

# The Official Map FACT SHEET

for Local Officials

## What is an Official Map?

An “official map” is a combined map and ordinance designed to implement the goals and community vision set forth in the comprehensive plan. The official map shows the locations of planned future public lands and facilities such as transportation, recreational parks and trails, and open space. The official map expresses a municipality’s interest in acquiring these lands for public purposes sometime in the future. Official maps can be used by townships, boroughs, cities, and counties. The official map is not to be mistaken for the official zoning map of a municipality.

## What are the Benefits?

- The official map can help focus limited financial resources on projects that meet and advance community goals.
- The official map helps municipalities make improvements such as connecting and improving the local street network, intersection improvements, protecting important natural areas, and providing more green space, recreation facilities, trails, and sidewalks.
- The official map saves time and money by informing property owners and developers of municipal goals and intentions in advance of development plans.
- The official map is an effective negotiation tool for municipalities, helping to ensure that development is compatible with and supportive of public goals.
- The official map supports other land use management tools (zoning, subdivision/land development, etc.) by advancing the implementation of infrastructure and public spaces.
- The official map gives municipalities a competitive advantage in securing grants.

## What are the Basics of Official Maps?

- A municipality should have an adopted comprehensive plan if they choose to adopt an official map.
- Official maps can cover the entire municipality or only a portion.
- The typical cost to develop an official map and ordinance is \$5,000-\$6,000.
- The governing body is required to provide a 45-day review period and one public hearing (at minimum) prior to adoption.
- Once a property owner or developer notifies a municipality of their intention to build, subdivide, or perform other work on land that is located on an official map, the municipality has up to a year to confirm its acquisition interest and negotiate to acquire the land.
- Acquisition can take the form of dedication by owner, purchase of land or easement by the municipality, negotiations with owner/developer to make desired improvements, or eminent domain (although rare), if the municipality chooses.
- Approximately 64 of Pennsylvania’s municipalities, and one county, have an official map. This handbook aims to reduce misunderstandings and misinformation that may have deterred others from achieving the successes made possible by the official map.
- Public outreach and education is key to a successful official map development, adoption, and implementation process.

*Municipalities and counties are authorized by Article IV of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) to develop and implement official maps. Official maps may include, but are not limited to:*

- *Existing and proposed public streets, watercourses, and public grounds, including widening, narrowing, extensions, diminutions, openings, or closings.*
- *Existing and proposed public parks, playgrounds, and open space reservations.*
- *Pedestrian ways and easements.*
- *Railroad and transit right-of-way and easements.*
- *Flood control basins, floodways and flood plains, storm water management areas, and drainage easements.*
- *Support facilities, easements, and other properties held by public bodies undertaking the elements of a comprehensive plan.*