

Although it was felt that this was the only pragmatic method for arriving at non-residential build-out, there were three main challenges with this method.

1. The Land Use Monitoring Reports only cover a five year period with any degree of comprehensiveness, meaning that trends are based on a short time span
2. Even in those five years, with the most complete response rate ever to the Land Use Monitoring Report survey, many municipalities still do not return the survey or return it incomplete (i.e. simply giving the total number of permits issues and not breaking them down by type or square footage in any way.)
3. Within those short five years, huge changes were seen from year to year in many municipalities. A given town might have 100,000 square feet of commercial growth one year, and zero the next.

Despite these issues, it was felt this was the only practical method to proceed with the commercial and industrial build out. Because of the base data issues, the annual average growth rates for commercial and industrial development were reduced significantly. Even with this conservative forecast, many municipalities still show extremely long build out time frames for commercial and industrial development. This suggests places tend to be “over zoned” for this type of development.

6. Analysis and Conclusions

Based on this analysis, it appears that many municipalities have excess zoning capacity. Many are legally zoned for thousands of residences and hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial and industrial space. This level of development may not be what the community truly desires for its future.

Communities may want to consider changes to their zoning based on the following:

- Likely growth scenarios (many communities are extremely optimistic with their zoning given current development trends)
- Optimal siting of specific land uses with consideration of constraints, transportation, infrastructure, commercial district viability, fiscal impacts of land use, and impacts on adjacent land uses (including those in nearby municipalities)
- Density requirements, especially in areas served by water and sewer where higher densities should be encouraged
- Promoting walking, bicycling, and transit use through appropriate setbacks, parking requirements, building placement, density, and mix of uses.
- Stormwater and drainage management

In recent years, many communities have rejected the view that growth and development is an unmitigated good. More and more municipalities realize that while growth does add to the tax base, it can also impose costs, financial and otherwise, on the community. Therefore, it is recommended that communities perform a buildout and fiscal impact analysis as part of their comprehensive planning process.

There is a crucial need for better and more uniform land use data. This includes, at a minimum, digital real property parcels on a county-wide level and digital floodplain maps at a county-wide level. An additional, and beneficial, level of data would be to link the land use regulation (i.e. zoning) with the parcel of property. Currently, in the majority of cases, even those with

digital zoning and digital real property parcels, there is no link between the land and the regulations governing that piece of land.