



The Active Communities Tool Assessment Modules

The Active Communities Tool (ACT): An Action Planning Guide and Assessment Modules to Improve Community Built Environments to Promote Physical Activity



<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/community-strategies/active-communities-tool>





MODULE 4:

LAND USE PLANNING

- » This module assesses the plans, policies, and resources that specify and determine development and future land use, for example, mixed land use, proximity to destinations, residential density.
- » Who should be involved – technical experts with knowledge of the community’s planning, transportation, and engineering plans, policies, and processes (for example, comprehensive/master plans, subdivision regulations, and zoning codes); specifically experts in land use and transportation planning and engineers.
- » Approximate time to complete – 60 minutes.

Community/ Municipality: _____

Term	Definition
Cluster housing	A development in which homes are situated in groupings relatively close together, while larger areas of open space within the development form a buffer with adjacent land uses.
Comprehensive plan	The adopted official statement of a governing body of a local government that sets forth (in words, maps, illustrations, and/or tables) goals, policies, and guidelines intended to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic development that occurs within its planning jurisdiction and that includes a unified physical design for the public and private development of land.
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	An approach to reducing crime by altering elements of the built environment ranging from the small-scale to the overarching, including the building form of an entire urban neighborhood and the opportunity for “eyes on the street.”
Density bonuses	Allowances for developers to increase housing density that will help communities achieve walkability, bikeability, transit, and/or affordable housing goals.
Empowerment zones	Federally- designated highly distressed urban and rural communities that may be eligible for a combination of grants, tax credits for businesses, bonding authority, and other benefits.
Form-based or design-based codes	Codes that emphasize physical form rather than separation of uses as the organizing principle, with a lesser focus on single-use land development. May include form-based overlay codes.
Greyfield redevelopment	Redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing development that takes advantage of existing infrastructure to reduce overall development costs in economically declining, outdated, failing, inactive, or underused real estate assets or land (e.g., older retail malls or strip centers that no longer attract adequate investment or tenants).
Growth Management Plan	A plan that sets forth the long-term goals and objectives of a locality related to growth and development. It influences how growth occurs and usually addresses density, availability of land, mixture of uses, and timing of development.
Health disparities	Particular types of health differences closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health and/or a clean environment based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.
Health equity	When everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.
Inclusionary zoning	An affordable housing tool that links the production of affordable housing to the production of market-rate housing. These policies either require or encourage new residential developments to make a certain percentage of the housing units affordable to low- or moderate-income residents.
Infill	Redevelopment that optimize prior infrastructure investments and consume less land than is otherwise available. It refers to the development of vacant parcels within previously built areas already served by public infrastructure.
Live-work zones	Zones in which residents can operate businesses on the ground floor of the building where they live.
Land use plan	A plan that regulates the use of land, specifically the occupation or use of land or water area for any human activity or purpose.

Term	Definition
Microunit	A small studio apartment, typically less than 350 square feet, with a fully functioning and accessibility compliant kitchen and bathroom.
Mixed use	Development that blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or entertainment uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated, and that provides pedestrian and bicycle connections.
Nodes	Places where people congregate and transportation routes converge or intersect.
Pedestrian-oriented districts (POD)	A distinct designation that preserves and encourages the pedestrian character of commercial areas and promotes street life and activity by regulating building orientation and design and accessory parking facilities; focusing on pedestrian friendly uses.
Planned-unit development (PUD)	A type of building development of both varied and compatible land uses, such as housing, recreation, commercial centers, and industrial parks, all within one contained development or subdivision.
Promise zones	Federally designated high-poverty communities where the federal government partners with local leaders to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health and address other priorities identified by the community.
Single room occupancy units	Typically a 160- square foot unit that relies upon communal kitchen or bathroom facilities.
Special improvement districts	An area of land within which property owners pay an additional tax or fee designated for specific services or improvements within the district's boundaries.
Tax-increment financing	A public financing method used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects within a defined area or district toward economic development or public improvement project(s).
Traditional neighborhood development (TND)	A development, which includes a variety of housing types, a mixture of land uses, an activity center, a walkable and bikeable design, and often a transit option within a compact neighborhood scale.
Transit-oriented development (TOD)	A type of urban development that maximizes the amount of residential, business, and leisure space within walking distance of public transportation.
Urban growth boundary	A land use planning border which controls urban expansion into farm and forest land.
Urban-to-rural transect	A zoning system that replaces conventional separated-use zoning. Transect zones provide the basis for walkable streets, mixed use, transportation options, and housing diversity.

