle downtown lighting, signs, and benches before moving to façade improvements, and the creation of the Clarion/Little Toby Trail.

31. **Key to Success: Know your assets.** Successful communities know their assets. The first step to safeguarding community character is identifying the location and significance of important features which might include historic sites and neighborhoods, natural resources, such as waterways, wildlife habitat areas, farmland, connected forest land, steep slopes, and scenic lands. In Pennsylvania, assets can be identified and protected through up-to-date comprehensive plans. Recognizing what is worth preserving is the first step toward better development.

➤ **IMAGE: KEY TO SUCCESS: Identify key natural, cultural, scenic, and economic assets.**

*Example:* Amateur astronomers approached the superintendent of **Cherry Springs State Park** in Potter County just a few years ago and showed him a satellite image of the U.S. at night. Potter County was a surprising dark spot in the eastern part of the country. Some would think that might be a liability but Superintendent Chip Harrison realized this was a unique opportunity. Now the park is known as Pennsylvania's first "Dark Skies Park", allowing some of the finest stargazing east of the Rockies. Neighboring jurisdictions are preparing dark sky ordinances to preserve the night sky. And the park is working with the nearby hospitality industry to promote sustainable astronomy tour packages.

32. **Key to Success: Successful communities pick and choose among development proposals.** Communities have choices on what, where, and how to build. We can ask for better development. If we expect more and demand more, we may get it. But we won't get better choices unless we ask.

Business is important to our community. We want to improve our community's economy. But not all development is created equal. Businesses are attracted to a community that cares about itself—and reflects that with its development. Communities that say “no” to development that is contrary to its comprehensive plan or simply bad for the community will almost always get better development proposals and actions instead of the original. We shouldn't resist all change, but we can set a higher standard and get better results for our community.

- **IMAGE: Key to Success: Pick and choose among development proposals.**

*Example:* McDonald's restaurants in **Annapolis; Philadelphia; Key West; Sedona.** Franchises and chain stores have different plans for development. Take a look at these McDonalds outlets. The one in Maryland looks different than the one in Arizona, which looks different than the one in Florida. Franchises like McDonalds are willing to change their design for a community if it is a desirable location for business.

33. **Key to Success: Successful communities use education, incentives and voluntary initiatives, as well as regulations.** We need to use the carrot as well as the stick. While regulations are important, we also need flexibility to encourage good and innovative development.  
*[See toolkit and Better Models publication for examples.]*

We need to think through what we want to build and how we want our community to look. We can start with guidelines that show desired design practices. The 12-county Pennsylvania Wilds region is one area that has created design guidelines—voluntary practices to express a community’s expectation for better design.

We can also encourage businesses to come in and meet with our community officials before they submit development plans—allowing them an opportunity to discuss how to shape their plans so they enhance our community character, not detract from it. If you don’t believe that this is possible, go to the Wal-Mart company Web site. It now has a section trumpeting the company’s Local Store Design initiative!

- **IMAGE: Cover of The Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide**  
*Example:* The **Pennsylvania Wilds region**, a 12-county landscape in north central Pennsylvania, created this design guide to help retain the qualities that make the region unique. The Design Guide requests, but does not require, creative design for new development in the region. The intent is to enhance community character, protect natural resources, and strengthen economic prosperity. The guide is available online at:  
<http://www.clintoncountypa.com/PA%20Wilds/PA%20Wilds%20Main.htm>

34. **Key to Success: Create a shared vision for the future—and follow it.** Successful communities—some of the most desirable and economically sound in the nation—have a shared vision for the future. These communities involve citizens in the decision-making process. The public should be engaged in the initial analysis of proposed projects and involved in developing options.

The best businesses, including Fortune 500 companies, plan for success, and our community should do the same. No place will

retain its special character by accident. Successful communities plan for growth and progress—including economic and community development, preservation of natural and cultural resources, and land use—and use these plans to preserve and enhance their assets and to define their future.

➤ **IMAGE: Cover of Somerset County comprehensive plan**

35. **A community's image is fundamentally important to its economic well-being.** Everyday, people make decisions on where to visit, shop, eat, and locate businesses. People are more likely to spend time and money in an attractive community than an unattractive one.

What business will invest in a community that won't invest in itself? Look at these signs at the entrance to a community. What place looks like somewhere you'd like to visit? To live? To start a business? To spend your time and money?

**IMAGE: Sign examples**—good and bad comparison. The good one is the gateway to **Oxford** in Chester County; the bad one is Midland, Tennessee.

36. **We can create a better community.** Working together, we can build on the remarkable assets we already have and make them even better. We can preserve our community's existing treasures and also build a legacy for the future. We can attract new development that will enhance our community—building safe, secure neighborhoods that meet people's needs today and prepare for the needs of the future.

