



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC SERVICES BUILDING
2051 KAEN ROAD | OREGON CITY, OR 97045

November 10, 2015

Sent Via Email

The Honorable Tom Hughes, President
Members of the Metro Council
600 NE Grand Ave
Portland, OR 97209

Re: Metro Urban and Rural Reserve Remand

President Hughes and Members of the Metro Council:

We are writing to further explain Clackamas County's interests in partnering with Metro to revisit the location of reserve lands in connection with our joint action on remand. We ask that this letter be placed in the record of Metro's proceedings on the Metro Urban and Rural Reserves (MURR) Remand. There are three primary reasons for Clackamas County's interest.

First, as you well know, the matter is on remand from the Court of Appeals and the Land Conservation and Development Commission. The permissible scope of that remand is broad and invites a "resubmittal of the Metro Region urban and rural reserve designations." See Director's Order 14-ACK-001861 dated January 15, 2015. As a result, Metro and the Counties have an opportunity to modify reserve designations as part of that remand process.

In fact, modifications seem inevitable if Metro wishes to actually achieve the goals of SB 1011 and provide certainty along with a realistic 30 to 50-year land supply. Modifications are also inevitable if Metro seeks a balance in the designation of urban and rural reserves that, "in its entirety, best achieves livable communities, the viability and vitality of the agricultural and forest industries and protection of" natural resources, as required by OAR 660-027-0005(2).

Second, the facts on the ground have changed dramatically since the original reserves adoption, prompting the need for corresponding changes to reserve designations. We cannot pretend that those changes didn't happen, or allow the matter to be dismissed as simply a change in leadership.

For example, the adoption of House Bill 4078 legislatively incorporated 1,178 acres of designated urban reserves into the Urban Growth Boundary and converted approximately 2,016 acres of urban reserve areas to rural or undesignated, all in Washington County. As a result, as it currently stands, through no formal action by Metro and the Counties, there are approximately 3,194 fewer acres of urban reserves than Metro and the Counties designated in 2011. In addition, the Cities adjacent to the Stafford Urban Reserve have consistently expressed opposition to urbanization. Two of them successfully appealed the Urban Reserve designation. The Stafford Triangle is approximately 4200 acres.

Similarly, given the difficulties, and possible demise of the City of Damascus, the Boring Urban Reserve (4300 acres) is unlikely to provide a viable land supply. Even in the best-case scenario, Damascus is not likely to urbanize beyond 222nd, and there will be miles of undeveloped land between Damascus and Boring.

Collectively this means that over 11,000 acres of the original 28,000 acres Urban Reserves are either unavailable, or of limited usefulness. We believe it would be irresponsible to ignore this fact.

At a minimum, Metro and the Counties should determine whether this significant loss in urban reserve lands serves regional objectives. Additionally, a study by Business Oregon, Metro, the Port of Portland, and private organizations has identified a critical shortage of large-lot industrial lands in metropolitan Portland. Modified reserves designations could address this critical economic development issue.

Finally, Clackamas County has an obligation under Statewide Planning Goal ("Goal") 9 to provide an adequate land supply for economic development and employment growth within the County, including identifying the approximate number, acreage, and characteristics of sites needed to accommodate industrial and employment uses.

Based upon the County's recent planning work addressing employment land needs and the significant development constraints evident in our existing reserves, Clackamas County believes that the reserve designations adopted in 2011, as amended by House Bill 4078, are inadequate and cannot be adopted consistent with Goal 9. Clackamas County is short on land for the future, particularly employment land.

Accordingly, we are compelled to, and will, take the steps necessary to ensure that Clackamas County's interests are met before signing off on any reserves designations. That may be as simple as removing rural reserves designations in some areas to create a safety valve in the event that existing reserves prove inadequate.

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We invite Metro to join us to address the reserve designations in Clackamas County to ensure that the final and complete reserves decision will meet Clackamas County's, as well as the region's, planning and economic development needs for the next 50 years. This said, however, we want to reiterate that Clackamas County believes that a complete policy solution to these issues is necessary; and, accordingly, the County does not intend to limit its consideration solely to the Stafford area.

Sincerely,



John Ludlow, Chair

On behalf of the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners