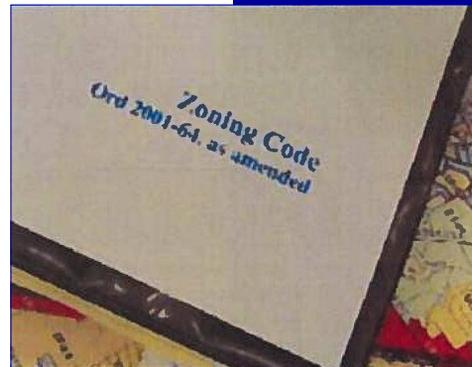


FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION

**How well
do your community's
development regulations
foster
prosperity,
livability,
sustainability,
and mobility for all?**



GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

September 2011

Communities in our region work very hard to meet the needs of their residents. Their central focus is the quality of the places in which we live: safe, appealing, affordable neighborhoods; convenient access to needed services; opportunities to participate in the regional economy; protection of natural resources, especially farmland and waterways; and preservation of what makes so many places in our region special — attractive buildings, scenic views, open spaces, historic districts, working landscapes, and cultural landmarks.

The main tools communities have to ensure quality in a purposeful way are master plans, zoning ordinances, municipal bylaws, and subdivision regulations. But demographic shifts, an environmental ethic now focused on sustainability, and increased fiscal concerns are creating both new demands and new opportunities for communities.

In light of these changes, it's reasonable to ask: How well does your community foster prosperity, sustainability, livability, and mobility for all?

This document is intended to help residents, policymakers, and other stakeholders evaluate the effectiveness of their community's development regulations.



Transportation Lens

Transportation decisions are at the center of economic, demographic, and environmental change, and therefore have a major impact on a community's quality of life.

Transportation investments are usually the biggest capital investments a municipality will make. They are also among the most visible. The condition and appearance of streets and sidewalks, for example, go a long way to defining not only how we get around in a community but also how we feel about a community.

Transportation costs are also the second biggest household expense, after housing, consuming nearly a fifth of the typical family budget. Providing a broader (and cheaper) mix of transportation choices to key destinations — walking, cycling, using a wheelchair or mobility scooter, in-line skating, or skateboarding — can allow residents to live affordably in the same community throughout their lives.

Traffic safety, air pollution, water quality, preservation of environmental and cultural assets, and recreational opportunities are among the other important quality of life factors affected by transportation decisions.

In other words, the choices we make at the local level regarding transportation can determine how adaptable, resilient, and responsive our communities are to a wide spectrum of change such as the growth of senior citizens and the rise in energy prices.

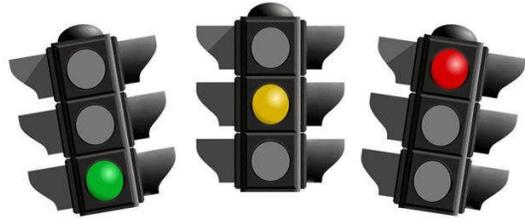
Transportation thus becomes a powerful lens for evaluating our communities' policies and practices.

Genesee Transportation Council

The Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) is a federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization. As such, it is responsible for transportation policy, planning, and investment decision making in the nine-county Genesee-Finger Lakes Region.

In the past 10 years, GTC has funded over 100 plans and studies in almost as many municipalities throughout the region. We have a keen appreciation of the region's wide range of land values, growth rates, topography, amenities, development practices, and municipal administrative practices.

This self-evaluation should not be interpreted as an assessment of whether or not an individual community, or the region as a whole, has appropriate development regulations. Rather, it is a tool to help communities decide for themselves which planning and regulatory solutions best meet their needs.



Let's begin...

Providing Alternatives to the Car

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities can improve access to services for the one-third of the region's population that is too old, too young, or too poor to drive or even own a car. Walking and bicycling can also improve health and fitness and lower transportation expenses for everyone.

Do your community's regulations require sidewalks? Are there design standards for sidewalks?

