

Build-Out Analysis and Land Use Planning in Vineland (Cumberland)

An ANJEC Smart Growth Planning Grant Project

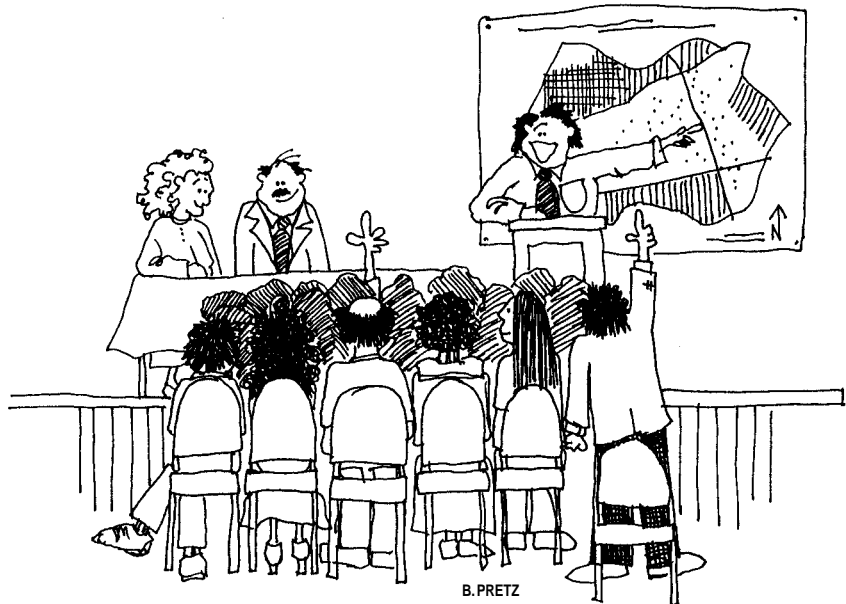
By Kerry Miller, ANJEC Assistant Director

Even the most ratable-hungry municipalities in New Jersey are becoming wary of sprawl, overdevelopment and the problems they bring. Land use planners and local boards and officials are on the hot seat, doing their best to balance their communities' need for property tax sources, housing and jobs with the need to protect natural resources, open spaces and quality of life. They soon realize the essentiality of a clear picture of "what is" to developing a satisfactory blueprint for change. In land use planning, build-out analysis is an examination of the existing zone plan.

A build-out analysis is an important planning tool. It yields a calculation of the total number of additional residential units and square feet of commercial and other resulting uses when all the zoning-permitted development is in place. With these calculations, the analysis can further show the number of additional people and impacts on natural resources, infrastructure and the demand for municipal services. A real eye-opener!

Addressing Future Sprawl-Development

In 2005-06, the City of Vineland used a matching grant from ANJEC's Smart Growth Planning Grant Program along with partial funding from the Landis Sewerage Authority to commission a build-out analysis by T&M Associates. New Jersey's largest city area, Vineland covers 69 square miles in Cumberland County. It has a population



of about 60,000 and a full range of land uses from urban to agricultural. A significant portion of the land is undeveloped or farmland and the sewer service area covers the entire municipality. This means that in the future, sewers could serve all Vineland areas.

The Planning Board and Environmental Commission knew that their town, with its vast sewer service area and current zoning scheme, was a prime target for sprawl-type development. The 1996 amendments to the zoning ordinance had downzoned (that is, required larger lots for each unit), but this would not protect the town from wall-to-wall residential development and the loss of agriculture as a "big business" industry in

Vineland. They sought a build-out analysis to inform a public process of master plan revisions that would help Vineland retain its rural character and avoid overtaxing its water and sewer resources.

Build-Out Analysis

Richard Cramer, of T&M Associates, proposed a comprehensive build-out analysis to

- Evaluate vacant and underutilized (subdividable) land;
- Subtract approved lots and undevelopable land due to environmental constraints, easements or permanent preservation;
- Determine the total number of additional units that could be

built in the municipality under current zoning.

From that information, Mr. Cramer proposed to calculate the resulting additional impervious cover, demand for sewer treatment and potable water, total loss of agricultural land, and additional affordable housing obligations that existing zoning would generate. To compare potential impacts, he also proposed to perform the same analysis on two alternative zoning scenarios.

Public participation and input was a prominent feature of this aggressive planning effort. The city planning staff understood the importance of educating the public, elected officials and board members about the issues involved to dispel misconceptions, get feedback and develop the best possible plan that residents would support. With an ad hoc Master Plan committee they developed an outreach plan that included

- Regular newspaper coverage;
- A compelling involvement flyer for residents;

- Meeting notices in electric bills;
- Local cable coverage of interactive public meetings (accepted phone calls and e-mails during meetings); and
- Information posted on the city's website.

A high number of residents turned out at public input sessions and hearings since they were anxious both to avoid big developments and preserve agricultural uses.


T&M's build-out analysis showed that, under current zoning, Vineland would face major additions including approximately

- 11,000 residential units;
- 8,000,000 square feet of commercial constructions; and
- 3,000,000 square feet of industrial constructions.

These increases would double the municipality's impervious surface, exceeding 25 percent of the land in five of the town's 14 watersheds. As a result, they would exceed the capacity of the existing wastewater treatment plant and Vineland's permitted water

withdrawals from the Cohansey-Kirkwood Aquifer.

Proposed Planning Changes

Based on these findings and the public's reaction to them, the Planning Board proposed significant changes to Vineland's Master Plan, resulting in 4,100 fewer new residential units. The city's stormwater management plan and the wastewater management plan being developed by the Landis Sewerage Authority will also incorporate the build-out analysis data. 

ANJEC 2007 Smart Growth Planning Grants for NJ Municipalities and Counties

ANJEC has received funding from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation to continue the Smart Growth Planning Assistance Grant Program in 2007. This program offers matching grants up to \$20,000 each to towns and counties with environmental commissions for land use planning projects that protect natural resources, open space and quality of life. This is the first year counties with environmental commissions are eligible to apply for ANJEC's Smart Growth grants.

The grants are suitable for a variety of planning tasks, for example

- Environmental/Natural Resource Inventories;
- Open Space Plans,
- Capacity studies,
- Master Plan and zoning revisions,
- Bike/pedestrian or trails plans,
- Brownfields inventories,
- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)/green building ordinances.



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Since 2002, the program has contributed over \$900,000 to support 112 projects throughout New Jersey.

ANJEC mailed application packets to municipalities and counties in mid-January 2007 and posted the documents on ANJEC's website, www.anjec.org. For additional information contact ANJEC at 973-539-7547.

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