Please answer these questions based on the community/municipality selected.

4.1 Does your state have planning or policy guidance/ requirements that affect local or regional products or processes related to the planning, design, and regulations that specify and determine development and future land use?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

PLANS

The **Plans** referred to in the following questions are those written and adopted by a local or regional authority. Plans can stand alone or be part of a Comprehensive Plan (e.g., Master Plan, General Plan). “Plan” is capitalized to indicate that it is a document adopted by a local or regional authority.

4.2 Does the community have a Land Use or Comprehensive Plan?

Yes

No → skip to #4.4

Not applicable → skip to #4.4

Don't know → skip to #4.4

4.3 Land Use or Comprehensive Plan

Does the community's Land Use or Comprehensive Plan:	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Address health?					
b. Address health equity?					
c. Strive for jobs/housing balance by promoting development of new residences near existing employment centers?					
d. Strive for jobs/housing balance by promoting development of new employment centers near existing high-density residential?					
e. Allow developers to provide fewer parking spaces for mixed use and higher density projects?					
f. Allow new off-street parking to be located behind street-fronting buildings or in parking structures?					
g. Set targets for affordable housing?					
h. Set goals for proximity of new development to destinations, such as schools and grocery stores?					
i. Direct growth to areas with existing infrastructure?					
j. Have disincentives for sprawl development?					
k. Include mixed-use projects as preferred type of development in commercial centers?					
l. Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles?					

The next several questions ask about a Growth Management Plan. A Growth Management Plan sets forth the long-term goals and objectives of a locality related to growth and development. It influences how growth occurs and usually addresses density, availability of land, mixture of land uses, and timing of development. It could be a separate plan or included as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

4.4 Is the community bound by a Growth Management Plan?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.5 Does the community have a Plan focused on housing/residential density?

- Yes, and it is 0–<5 years old
- Yes, and it is 5–<10 years old
- Yes, and it is 10 years or older
- No → skip to #4.9
- Not applicable → skip to #4.9
- Don't know → skip to #4.9

4.6 In the past year, about how often was the Plan consulted when making relevant decisions?

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.7 In the past year, were any of the housing/residential density goals or priorities specified in this Plan accomplished?

- Yes → describe: _____
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.8 Does the Plan project the amounts and types of housing needed over the next 10 years?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

POLICIES

The **Policies** referred to in the following questions are those written and adopted by a local or regional authority. Policies include local ordinances (such as zoning regulations, subdivision ordinances, street design guidelines, etc.) which are passed by local or regional governing authorities, such as a city council or board of commissioners.

4.9 Zoning measures to encourage dense, mixed-use development

What zoning measures does the community use separately or include in the Master Plan to encourage dense, mixed-use development? (Note: If there are multiple districts with their own zoning, do any of the districts have the following policies?)	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Mixed-use development, districts, or zones					
b. Vertical and horizontal mixed uses (i.e. vertical stacking land use)					
c. Pedestrian-oriented districts (POD)					
d. Transit-oriented development (TOD)					
e. Developers allowed to provide fewer parking spaces for mixed-use and higher-density projects					
f. Urban-to-rural transect allowed, creating distinct patterns from compact centers to lower-density outward areas					
g. Developers required to orient main entrances toward the street/sidewalk for retail buildings					
h. Building lot coverage that reserves space exclusively for green space					

4.10 Other measures to encourage mixed-use development

What other measures does the community use to encourage mixed-use development? (Note: If there are multiple districts with their own zoning, do any of the districts have the following policies?)	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Special improvement districts or overlay zones					
b. Tax increment financing					
c. Empowerment zones					