- Yes, for street infrastructure enhancements.
- Yes, for residential development and redevelopment.
- Yes, for commercial development and redevelopment.
- No, there are limited or no requirements or standards for sidewalks.

Does your community require bicycle parking for new or redeveloped commercial projects?

- Yes.
- No.

Are there designated or established safe routes for children to walk or bike to school?

- Yes, established safe routes can be found in all parts of the community, and that includes accessible and readily visible means of crossing busy streets and roads.
- Yes, safe bike paths and routes are encouraged or required throughout the community in accordance with a bicycle master plan or active transportation plan.
- No, the municipality is aware of the safe routes to school concept but has not established any.
- No, there are no established safe routes to school.

Safety and Connectivity

Developers are correct when they argue that sidewalks alone will not induce walking. Sidewalks will see limited use if they are broken, interrupted by cars pulling in or out of driveways, or lead to dead ends or busy streets that are difficult to cross.

Do your community's sidewalk ordinances address maintenance responsibilities?

- Yes.
- Yes, but provisions are not always enforced.
- No.

- Yes.
- Yes, but cul-de-sacs are allowed.
- No.

Do regulations require the connection of new streets to existing streets, adjacent neighborhoods, and community amenities?

- Yes, via streets.
- Yes, via sidewalks or multi-use trails.
- No.

Do regulations require that new or redeveloped commercial areas have designated pedestrian walkways through parking lots?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations require the stubbing of streets for connectivity to future development?

- Does your community require new or redeveloped commercial or residential developments to limit the number of driveways that open onto major streets and roads?**
- Yes.
 - No.

Do regulations require inter-parcel connections between individual developments, as compatible?

- Yes, throughout the community.
- Yes, on main commercial roads only.
- No, shared access easements or agreements are required, but not connections.
- No.

Does your community have an access management program to limit curb cuts, reduce left turn movements, build median islands, group commercial parking lot entrances, and generally improve safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations require the installation of traffic islands or medians on new or reconstructed roads wider than 60 feet to provide refuge for pedestrians?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations require marked and/or raised crosswalks with additional pedestrian treatments such as pedestrian signals, median islands, lead-time pedestrian signals or visibility enhancements such as flashing lights?

- Yes, at all intersections close to schools.
- Yes, at all major intersections.
- No.

Are dogs required to be on leashes or in fenced-in yards?

- Yes, we have an ordinance and it is enforced.
- Yes, we have an ordinance but it is generally not enforced.
- No, we have no ordinance.

Does your community have a transportation plan to increase mobility options for residents and visitors?

- Yes, and it envisions a network of sidewalks and bike paths and includes a transit element.
- Yes, but it has no transit element.
- No, a transportation plan has not been adopted.

Destinations

For walking and biking to become more than recreational activities, people also need places to which they can conveniently walk or bike to meet some of their daily needs. Or perhaps they can drive to one location, park, and walk to several destinations, rather than take multiple individual trips by car. Or take a bus to a destination center. This usually means allowing different uses — retail, residential, offices — closer to one another in at least some parts of the community.

Do your community's regulations contain at least one district where residential, commercial, and office uses are permitted side-by-side, in close proximity, or in the same building?

- Yes, by right.
- Yes, but only conditionally or through a mixed-use PUD.
- No, our zoning is single-use.

Do regulations allow for compatible, small-scale neighborhood commercial uses, such as corner stores, adjacent to or within residential neighborhoods?

- Yes.
- Yes, within designated districts.
- No.

Are residential uses permitted in your community's downtown?

- Yes.
- No.

Are live/work units permitted by right in at least one district?

- Yes.
- No.



Mixed-use districts increase community vitality and convenience, offer residents of all ages opportunities to meet some of their daily needs by walking or biking, and fully utilize public infrastructure. On the other hand, it may be difficult to achieve the level of retail traffic needed to make mixed-use viable, and thus financial institutions may be reluctant to finance mixed-use.

Are your community's home occupations regulations flexible enough to allow a wide variety of money-making activities while maintaining neighborhood character and tranquility?