➤ **IMAGE: DISCUSSION**

## Answering Some Tough Questions:

### *How do we start?*

A Chinese proverb states, “A journey of a thousand miles starts a single step.” The most important aspect of changing the development in your community is to start work on an easy thing first, something everything can agree on, rather than something very complex or difficult that could derail the momentum. Nothing succeeds like success. Achieving an early success can excite community members and attract new partners, investments, and projects enabling greater possibility for success with more complex efforts in the future.

### *I like our community the way it is. Why should we explore these so-called “better models”?*

There are two kinds of change: planned and unplanned. Just like the top companies in the country plan, the best communities have a vision for the future and make sure they plan to achieve that vision, one decision at a time. If we don’t plan, things are simply going to happen to us and we will lose control of the very things we now like.

### *I’m concerned about property rights. Will this limit my ability to use my property or make a profit?*

[Excerpted from Ed McMahon’s article “Sustainability and Property Rights,” *Urban Land* magazine, June 2006. The full article can be viewed online at the ULI Web site: [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)]

The popular perception is that limits on the use of land automatically result in a loss of value. The truth is, the primary source of value in real estate is largely external to the lot lines. What our neighbors do – or can do – plays an enormously important role in determining the value of our own property. Remember the traditional real estate mantra about what matters most: “Location, location, location”.

Numerous social, political, economic, and physical factors affect the value of real estate, but the primary reason why land use controls were created

in the first place is to protect property values, not undermine them. Value tends to track expectations that can be relied upon over time.

Sensible land use regulations almost always increase property values. If you don't believe this, visit any historic district and compare property values in the district with property values outside of it. On the other hand, try selling a home next to an asphalt plant, a billboard, a landfill, or other noxious use. Sensible regulations can create predictability and certainty for all landowners thus increasing fairness.

The 2002 *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* by the real estate analysts at PricewaterhouseCoopers states, "Markets where you can build too easily tend to produce lower returns."

Sensible land use regulations also promote fairness. They rely on the democratic principles of both rights and responsibilities. Therefore, you have the right to "swing your fist, as long as it doesn't hit my nose."

***You're proposing a lot of changes. How much is this going to cost?***

Good design needn't be expensive. True, some ideas may cost more. But investing in your community and its future upfront and as part of a thoughtful, focused plan is more cost-effective than haphazard and unplanned, anything-goes development. Money always follows great ideas. And businesses and residents are more likely to seek communities that invest in themselves. Also for many of these principles, money can be saved with use of a development pattern that uses less infrastructure—for roads, water and sewer, and gas—while still providing the benefits to natural resource protection and community walkability and livability that results from a more compact form.

***How do I get a chain store to change their plans to fit my community instead of having my community change plans to fit a chain store?***

Ask. Show them examples of the kind of development that is traditional for your town. Tell them how you'd like to adapt their plans: address materials (wood instead of plastic, use of stone), lighting, scale, signage,

vernacular style, parking (in rear rather than in front), location on the lot (pulled to sidewalk versus set back), accessibility (accommodating pedestrians as well as cars), and so forth.

***Why do we need new models for development? Builders produce what consumers like. Otherwise they wouldn't buy it.***

This is vastly oversimplified rationale. Many homebuyers might prefer neighborhoods or commercial areas that are different from what is being offered, but they lack the choice. There are better, more attractive and more profitable ways to build that offer more choices.

**Exercise:** If you are unfamiliar with audience members, at the start of presentation ask audience members to introduce themselves briefly or poll the audience: “Who represents neighborhood groups? Who is a builder or developer? Who represents local or other government? Who represents a community interest group? Who represents a business or industry?” Some audience members may reflect multiple groups. You may want to ask other questions such as “How long have audience members lived in the community?” Tailor your questions for the time available, your knowledge of the audience or the audience’s familiarity with each other, and what information would be useful to you in shaping the presentation.

**Idea: Have resources on hand.** You may want to have copies of the *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* publication and other resources on hand to display, distribute to the audience, or to illustrate key points or examples. Contact DCNR at 717/787-7672 or The Conservation Fund at 703/525-6300 or [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org) to order copies. You may also download a copy from the DCNR Web site at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/2005/BetterModels.pdf>

**Idea: Map your assets!** Get a map of your community and lead a discussion about the physical assets of your community. What is the community proud of? What is the community known for (historically and now)? What places do you take your out-of-town friends to see when they visit you? Brainstorm on the historic, cultural, business, and natural assets. List them on an easel and mark them on a map to show where they are located. Now discuss: How do people get there? What does the entrance to the assets look like? Where are services such as lodging, meals, restrooms, and conveniences located? What is the region that encompasses all these assets? Discuss who manages these assets. Discuss how new development supports or fails these assets. Now talk about what can be done to protect these assets and help them realize their potential.

