



What is an Urban Development Area (UDA)?

Urban Development Areas (UDAs), or other similarly defined growth areas, are a voluntary designation made by Virginia localities with comprehensive plan and zoning authority per the Code of Virginia [§ 15.2-2223.1](#).

Why designate a UDA?

The local designation of UDAs has several potential benefits:

- Promote transportation-efficient land use and land development patterns to help reduce the impact of growth on the state's transportation network.
- Encourage walkable, bikeable, and mixed-use places as a means to attract development and spur local economic growth.

Designating a UDA also opens up opportunities for state planning assistance and project funding:

- The Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment's (OIPI) [Growth & Accessibility Planning \(GAP\)](#) Technical Assistance Program provides support to eligible applicants under program Component #1 to "Conduct multimodal planning within existing or planned UDAs or Growth Areas".
- Per the Code of Virginia [§ 33.2-353](#), VTrans, the state's transportation plan, identifies capacity needs and improvements in the designated UDAs. These identified needs become eligible for [SMART SCALE](#).

How to Designate a UDA?

The designation of UDAs is voluntary, optional, and based on a locally-driven process. OIPI does not play a role in a locality's designation process.

To designate a UDA, the local jurisdiction governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan that identifies locally-designated growth areas (with specific, identified boundaries) that are consistent with the intent of Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1.

- The Plan must specifically reference that the locally designated growth areas are consistent with the intent of Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1., but it is not required that the term "Urban Development Areas" be used.
- A locality may refer to their UDA areas by other terms, such as "Designated Growth Areas" or "Development Districts" in the comprehensive plan and future land use map while including reference to Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1.

How are UDA Needs incorporated into VTrans?

VTrans is Virginia's statewide multimodal transportation plan that includes an assessment of mid-term (0-10 years) capacity and safety needs for the Commonwealth's transportation system. Per the CTB policy, UDA Needs are identified based on, "Locality-identified transportation needs for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, circulation and access, safety, transit enhancements and access to locally designated UDAs". More details can be found in the following documents:

- The [Policy Guide for the Identification and Prioritization of the Mid-term Needs](#) provides the framework and policy-level details for the identification of VTrans Mid-term Needs.
- The [Technical Guide for the Identification and Prioritization of the Mid-term Needs](#) documents data sources, methods and processes for the identification of VTrans Mid-term Needs.



STEPS TO DESIGNATE, IDENTIFY NEEDS, AND MAINTAIN A UDA

<p>Our locality is interested in establishing a UDA, where do we start?</p>	<p>Step 1: Establish desire to promote transportation efficient land use and promote walkable, bikeable mixed-use places in the locality.</p> <p>Step 2: Identify areas with potential growth and development consistent with Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1.</p>
<p>Once we have identified potential areas, how do we make them official UDAs?</p>	<p>Step 3: The local governing body adopts an amended comprehensive plan or new comprehensive plan that identifies locally-designated growth areas (with specific, identified boundaries) that are consistent with the intent of Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1. and incorporate principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND).</p>
<p>How, when and to whom should the designation action be communicated to ensure our UDAs are considered in Virginia’s transportation planning and programming processes?</p>	<p>Step 4: Upon adoption of the comprehensive plan, the locality submits the local governing board resolution and the amended future land use map (as required by the Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1. Section B.4) to the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI).</p> <p>Step 5: Coordinate with the OIPI to establish “Locality-identified transportation needs for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, circulation and access, safety, transit enhancements and access to locally designated UDAs” per the CTB policy.</p>
<p>What ongoing opportunities are available to advance planning studies and project development within our designated UDA areas?</p>	<p>Step 6: Consider applying to the OIPI Growth and Accessibility (GAP) Technical Assistance Program which provides support to eligible applicants under program Component #1 to “Conduct multimodal planning within existing or planned UDAs or Growth Areas”.</p> <p>Step 7: Submit project funding requests via SMART SCALE, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and/or other state, regional or local funding programs.</p>
<p>How do we maintain UDA designation?</p>	<p>Step 8: Reexamine the boundaries and size of each urban development area, and, if necessary, revise every five years in conjunction with the review of the comprehensive plan (as required by the Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1. Section B.4).</p>

Detailed UDA Designation requirements per §15.2-2223.1

The table below outlines key components of Code of Virginia [§ 15.2-2223.1](#) including voluntary (“may”) sections and required (“shall”) sections for which local jurisdictions intending to designate a UDA must comply.

VOLUNTARY/ REQUIRED	CODE	REQUIREMENT
Voluntary	B.1	Urban development areas are areas that may be appropriate for development at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a density on the developable acreage of at least four single-family residences, six townhouses, or 12 apartments, condominium units, or cooperative units per acre, and • an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.4 per acre for commercial development, any proportional combination thereof, or any other combination or arrangement that is adopted by a locality in meeting the intent of this section.
Voluntary	B.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The urban development areas designated by a locality may be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 20 years, which may include phasing of development within the urban development areas. • Where an urban development area in a county with the urban county executive form of government includes planned or existing rail transit, the planning horizon may be for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 40 years.
Required	B.3	The boundaries and size of each urban development area shall be reexamined and, if necessary, revised every five years in conjunction with the review of the comprehensive plan and in accordance with the most recent available population growth estimates and projections.
Required	B.4	The boundaries of each urban development area shall be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified in the locality’s comprehensive plan; and, • shown on future land use maps contained in such comprehensive plan.
Required	B.5	Urban development areas, if designated, shall incorporate principles of TND, which may include but need not be limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. pedestrian-friendly road design, ii. interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, iii. connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, iv. preservation of natural areas, v. mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, vi. reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and vii. reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.