Urban Growth Boundary

Description

An urban growth boundary, also called an urban service boundary, is an officially adopted and mapped line beyond which the local or regional government does not support development for a specified period of time. Growth is supported inside the boundary with utilities and development-friendly policies. Growth is discouraged outside the boundary. Urban growth boundaries typically include enough land for development over a twenty (20) year period and are typically reviewed periodically (every five years) to ensure that adequate land remains within the boundary. If the urbanized area includes multiple jurisdictions a regional agency may be needed to manage the boundary.

Benefits of an urban growth boundary

There are a number of reasons to implement an urban service boundary. The two most "fundamental purposes [are]; (1) to promote compact and contiguous development patterns that can be effectively served by public services and (2) to preserve open space, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas that are not currently suitable for urban development" (Nelson and Duncan in Urban Containment in the US)

Urban services boundaries can help communities:

- Manage leapfrog or sprawling development
- Support densities needed for public transportation systems
- Protect natural resources
- Protect farmland so that it is viable for modern agriculture operations
- Manage expenditures for urban services including road maintenance, water and sewer service provision, and police and fire protection

Limitations of urban growth boundaries

Urban growth boundaries do have some limitations. Setting the size of the urban growth boundary correctly is critical to maintaining the economic viability of the community. If the boundary does not include enough land, the cost of residential and other development can be driven up or development can be forced to other nearby communities. If the boundary contains too much land, it will not be an effective tool for achieving community goals, including growth management [http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/ToolDetail.asp?GetTool=53].

Additionally, without cooperation of private utility services providers (particularly water and sewer) in communities without publicly owned utilities an urban service boundary is impossible to implement successfully.

Implementing an urban growth boundary

Urban growth boundary programs should:

1. Accommodate long-range urban population growth requirements consistent with state and local goals and policies;
2. Fulfill local needs for housing, employment opportunities, and livability;
3. Provide public facilities and services in an orderly and economic manner;
4. Maximize efficiency for land uses in or at the fringe of existing urban areas;
5. Consider all environmental, energy, economic, and social consequences;
6. Preserve farm, forest, and other resource lands; and
7. Ensure compatibility of proposed urban uses with nearby resource activities. (Urban Containment, see helpful references)

Urban Growth Boundary

Urban growth boundary programs should have provisions for revising the boundary over time, but should have limitations on how often the boundary can be modified to provide the local land use plan with stability and meaning. Additionally, growth within the boundary should be subject to contiguity requirements for annexation purposes and should be sized for efficient development within the planning period.

Example urban growth boundaries

Two of the best known urban growth boundaries/urban service areas are in Portland, Oregon and Lexington, Kentucky. In Lexington, a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program is used in conjunction with the urban service area.

Relevant Statutes

No relevant statutes have been identified for this tool.

Capacity Recommendations

A Plan Commission with available staff and resources should be in place for review and to make recommendations. In order to have zoning a plan commission and Board of Zoning Appeals is required by Indiana Code.

Guidelines / Considerations for Implementation

- Need to work closely with utility providers to be effective, particularly with private utility companies.
- May require assistance from a qualified consultant or outside vendor to determine the proper amount and location of land to be included in the urban growth boundary.
- Building consensus and support from various groups in the community is important during initial development of a program.

Example Ordinances

- **Urban Service Expansion Area Master Plan (Lexington, Kentucky)** [ftp://ftp.lfucg.com/Planning/LongRange/EAMP.pdf]
- **Expansion Area Zoning (Lexington, Kentucky)** [http://www.lfucg.com/planning/documents/article23.pdf]
- **Comprehensive Plan (Portland, Oregon)** [http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=141396]
- **Metro Urban Growth Boundary and Urban Reserve Procedures (Portland, Oregon)** [http://www.metro-region.org/library_docs/about/chap301.pd]

Example Studies

No example studies are available for this tool.

Helpful References and Links

- "**Urban Containment in the United States: History, Models, and Techniques for Regional and Metropolitan Growth Management**." Nelson, Arthur and Casey Dawkins. American Planning Association PAS Report 520.

Urban Growth Boundary

Helpful Contacts

- **Indiana Land Use Consortium** is made up of different business, development, government, and education representatives from throughout Indiana. Its purpose is to offer educational information and discussion for land use policy in the state that are guided by a list of principles on their website. http://www.indianalanduse.org/index.html

  Jamie Palmer, Chair
  (317) 261-3046
  jlpalmer@iupui.edu

- **Purdue University Community Extension Services – Land Use Team**: The Purdue Land Use team offers resources to help communities address land use issues. The team provides educational resources and a variety of programs for citizens, local officials, and other development groups [**http://www.ces.purdue.edu/landuse/index.html**].

  Sam Cordes
  Program Leader, Leadership and Community Development
  (765)494-3573
  smcordes@purdue.edu

- **Center for Urban Policy and the Environment**: As part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI, this organization can assist in a variety of planning related matters.

  334 N. Senate Avenue, Suite 300
  Indianapolis, IN 46204
  Tel: 317-261-3000
  Fax: 317-261-3050
  urbanctr@iupui.edu
  http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/AboutTheCenter/

Other Possible Funding Sources

No other funding sources have been identified for this tool.

Program Objectives and Issues Addressed

- Growth management
- Implementation of plans
- Code/ policy enforcement
- Vision of development and growth
- Regulatory issues
- Zoning ordinance
- Subdivision control
- Development plan approval

See Also

- Zoning Ordinance
- Advisory/ Area Plan Commission