



MICRO-CREDENTIAL

LAND MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

5.- Land Use Concept and Forms

Land Use Review

LM-W05-V35



A comprehensive look at how thoughtful land use planning builds resilient, equitable, and vibrant communities — today and for generations to come.



The Foundation of Community Planning

Before communities can grow wisely, they need a shared vision. This chapter explores the essential tools — comprehensive plans, zoning codes, and land use maps — that form the bedrock of responsible planning.

What is a Comprehensive Land Use Plan?

The Big Picture

A Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a proactive, forward-looking document that establishes a long-range vision for a community's growth, character, and future. It is not a rigid rulebook — it is a guiding framework that reflects shared community values and aspirations.

What It Does

→ Guides Growth

Directs future development and resource allocation across the community.

→ Shapes Policy

Serves as a policy document approved by elected officials, giving it democratic legitimacy.

→ Informs Decisions

Provides a consistent framework for evaluating rezoning, permits, and capital investments.

These two documents work in tandem, but they serve fundamentally different purposes. Understanding the distinction is essential for effective community governance.

Comprehensive Plan

A **vision document** — it articulates aspirations, recommendations, and guiding principles for how a community should grow and evolve over time. It is advisory in nature, providing the "why" and "where" of development.

Zoning Code

A **legal document** — it establishes binding rules and regulations for land development, including permitted uses, building height limits, setbacks, lot coverage, and density standards. It carries the force of law and is enforceable.

- 📄 The Comprehensive Plan informs the Zoning Code — not the other way around. When conflicts arise, the Plan guides reform of the Code.



Future Land Use Map

A **visual guide** depicting the desired long-term pattern of land uses across a community. It shows where future residential, commercial, industrial, and open space uses should ideally be located — and serves as the primary reference for evaluating rezoning requests and development proposals.



Zoning Map

A **regulatory map** that assigns every parcel of land within a jurisdiction to a specific zoning district. Each district carries a defined set of rules governing what can be built, how tall, how dense, and how close to property lines. Unlike the future land use map, it is legally binding today.



Accommodates Growth

Manages population and economic expansion in a way that is planned, coordinated, and sustainable.



Fosters Quality Living

Ensures access to amenities, services, and safe environments that support a high quality of life.



Protects Resources

Safeguards rural character, natural habitats, water quality, and historic properties from incompatible development.



Ensures Public Welfare

Promotes general public health, safety, and welfare through thoughtful land use decisions.



Land use planning is not a one-time event — it is a continuous cycle of review, engagement, and refinement. This chapter highlights how different jurisdictions approach the process of updating their plans to meet evolving community needs.

The Critical Area Commission's Mandate (Maryland)

Maryland's Critical Area Commission requires that all jurisdictions within the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area review their **entire program** — including zoning maps and land use policies — at minimum **every six years**. This ensures that protections for sensitive environmental resources remain current, comprehensive, and scientifically grounded.

The review process mandates updated resource inventories to capture changes in land cover, habitat, and development patterns, as well as precise acreage quantification to track gains or losses in protected lands over time.

Key Requirements

- Full program review every **6 years**
- Updated resource inventories reflecting current conditions
- Acreage quantification for protected areas
- Zoning map alignment with Critical Area boundaries

1

Role

Develop practical recommendations for smarter, more sustainable development patterns that reflect the county's long-term vision and values.

2

Deliverables

Ensure new growth is supported by adequate infrastructure, address critical housing needs, preserve agricultural and natural resources, and actively prevent uncoordinated sprawl.

3

Process

Iterative refinement of draft recommendations through structured working group meetings, stakeholder input, and public comment periods — building consensus at each stage.

Focus & Approach

North Salt Lake's General Plan update centers on revising the community's land use vision based on **seven guiding principles** developed through extensive public engagement and stakeholder collaboration. The process integrates public feedback at every stage to ensure the plan reflects genuine community priorities.

Anticipated Outcome

A revised **Future Land Use Map** that clearly defines the desired character, scale, and form of different areas across the city — providing a coherent framework for future development decisions.

Goal

Conduct a thorough review and update of the Land Use Element's Goals and Policies to ensure they reflect current conditions, emerging challenges, and evolving community priorities across Island County's unique island geography.

Critical Area Protection

Designating and rigorously protecting environmentally sensitive critical areas using **Best Available Science** — from wetlands and shorelines to fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.

Equity & Resilience

Proactively addressing **environmental justice**, building **climate resilience** into land use policies, and strengthening the **social infrastructure** that supports vulnerable communities.



From Sprawl to Sustainability: The Land Use Transformation

The contrast between uncoordinated suburban expansion and intentional sustainable development defines the central challenge of modern land use planning. The choices communities make today will shape their character — and their resilience — for decades to come.



