



## **Nashville, TN MSA**

*Regulatory Order/Family: Reform/Containment*

### *Summary*

Metropolitan Nashville, like Memphis, has the makings of a new growth management system. The jurisdictions in the region widely report urban growth boundaries (UGBs) that help them plan more orderly annexation, and most counties have regulations to recover some of the capital costs associated with new infrastructure development. But exclusionary zoning lingers in some cities and counties, and high-density zoning does not appear as generally acceptable as it appears to be in Memphis. Furthermore, only a minority of cities use fees or APFOs to recover infrastructure costs. Since Tennessee's UGB requirement was adopted recently, it will take time to learn the impacts of this combination of loose urban containment, inconsistent accommodation of high density, and weak recovery of infrastructure costs will mean for sprawl.

### *Governance Framework and Growth Trends*

About 1.2 million residents lived in the Nashville MSA in 2000, up 25 percent (250,000 residents) from 1990. The region has 45 cities, 7 counties, and the consolidated city/county of Nashville-Davidson, which accounts for almost 550,000 residents. The region has three other jurisdictions with over 50,000 residents—one city, Murfreesboro, and the unincorporated portions of two counties (Rutherford and Wilson). Another five counties and 11 cities have between 10,000 and 50,000 residents, and the balance of jurisdictions (33 cities) have fewer than 10,000 residents. Together, municipalities account for 77 percent of the population.

Like the other Tennessee and North Carolina metro areas in the survey, Nashville urbanized land much more rapidly than its population grew in the 1980s and 1990s. While population grew by about 31 percent between 1982 and 1997, urbanized land grew by a remarkable 87 percent—over 210,000 acres. That figure is greater than the land consumed in the Tampa metropolitan area, for example, even through Tampa grew by twice as many people as Nashville during this period. Consequently, Nashville's metropolitan density slid from 3.5 persons to 2.5 persons per urbanized acre, moving it from 37th to 47th densest metro area. Over 95 percent of the region's land area is privately owned.

### *Regulatory Environment*

We received responses from nine cities and five counties in Nashville, which together accounted for 80 percent of the population and just over 70 percent of the land area. Because we had very limited responses from small jurisdictions, we did not estimate the land use regulations for 33 jurisdictions under 10,000 residents, meaning that our metropolitan tallies do not account for about 220 square miles of land with around 85,000 residents in 2000.

Based on our results and estimates from both Memphis and Nashville, the Nashville metro area is entirely zoned. Exclusionary zoning is not uncommon, but neither does it prevail; about 12 percent of



cities, with 5 percent of the population and 7 percent of the land area, use low-density-only zoning that would preclude construction of our prototype apartment development. Counties are somewhat more likely to have low-density-only zoning, with an estimated 2 or 3 of the 7 counties restricting development to fewer than 8 dwellings per acre and perhaps four of the 7 barring construction of the prototype apartment development in unincorporated areas. In all, about half the metropolitan land area accounting for 17 percent of its population is in jurisdictions that would bar the hypothetical apartment complex. But the majority of the metro area's population (61 percent) lives in jurisdictions whose zoning permits densities to exceed 15 dwellings per acre, with half its cities and one of its counties being this accommodating.

Tennessee law requires the development of UGBs as components of city annexation plans. All seven of the cities with plans also claimed to have a UGB, as did all five county respondents. Two cities reported having neither plans nor UGBs. In addition, 36 percent of the cities and four or five of the counties are estimated to have impact fees. Only about 15 percent of the cities and one or two counties have an APFO. About 20 percent of the cities and counties have incentive based affordable housing programs.