Rethinking Development: A Built-out Analysis of the Town of Norfolk, MA

**WHAT IS A BUILT-OUT ANALYSIS?**

A built-out analysis is a useful tool for estimating and illustrating the amount and possible location of future development under the current zoning and development regulations. It is undertaken to further a community’s awareness of existing growing patterns and potential future growth. Built-out Analysis is a Policy making Tool. People choose to make an investment in the community with the purchase of their home often because of reasons such as quality of life, access to amenities, scenic views, recreational opportunities and proximity to employment. Outdated Zoning regulations can hinder such development of factors that pull new residents into a community.

By making the analysis publically available for communities to give feedback on, planners and policy makers can make decisions concerning how to further the development of the city. This can help decide further on whether to alter the existing zoning regulations or continue to develop with the same. It also helps municipalities predict and estimate future demands on public infrastructure needs, such as roads, schools, sewage, utilities, waste disposal, as well as tax revenues that can be gained.

This can help give direction to future development taking in consideration the needs of the communities and planning this development in a way it caters to those needs. Once the planners, city officials, and residents are informed with the facts, they can then determine whether or not existing zoning regulations should be changed for further development or not. For development to happen under control, it is thus necessary to produce a framework that is in accordance with the needs of the community. This also helps prevent developer controlled development and sprawling development and gives us an opportunity to rethink zoning considering the present necessities and requirements of the city.

**Site Description:**

Norfolk is a town in Norfolk County, Massachusetts, United States with a population of 11,227 people. It is located in the Charles River Watershed Area, in eastern Massachusetts, bordered by Millis and Medfield on the north, Walpole on the East. It is about 20 miles southwest of Boston. The town has experienced significant population growth in the recent years which has placed significant stress on the Town’s resources and ability to maintain services to support its growth.

**Key Questions:**

1) How much land can be developed under the current zoning regulations?
2) What is the type of development that can occur on the remaining developable land in the City of Norfolk?

**METHODOLOGY**

The analysis was carried out using relevant geospatial data like the existing land use, the zoning data, building parcels data, hydrology, flood zones and road data. All the features that already exist and cannot be built on were first taken off the map of the city. They served as constraints and limiting factors to development and thus were taken off the map:

1. Open Spaces
2. Hydrology
3. Built parcels
4. Government buildings
5. Flood zones
6. Roads

Using the Erase tool, all the development constraints like man-made and natural development constraints were removed from the base map. This resulted in a map with all the sections that can be built on. The present zoning regulated map was overlaid on this built-out map, helping determine the existing zoning of the remaining land to be built-out. This helped determine the exact area left to be built for each type zoning.

**RESULTS**

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**BUILT-UP ANALYSIS**

There is a total of 1106.26 acres of land still left for development, as seen in the preliminary built-out analysis. A major portion of this area has been primarily residentially zoned (approx. 83%).

**References:**


**Data Sources:**

- Mass GIS

**Projector:** 1983 State Plane Massachusetts Mainland FIPS 2001, Meter