What other measures does the community use to encourage mixed-use development? (Note: If there are multiple districts with their own zoning, do any of the districts have the following policies?)	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
d. Promise zones					
e. High-density residential uses allowed and encouraged in central business/commercial districts					
f. Planned unit development (PUD) zones to promote dense mixed-use development					
g. Traditional neighborhood development (TND) zones					
h. Live-work zones					
i. Form-based or design-based codes					
j. Retail/commercial uses on the ground floor of residential buildings in mixed-use corridors or districts					
k. Density bonuses to developers to enhance walkability and bikeability					
l. A policy that encourages or rewards reuse/rehabilitation of existing buildings					
m. Other policies, requirements, or incentives for infill development					

4.11 Residential density

For residential density, does the community have policies in place that:	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Allow accessory dwelling units for single family lots (i.e., mother-in-law or garage apartment)?					
b. Encourage multi-family dwellings?					
c. Allow diverse housing types in a single residential district (large family homes, cottages, boarding houses, duplexes and small apartments, town homes, condominiums)?					
d. Allow local zoning flexibility in housing sizes, allowing for small single-family homes such as micro or tiny homes (under 500 sq ft)?					

For residential density, does the community have policies in place that:	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
e. Encourage minimum lot-sizes that are small enough to accommodate all income groups?					
f. Allow greyfield redevelopment for housing?					
g. Allow brownfield redevelopment for housing?					
h. Encourage mixed income housing development?					
i. Discourage sprawl-generating subsidies?					
j. Allow micro-units in multi-family dwellings?					
k. Allow single-room-occupancy units in multi-family dwellings?					
l. Encourage cluster housing?					
m. Allow re-zoning of commercial or industrial property to residential for revitalization?					
n. Allow set-asides for green space?					

4.12 New multi-unit housing development projects

For new multi-unit housing development projects, does the community have policies in place that address affordability and accessibility for families in the following ways:	Require	Suggest	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Residential density?					
b. Proportion of rental units?					
c. Project distributes unit size appropriately to accommodate housing needs of the community population?					
d. Minimum project set aside of units for affordable housing?					

4.13 Does the community have an inclusionary zoning policy?

Yes, and it is required for all new residential developments

Yes, and it is suggested for all new residential developments, but not required

No

Not applicable

Don't know

4.14 Does the community have a policy to build new schools in or near existing neighborhoods?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.15 Does the community have an urban growth boundary?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

ENVIRONMENT

The following questions ask about the built environment infrastructure in the community. Mixed-land uses in the community refer to areas that offer residents easy, convenient access to places and services they use daily—including grocery stores, restaurants, schools, and parks—without relying heavily on a car.

4.16 Does the community have areas with mixed land uses?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.17 Infill

What percentage of development in the community has been infill during the last five years?	Percent	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Commercial			
b. Residential			

4.18 Does the community have commercial development concentrated in nodes or centers?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.19 Does the community have commercial development concentrated in residential or non-residential neighborhood settings?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Don't know

4.20 Does the community have a downtown district?

Yes

No → skip to #4.24

Not Applicable → skip to #4.24

Don't know → skip to #4.24

4.21 Does the community have retail and services located on lower levels in downtown?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Don't know

4.22 Does the community have residential space located on upper levels (i.e., above ground floor) in downtown buildings?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Don't know

4.23 Considering new residential development in downtown, what is the required:

a. Minimum density?

_____ units/acre

Not applicable

Don't know

b. Maximum density?

_____ units/acre

Not applicable

Don't know

RESOURCES

The next set of questions ask about resources to support plans, policies, and built environments that impact physical activity.

4.24 Financial incentives

Does the community provide tax or other financial incentives:	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. For mixed-use development?				
b. Or infill development?				

Does the community provide tax or other financial incentives:	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
c. To increase healthy food retail in or near residential areas (e.g., healthy food financing, tax breaks, or other subsidies for retail in food deserts or underserved neighborhoods)?				
d. To support affordable housing?				
e. To invest in the revitalization of areas historically designed to accommodate multi-modal transportation?				

4.25 Does the community's local government have a planning and/or zoning commission?

Yes

No → End of Module 4

Not applicable → End of Module 4

Don't know → End of Module 4

4.26 Is there a health/public health representative on the planning and/or zoning commission?

Yes

No

Don't know



US Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Obesity