- Yes, throughout the community.
- Yes, in certain residential districts.
- No, our current regulations are out-of-date.
- No, we have no home occupations regulations.

Do your community's regulations allow Planned Unit Development (PUD)?

- Yes, and they provide for appropriate mixed-use.
- Yes, but they are limited to residential development.
- Yes, but they result in primarily single-family development.
- No.

Parking

Cars will be the dominant form of transportation in our region for many years to come. But that doesn't mean that parking lots have to inhibit walkability, be unsightly, or consume excessive amounts of land that could better serve the community in other ways.

In addition to minimum parking standards, does your community:

Require reduced parking minimums for certain uses, such as retail and commercial?

- Yes.
- No.

Allow flexible arrangements, such as shared parking, to meet the minimum parking standards?

- Yes.
- No.

Require maximum parking standards, such as capping the number of parking spaces that can be built in a particular development?

- Yes.
- No.

Are small retailers (<3,000 sf GFA ±) exempt from off-street parking requirements?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations provide for reductions in parking spaces on sites where public busses are available?

- Yes.
- No.

Is on-street allowed where it can be safely provided?

- Yes.
- No.

Do your community's regulations allow new or redeveloped commercial areas to place parking behind the building or on the streets?

- Yes, our regulations require this.
- Yes, our regulations allow this.
- No, our regulations require parking between the street and the front of the building.



Community Health and Stability: Housing

Imagine if your community could retain all of its residents. Imagine if families, seniors, and young adults didn't move to another municipality because they couldn't find the "right" house or apartment. The community's property tax base would likely grow, and its future would be secure. Many factors enter into a person's or family's decision about whether or not to stay in a community, but none are as basic as housing and transportation. People need options for both to meet their changing needs at different stages in their lives.

Do your community's regulations allow a mix of housing opportunities (multi-family, single-family, duplex, manufactured housing, etc.) in at least one residential district?

- Yes, by right.
- Yes, by conditional permit.
- No.

Do regulations allow for accessory apartments (i.e., granny flats, in-law units) within single-family areas?

- Yes, by right.
- Yes, by conditional permit.
- No.

Do regulations include at least one higher-density residential district (>8-12 du/ac)?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations include smaller minimum lot sizes (6,000 sf ±) for detached single-family homes in at least one district?

- Yes.
- No.

Have your community's regulations eliminated (or reduced to <1000 sf) minimum floor area requirements for residential districts?

- Yes.
- No.

Do your community's regulations state permitted residential densities independent of minimum lot sizes?

- Yes, density standards are specified for each district. Land required per dwelling unit is used to express maximum densities.
- Yes, but for special districts like downtown and waterfronts only.
- No, minimum lot sizes are used to determine the density of development.

In rural areas, do your community's regulations provide for "cluster subdivisions" (also know as conservation subdivisions)?

- Yes, as a matter of right.
- Yes, with a conditional use permit.
- No.

What densities of development are permitted on farmlands in your community (low density = >25 acres)?

- Low densities, with provisions for small lots to protect farmland.
- Low densities, with sliding scale provisions that limit the number of times a parcel can be split.
- Low densities, but without provisions for small lots or higher densities.
- Medium to high densities, with no provisions to protect farmland.

Providing a range of housing choices allows everyone to find a comfortable place in a community, whether first time homebuyers, elderly residents who have lived in the community their entire lives, young professionals, or families with young children.

Do regulations specify minimum open space ratios in new developments?

- New developments must provide open spaces and connections to existing destinations and adjacent open spaces.
- Open space is required, but connections are not.
- Open space is an option in at least one district.
- There are no provisions for open space in new developments.



Large lot zoning does not protect the local agricultural industry. Large lots along rural roads are frequently developed, road improvements are made, and land is slowly converted to single lot development or minor subdivision development. Eventually, wholesale zoning changes are requested, and the agricultural component of the landscape gets diminished.

