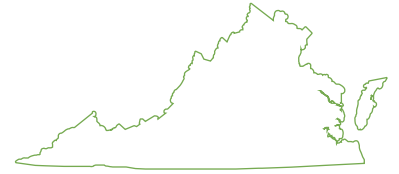


# Urban Development Areas



WILL PARSON/CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

**U**rban Development Areas (UDAs) promote efficient land use. Often called Urban Growth Boundaries or Urban Service Areas, they identify areas to encourage development and areas to protect to support rural land uses. Higher density and mixed-use developments take place inside the urban development boundary and receive robust public services, including amenities like parks. Agriculture, forestry, and other low density land uses occur outside the boundary and receive limited public services.

Areas are designated on land use maps and used to guide decisions on infrastructure and other development, especially the extension of roads, public water, and sewer. Set for a specified time to accommodate projected population growth and land use needs, they can be revised or renewed at the end of the period. The first UDA was enacted in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1958 to control sprawl and limit the costs of community services.

## Virginia Program Description

### PURPOSE

Local governments in Virginia can designate UDAs to promote transportation-efficient development, attract new development, and encourage local economic development. This approach also opens opportunities for state funding and planning assistance. For example, Virginia's transportation plan (VTrans) identifies capacity needs and improvements in UDAs. This makes them eligible for [SMART SCALE](#) funding, which evaluates potential transportation projects based on several key factors. These include improving public safety and increasing accessibility, promoting efficient land use and reducing congestion, increasing accessibility, and more. They also become eligible for support from the state's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment's (OIPI) Growth & Accessibility Planning (GAP) Technical Assistance Program.

### HOW IT WORKS

In 2007, Virginia passed legislation to require high growth localities to designate [urban development areas \(UDAs\)](#) to concentrate new development in areas with adequate infrastructure. The code was amended in 2012 to define UDAs more broadly, make them optional, and increase eligibility for SMART SCALE funding.

UDAs are designated by local governments, identified in comprehensive plans, and reviewed every five years. Voluntary and optional, they must be appropriate areas for higher density development due to public infrastructure such as transportation facilities and public water and sewer, eligible for infill or redevelopment, and incorporate Traditional Neighborhood Design which fosters mixed land uses, walkability, and multiple forms of transportation.

Any locality may amend its comprehensive plan to incorporate one or more UDAs. If adopted, the plan must identify UDA boundaries and show them on future land use maps. The areas must be sufficient to meet the projected development needs for at least 10 but not more than 20 years. The boundaries must be reexamined—or if necessary, revised—every five years in accordance with the review of the comprehensive plan and population

growth projections. To the extent possible, the law encourages public infrastructure funding to be directed to these areas. UDAs are also allowed reductions in stormwater management requirements.

### CONSIDERATIONS

UDAs promote efficient land use by designating areas for development and for conservation and protection. They require somewhat sophisticated planning to ensure they are large enough to meet demand for new development but not so large that they encourage leapfrog development. They also should be consistent with both the comp plan and local land use regulations and should not conflict with neighboring jurisdictions.

### To Learn More

- › [VTrans: “Urban Development Areas”](#)
- › [Prince William Conservation Alliance: “Urban Development Areas”](#)
- › [We Conserve PA: Urban Development Boundary](#)