**Idea: Brainstorm on creative approaches to better models in your community!** Successful communities use carrots as well as the stick. Regulations are important but your community should also use education, incentives, and voluntary initiatives. Engage a small working group on what you want your community to be and brainstorm on creative strategies to get there. Mine the Better Models publication and toolkit for ideas.

**Idea: Think big.** The Book of Proverbs states, "Without vision the people will perish." Having a commonly held vision can be very powerful—and will make your community more desirable and economically sound. A vision can also provide clear expectations for builders and developers creating more predictability and certainty for them, as well as reduced opposition. There are a number of ways to engage citizens and leaders in a vision for the community. See pp. 9–10 of the Better Models publication for some ideas.

**Exercise:** At the end of presentation, have the group review six principles for Better Development on page 5 of *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*. Discuss which principle(s) or action needs the most attention in your community. Direct participants to actions in each principle chapter. Review the examples presented. Brainstorm on what could be done locally and record the idea. At this point, encourage the creative free-flow of ideas and vision; don't discard any ideas, no matter how far-fetched they may seem. Then lead the group in prioritizing ideas. You can provide group members with stickers, placing stickers alongside the three ideas that they would like to implement. Or you can lead a hand vote. A variety of implementation techniques including additional resources, codes, ordinances, and case studies are provided in the Better Models toolkit.

**Exercise:** Before beginning your presentation, *think about the physical assets of your community*. The first step toward better development is recognizing what should be protected. Think about and list your community's:

- Downtown, historic buildings and sites, neighborhoods, the design of new and old development, the shops and stores, the businesses, the roads, the signs, the stunning views, the entrances to your community, the historic buildings.
- Natural resources (parks, rivers and waters, wildlife habitat, recreational lands), working lands (farms, ranches, forests), and scenic, historic and cultural landscapes.
- Unique crops or manufactured products and unique species of plant or wildlife.
- Places you take family or friends when they visit.
- Places that reflect the “spirit” or “soul” of the community—whether a historic clock tower, town commons, Little League baseball field, or a Native American burial mound. These places that make your community different and unique are also part of your shared heritage. Some of these sites may also reflect painful or difficult chapters in

your community's history, such as a natural disaster, traditional industries that are gone, or a manmade conflict such as battles, civil rights conflicts, labor strife, or other past or recent events. It's important to recognize these places in community plans.

In developing the list, answer these questions:

- What is the community proud of?
- What is special, unique, and different about your community?
- What aspects of your community could be improved?
- What would other people include in this list?

Think about *the appearance of your community*.

- What does it look like?
- How are your community assets treated?
- Are they in good condition or rundown?
- What parts of your community are attractive? What parts are ugly?
- Are natural areas, parks, cultural assets, historic building and sites well cared for and protected?
- Does new development respect ("fit with") the older development?

Now think about your *development process*:

- Are development proposals reviewed for their "fit" with existing/traditional development?
- Does your community have a comprehensive plan? Zoning? Design guidelines or standards?
- Does your community provide incentives and voluntary initiatives for the desired form of development?
- Do citizens and businesses understand the development process?
- Do they understand the role that the planning review and elected officials can play in shaping your community's development?
- Do they understand the threats (economic change, competition, etc.) to your community?
- Do they appreciate how community appearance is an economic asset?

Keep these lists in mind as you present and draw on them to build support for better models for development while communicating an understanding of the pride for your unique community.

**Idea: Explore Implementation Techniques.** Numerous tools can help engage community members and stakeholders in community development decisions and gain important buy-in for change. The toolkit provides numerous resource ideas for implementation. But to engage community members in the community's future, consider some of the tools listed on pages 9 and 10 in the *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania* publication. These include: resource inventories, community visioning, visual preference surveys, visual assessments, design charrettes, visual simulations, and buildout studies. Some other techniques for thought-provoking engagement include

- Documentation of traditional design features in the community (may be the start of design guidelines);
- Field trips of local officials and community members to visit good (and bad) examples of development;
- Videos, plays, or speakers that cover conservation and development topics followed by facilitated community discussion;
- Community-wide book reading and discussion related to the community's future;
- Children's art shows or curriculum that engages them to depict or discuss their community in the past, present, and future;
- Media coverage that engages and educates community members about choices for the future.

**Idea: Use the tools.** If an audience member locks in on one principle, use the *Better Models* publication and the toolkit to refer to examples and tools that could be used in your community. Remember: these resources show that it CAN be done in Pennsylvania.

**We'd Like to Hear From You!**

We want this tool to be helpful to you, the local leader, as you forge ahead with creating a better community. Please let us know how you use the *Better Models* presentation and script, whether it was helpful, and what could be improved. Send an e-mail or call us at The Conservation Fund: [postmaster@conservationfund.org](mailto:postmaster@conservationfund.org) or 703/525-6300. Thanks!

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