Key Themes and Challenges in Land Use Planning

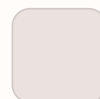
Across jurisdictions, certain challenges emerge again and again: the need for affordable housing, the imperative to protect farmland and natural resources, the fight against sprawl, and the demand for better mobility. This chapter examines each in depth.

The Standard

Affordable housing is defined as housing that costs **no more than 30% of a household's gross income**, including utilities. When housing costs exceed this threshold, families face difficult trade-offs between shelter, food, healthcare, and transportation.

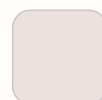
Why It Matters

Access to affordable housing directly supports residents' well-being, strengthens community bonds, and fuels local economic growth by enabling workers at all income levels to live near their jobs.



NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing)

Preserving and rehabilitating existing older housing stock that remains affordable without subsidy — protecting these units from displacement and loss.



Missing Middle Housing

Duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts that fill the gap between single-family homes and large apartment buildings — offering naturally more affordable options at a human scale.

Preserving Farmland and Natural Resources

The Concern (Sussex County)

Ongoing loss of forest cover and wooded areas on large rural parcels — as residential and commercial development pressure extends into the agricultural hinterland, fragmenting habitat and diminishing landscape character.

The Goal (Sussex (Sussex County)

Proactively preserve productive farmland and critical environmental resources by directing growth to appropriate areas and establishing strong policy protections for rural and agricultural lands.

The Policy (Island (Island County)

Designate and rigorously protect critical areas — wetlands, shorelines, fish and wildlife habitat, and geological hazard areas — using the **Best Available Science** standard mandated under the Growth Management Act.

Preventing Low-Density, Uncoordinated Sprawl

Strategies & Solutions

→ **Smarter Development** (*Sussex County*)

Implementing sustainable development practices that concentrate growth near services, infrastructure, and transit — reducing land consumption and environmental impact.

→ **Activity Centers** (*North Salt Lake*)

Creating distinct, recognizable activity centers and gateways that anchor neighborhoods with mixed-use development, walkable streets, and a strong sense of place.

The Challenge

Sprawl — characterized by scattered, low-density development disconnected from services and infrastructure — consumes farmland, increases infrastructure costs, degrades environmental quality, and undermines community cohesion. Managing growth to avoid these patterns is one of the most pressing challenges facing jurisdictions today. (*Sussex County*)

Transforming Key Corridors (*North Salt Lake*)

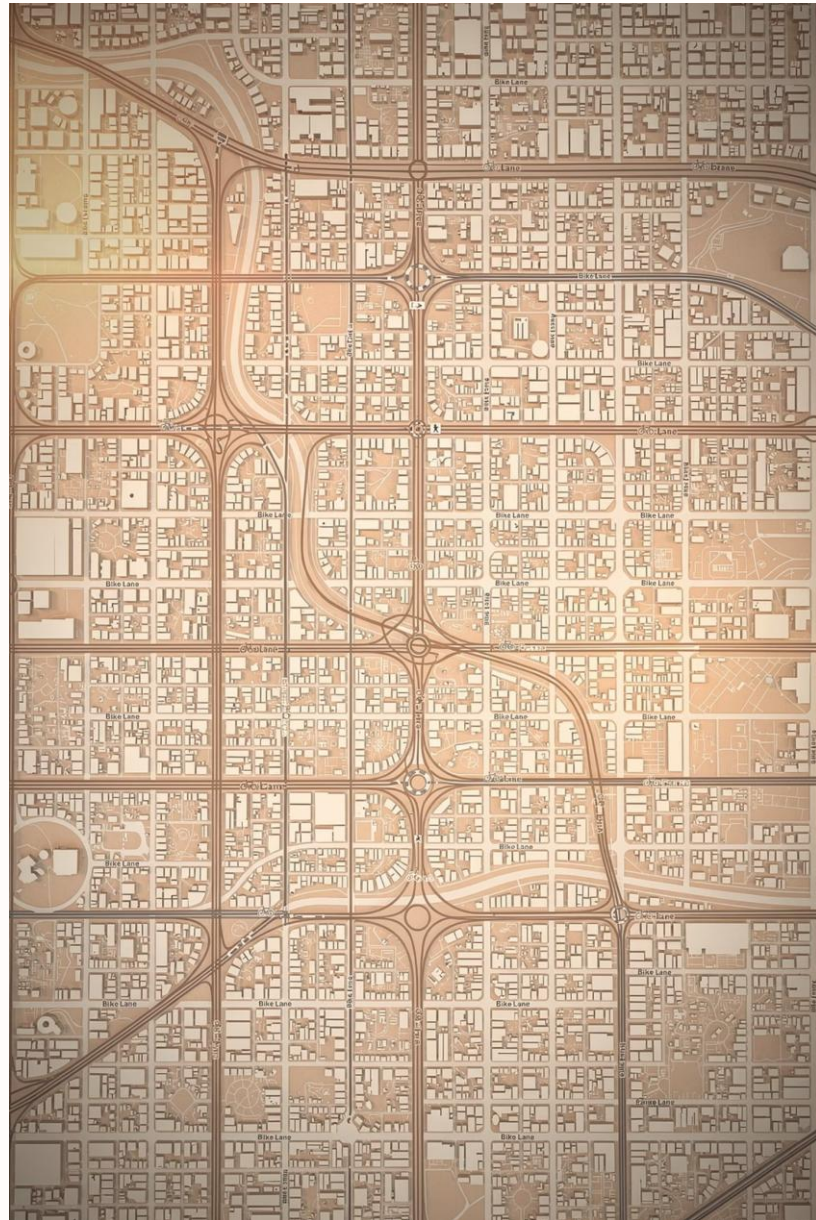
Redesigning major arterials and corridors to absorb growth gracefully — with mixed-use development, improved streetscapes, and multimodal infrastructure that connects neighborhoods and reduces auto-dependency.

