Increases in the supply of buildable land by expanding growth boundaries overview

Some cities, towns, and counties establish growth boundaries and urban service areas to encourage efficient land use, protect and preserve rural areas or other sensitive environments, and reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions through land use patterns that facilitate walking, biking and public transit.

The boundary or perimeter of a service area delineates the zone within which development is encouraged and the municipality will provide public infrastructure and services such as schools, roads, and water and sewage. New development outside of the growth boundary or service area is possible, but discouraged by land use regulations and the difficulty of independently establishing critical infrastructure. Communities typically define these areas for a set period of time, after which they reevaluate the boundaries to determine if they are still appropriate. To respond to rising demand and avoid suppressing needed development, cities with growth boundaries or urban service areas can allow for the supply of housing to expand by ensuring the boundary lines and permissible density within the boundaries are adequate to efficiently accommodate new development.