

Design Features

Transportation needs in rural areas present unique opportunities to think creatively about how residents get around. Programs and infrastructure that support vehicle pools or park-and-ride programs may be one way to address travel needs for those without access to a personal vehicle.



2011 Debbie Henry, The TMA Group

Policies

While understanding healthy design features are important, implementing policies that promote these features is just as important. Below are some policy recommendations to encourage healthy design in the Rural transect.

- 1. Land use easements between local governments and residents reduce land acquisition fees for public amenities, while reducing individual property taxes on the land included in the easement. Likewise, partnerships between a local government and preservation organizations like the Land Trust for Tennessee protects designated land from development, while providing tax benefits to private land owners.
- 2. Relaxing or removing strictures and/or taxes on farmers markets and farm stands incentivizes local farmers to pursue pop up markets, which has also been proven to positively affect surrounding retail sales in addition to increasing access to healthy foods.
- 3. Consider existing land use policies, and how they promote or deter health promoting design. Updating or creating new policies that require features such as sidewalks, building preservation, or public spaces promotes more livable and connected communities.

HEALTHY DESIGN IN TENNESSEE

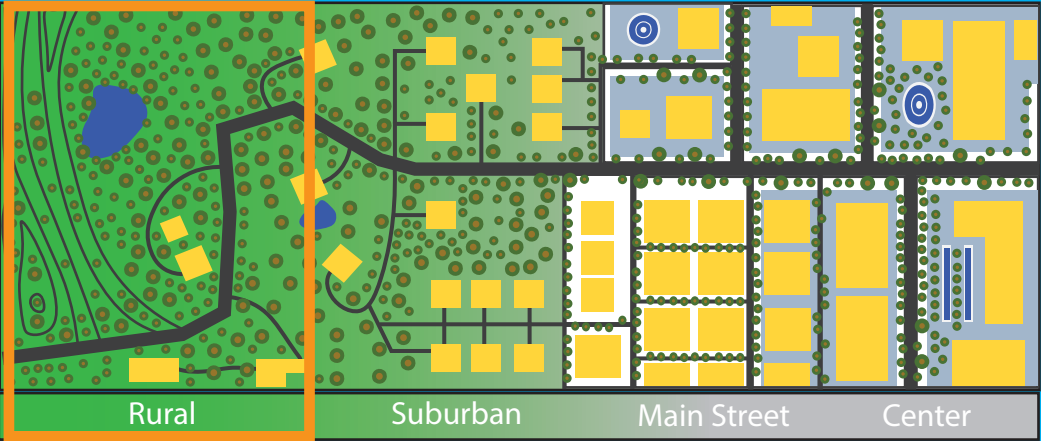
What is a Transect?

The transect model of city planning defines a community by a series of “zones”, each with its own unique features and design. The full transect model contains seven zones, ranging from natural undeveloped land, to dense urbaan cores. The transect model has been partially adapted for this series to show health promoting design in Tennessee’s non-urban contexts.

Why Study Transects?

The transect model provides a common, united language in which to talk about land use and planning practices. Using this language, communities can create clearer outlines for their growth while specifying context specific design, density, and connectivity. If done mindfully these features produce healthy and more vibrant communities for all residents.

Series 1: Rural



As opposed to traditional rural development (above), conservation development (right) clusters development into smaller, walkable areas. This style reduces sprawl and construction costs, while preserving the natural features that define the rural transect. Conservation development should however be balanced with potential needs for increased public utilities and services.



2003 Metro Nashville Planning Dept.



The mission of the Nashville Civic Design Center is to elevate the quality of Nashville's built environment and to promote public participation in the creation of a more beautiful and functional city for all.



The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee.

To see more case study, visit the TN Department of Health's list of [Case Studies](#).

Rural Transect

The rural transect is marked by relatively sparse development, limited commercial presence, and any pockets of density usually being found around major intersections. Roadways are often two lanes with little bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Residential areas are usually comprised of single family houses with wide open spaces between them, natural landscapes, and minimal city services.

Transportation

Due to general lack of proximity between amenities, schools, and workplaces, rural transportation should incorporate transit programs such as park and ride, vehicle pools, and senior shuttles. Gathering places for these ride share programs can be placed around existing business and/or retail centers. In areas with commercial presence, complete streets and pedestrian street crossings may be a viable option for connectivity.

Food Resources

Unlike other transects, rural areas generally have greater access to food producers. As a result, farmers markets and pop up stores can subsidize the often long travel distance to traditional food stores. Likewise, the typically larger residential lots offer opportunities for family or personal gardens. For existing food stores, communities should prioritize connectivity to residential areas while directing future development within easily traveled distances from these stores and local production. New food stores should be guided towards locations with a reasonably short travel distance from concentrated residential areas, and any existing commercial districts.

Design Features

Corner stores, like this one in Leipers Fork, can be preserved and emphasized as local "center". Creating adequate pedestrian infrastructure between these places and nearby residential areas reduces parking needs while promoting physical activity and social interactions.



2012 Brian Phelps and Chris Whitis

2008 Metro Nashville Planning Dept.



Pedestrian paths and sidewalks provide safe connectivity options that promote physical activity and community access.



2013 Nashville Civic Design Center

Open Spaces and Parks

The rural transect contains an abundance of open space, but may not contain easily accessible gathering places for a community. Rural parks, fields, or trails should therefore be located in proximity to community, civic, or business centers, and be connected to residential areas.

Walkability

Rural walkability should prioritize multi-use and safe pedestrian infrastructure around and between amenities and services, and especially along main thoroughfares. More natural areas such as state parks offer opportunities to create and leverage trail and path connectivity.

Housing

Healthy rural transects should offer a diversity of housing that provides attainable options for all stages of life and incomes. Areas of more concentrated housing should avoid sprawl through ensuring smaller housing lots - a practice known as conservation development. This style of development preserves existing open spaces and rural character.

Neighborhood Design

Neighborhoods in the rural transect should pursue community designs which strengthen their unique identity - an idea known as placemaking. This design process should consciously integrate and conserve natural places, protect corner stores and historic buildings, and promote access between existing and future amenities. Likewise, existing corner stores should be preserved and leveraged as neighborhood centers.