

Overlay Zoning

What is Overlay Zoning?

Zoning ordinances regulate how land is used in a municipality. They must be based on sound data, reflect the policy goals of the community and be reviewed and updated as necessary.

There are several methods that enable the zoning ordinance and its administration to be more flexible—and the zoning overlay is one of them. Overlay districts are placed over the original zoning districts and apply additional provisions that are either more restrictive or expansive, or that may provide for different uses or design standards than the original district regulations.



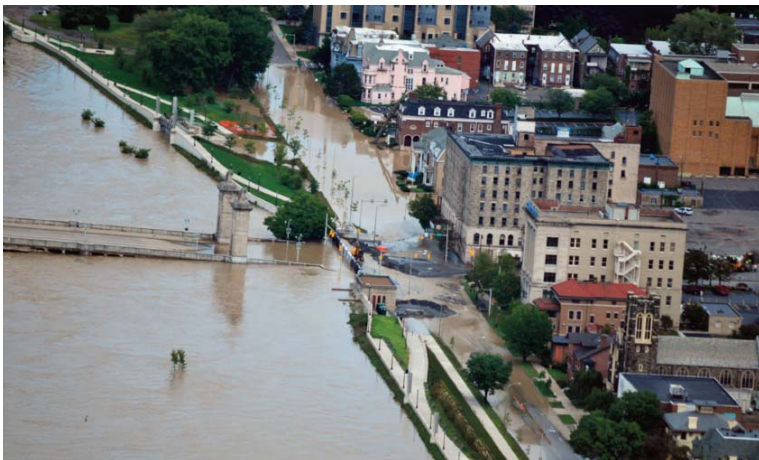
Overlay districts can be used for infrastructure planning and can help to manage safety, access, mobility, and floodplain areas.

What Does Overlay Zoning Do?

Overlay zoning can be a useful tool to help promote development that is compatible with, enhances, and protects the function and value of a natural resource. Overlay districts also can be used for infrastructure planning. They can help to manage safety, access, and mobility. They can also be used to preserve scenery and conservation areas. Clustering, performance zoning, planned residential development, traditional neighborhood design, and historic district preservation are types of zoning overlays that add site flexibility. Here, overlay zoning can benefit both the municipality and individuals seeking to develop property.





How is Overlay Zoning Used?

- ▼ **To preserve open space**
 Connect parks to walking trails, maintain scenic views, and protect wildlife habitats
- ▼ **To manage natural resources**
 Protect wetlands and floodplains, encouraging forest re-growth and protect steep slopes and landslide prone soils
- ▼ **To preserve historic treasures**
 Specify design standards and allow flexibility in uses for certain properties
- ▼ **To encourage improved development design**
 Help to define community character facilitate flexibility for developers by enhancing subdivision designs requirements





What are the Benefits?

-  Cost-effective way to update existing ordinances without the need to rewrite them entirely
-  Provide flexibility in design, either by protecting or promoting development objectives
-  Provide the ability to call out a geographic area or areas for which specific overlay regulations apply
-  Provide the ability to address unique and/or specific objectives where traditional zoning may not be the appropriate tool

Relevant Statute Referenced:
 Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code
 (Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No. 247, as amended)

OVERLAY DISTRICTS AT WORK IN PA

Case Study: Upper Providence Township, Montgomery County

Upper Providence Township is witnessing the successful results of its two overlay districts established along the Pottstown Expressway (S.R. 422). These zoning districts encourage the development of corporate centers in the Interchange Office District. The result has been the development of multi-use commercial and office campuses with compatible uses. This is an example of how an interchange overlay can specifically target economic development and focus transportation infrastructure to facilitate specific types of growth within the zoning districts. Contact: Upper Providence Township at 610.933.9179

For more information, contact:

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