Community Health and Stability: Community Character

The appearance of streets, sidewalks, and parking lots, and the way buildings relate to these transportation facilities, go a long way to defining a community's character or "sense of place". Communities with high-quality streetscapes that are visually attractive and functionally cohesive create a sense of civic pride. They hold their value over time and encourage continual reinvestment. Many features of a municipal code, including the way developments are reviewed, can contribute to a sense of place.

Do your community's regulations require site plan review?

- Yes.
- No.

Are design standards in place for reviewing new developments or redevelopments?

- Yes.
- No.

Are landscape plans required for new developments or redevelopments?

- Yes.
- No.

Is parkland required to be dedicated (or a fee in lieu of dedication) for new developments?

- Yes.
- No.

Do your community's regulations provide for traditional neighborhood development?

- Yes.
- No.

Are street trees required for new developments and redevelopments (along roads and within parking lots)?

- Yes.
- No.

Do the downtown or main commercial district regulations:

Require zero lot-line front building setbacks?

- Yes.
- No.

Require parking to be in the rear of the principal building?

- Yes.
- No.

Prohibit drive-through facilities (or allow by conditional permit)?

- Yes.
- No.

Require first floor retail?

- Yes.
- No.

Require windows on street-facing building facades?

- Yes.
- No.

Does your community regulate commercial signs for number, size, placement, and quality?

- Yes.
- No.



Should your municipality respond only to basic housing and commercial needs, or also help create a community that is distinctive and unique?

Do regulations protect steep slopes (>15%), large woodlots, water courses, wetlands, and coastlines?

- Yes.
- No.

Do regulations require best management practices for water quality?

- Yes.
- No.

Are density bonuses or other regulatory incentives offered for public amenities in projects (artwork, bike ways, public open space, youth recreational facilities, etc.)?

- Yes.
- No.



Development Process

Development regulations, particularly those that enable transportation options, best serve a community when they are easily understood by administrators, the public, and developers.

Have your community's development approval and permitting processes been comprehensively reviewed to identify opportunities for eliminating duplication, unfairness, and excessive, unnecessary, and overly-time-consuming requirements?

- Yes, and reforms have been made.
- Yes, and reforms are contemplated.
- No.

Does your community have a guidebook for developers and applicants to explain the local regulatory process?

- Yes, there is an up-to-date guidebook.
- No, but general guidance documents are available.
- No, only verbal guidance is routinely available.

About GTC

The Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) guides transportation planning in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, which includes Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates Counties.

By federal law, every urbanized area of the country with over 50,000 people must have a formal planning organization for transportation. The Genesee Transportation Council fills that role in our region.

GTC is authorized to conduct transportation planning and oversee transportation investment.

The Genesee Transportation Council assures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, disability, age, gender, or income status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity.

GTC further assures every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether or not those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

Contact GTC

If you have any questions about this document or require information on transportation in our region, please contact the Genesee Transportation Council:

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GTC RESOURCES

The following resources of the Genesee Transportation Council are available to policymakers, planners, researchers, and anyone with an interest in the region's transportation system.

PLANS AND STUDIES

Transportation plans and studies funded by GTC are available for reference or download at www.gtcmpo.org/Docs/PlansStudies.htm.

SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

GTC staff maintains a large database of information from the U.S. Census Bureau, NYSDOT, RGRTA, and other sources. Popular transportation-related tables for the region include population, income, commuting patterns, travel time to work, commuting modes (foot, car, carpool, bus, bike), vehicle ownership, major trip generators, and land use.

ROAD/TRAFFIC DATA

GTC collects data for highways and roads throughout the region, including traffic counts, speed data, pavement conditions, and accident history.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

GTC staff can provide GIS data layers, such as rail lines, public transit routes, multi-use trails, ITS network, truck routes, TIP projects, and environmental justice. A data layer can be used as a stand-alone GIS database/map or as a component in creating one.

MAP CENTER

GTC has created maps related to the region's transportation system that can be downloaded at www.gtcmpo.org/Resources/MapCenter.htm.