Regional Trail Network (*North Salt Lake*)

Developing a prioritized network of regional and neighborhood-linking trails that provide non-motorized connections between activity centers, parks, schools, and open spaces throughout the community.

Expanding Walkability (*Washington Township*)

Investing in sidewalk infrastructure, crossings, and pedestrian-friendly design standards to make walking a safe, convenient, and attractive option for everyday trips.



Connecting Communities: The Future of Mobility

A well-connected community reduces dependence on single-occupancy vehicles, improves air quality, supports public health, and creates more equitable access to jobs, services, and opportunity for all residents — regardless of age, income, or ability.



Effective land use planning is grounded in rigorous analysis. This chapter explores how buildout analyses — like Albemarle County's — use quantitative methods to understand development capacity, anticipate demand, and align planning policy with real-world conditions.

Methodology

01

Identify developable parcels within Development Areas

02

Apply buildout assumptions based on zoning and land use land use designations

03

Calculate total theoretical future development capacity

04

Compare findings to demand forecasts and plan targets

The buildout analysis is designed to help Albemarle County understand the total development **capacity** of its designated Development Areas — the places where the Comprehensive Plan directs growth. This knowledge is essential for testing whether the plan can actually accommodate projected population and employment growth.

Residential Findings (*Albemarle County*)

Tracking the Pipeline

The analysis tracks two key categories of residential capacity: the **"Development Pipeline"** — projects that have already received approval or are currently under review but remain unbuilt — and the **theoretical maximum buildout** representing the full potential of all developable land under current zoning and plan designations.

By comparing **2022 and 2025 findings**, the county can identify meaningful trends — whether housing capacity is growing, shrinking, or shifting — and adjust planning policy accordingly to ensure long-term housing supply meets projected demand.

Non-Residential Findings (Albemarle County)

The buildout analysis extends beyond housing to examine the county's capacity for commercial and industrial development — a critical component of economic vitality and fiscal sustainability.

Retail SF

Projected square footage of retail space at full buildout, compared against 20-year retail demand forecasts to assess supply adequacy.

Hotel Rooms

Hospitality capacity projections evaluated in the context of tourism growth and regional visitor demand trends.

Industrial SF

Industrial land capacity assessed to ensure the county can support logistics, manufacturing, and employment-generating uses over the 20-year horizon.

Office SF

Future office space capacity analyzed relative to employment growth projections and evolving workplace trends.

The Vision for Resilient and Equitable Communities

The ultimate purpose of land use review is not compliance — it is transformation. This chapter brings together the themes, strategies, and lessons of previous chapters into a unified vision for what our communities can become.



Community Engagement

Inclusive, ongoing public participation ensures that land use plans reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of all residents — not just the most vocal.

Continuous Collaboration

Land use review is not a one-time event. It demands sustained coordination among planners, elected officials, developers, residents, and environmental advocates.

Resilient & Equitable Communities

The ultimate goal: communities that are economically vibrant, environmentally resilient, socially equitable, and provide an exceptional quality of life for every resident — now and for generations to come.

Data-Driven Decisions

Rigorous buildout analyses, resource inventories, and demand forecasts provide the factual foundation for defensible, future-focused planning policy.



MICRO-CREDENTIAL

LAND MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

5.- Land Use Concept and Forms

Land Use Review

LM-W05-V35