

Metro guide

2015 growth management decision

What is this guide?

This guide explains the reasons behind the Metro Council's decision to not expand the urban growth boundary in 2015.

The region is changing.

How we change says a lot about what we value. The Metro Council's decision reflects changing trends in our population and economy, and makes a commitment to creating housing and job choices in places where we've already planned for growth, while protecting farms and forests at the region's edge.

When will Metro next consider the urban growth boundary?

The Metro Council plans to take another look at the urban growth boundary in 2018 – three years sooner than required under state law.



PREPARING FOR CHANGE

Holding the urban growth boundary

As the Portland region grows, how can we create housing and job opportunities that fit people's needs while protecting the farms and natural places that make this a great place to live? That's the purpose of the Portland region's urban growth boundary.

The urban growth boundary was first created in 1979. Every six years, state law requires Metro to assess whether there is a need for more land inside the boundary to make room for the next 20 years of housing and job growth. Since 1979, the Metro Council has expanded it by around 32,000 acres – an area the size of six Forest Parks or two Hillsboros.

In November 2015, the Metro Council decided unanimously to not expand the growth boundary for the first time. This completed a 2-year process with extensive public input and technical review of the analysis supporting the decision.

The Council's decision reflects communities' success around the region in planning for growth and supporting investment in vacant or neglected properties in downtowns and along major transportation routes. It also reflects changing needs of households in the region and ongoing challenges in producing housing and jobs in areas added to the boundary in the past.



Why the Metro Council decided not to expand the growth boundary in 2015

The Portland region is growing. But that growth looks different – which means our land needs do, too.

The region’s quality of life and strong economy will continue attracting people.

About 400,000 additional people are expected inside the regional boundary between 2015 and 2035. That’s more than currently live in Hillsboro, Gresham, Beaverton and Tigard, combined.

About two-thirds of the region’s population growth comes from migration, primarily from California and Washington.

By 2035, Metro expects about 195,000 more households – that is, one or more people living in a single house or apartment – in the region.

Most of this population growth is expected to occur in downtowns and along transit corridors around the region, with a large share within Portland’s city limits.

A changing population needs different kinds of housing.

Those new households will be smaller, older and have less spending power than our growth in the past. Sixty-eight percent will have one or two people. Fifty percent will be headed by someone 65 years or older. Sixty percent will have annual income of less than \$50,000.

More new housing will be apartments and condos, but most homes will still be single-family houses.

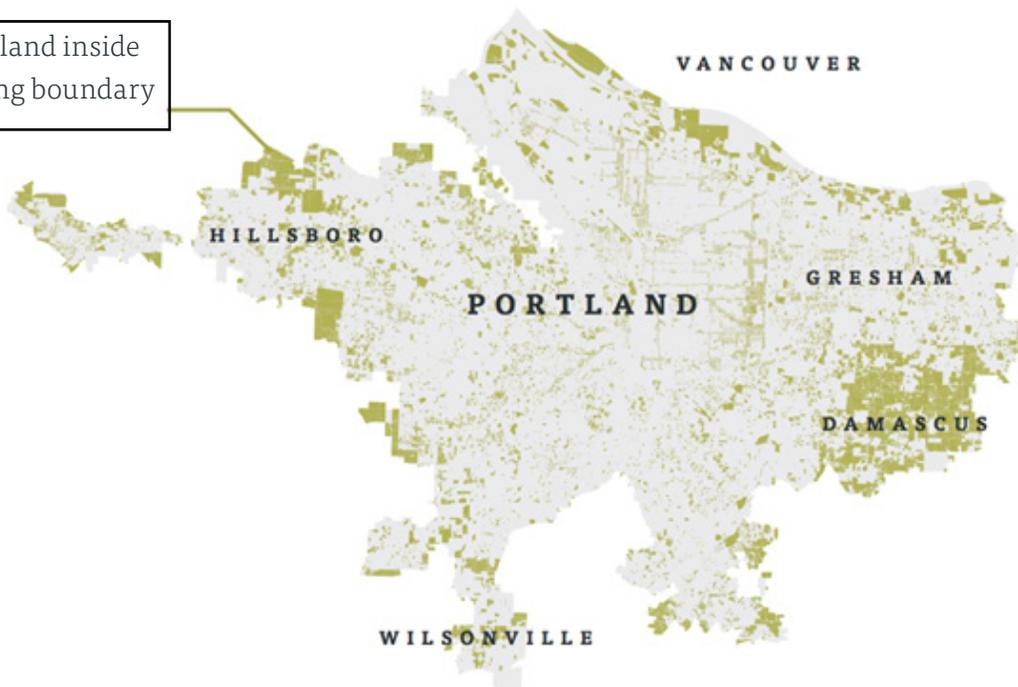
Today, most people in the Portland region live in single-family houses. About two-thirds of housing units in the region are single-family houses.

In 20 years, most people will still live in single-family houses, but the split will have shifted somewhat: Sixty percent of housing units will be single-family in 2035.

In short, we have enough land.

Existing city and county plans – and the amount of vacant or developable land already inside the boundary – provide more than enough room for all the new housing we expect to need over the next 20 years.

Buildable land inside the existing boundary



Job growth is expected to continue. Some fields will do especially well.

About 260,000 additional jobs are expected inside the regional boundary between 2015 and 2035.

Job growth is expected to be particularly strong in health care (18 percent of the new jobs), construction (11 percent of the new jobs) and professional services such as architecture, engineering and legal (9 percent of the new jobs).

The region is expected to maintain its historic strength in manufacturing, but this sector will only account for 1 percent of the new jobs.

There is enough room in the boundary for the jobs we expect.

There are thousands of acres of employment land, both vacant and redevelopable, already inside the boundary. There are 6,790 buildable industrial acres inside the boundary – that’s like 10 downtown Portlands.

There are also 3,750 buildable commercial acres –that’s like the retail area of 100 Washington Square malls.

Challenges to address

The Portland region is not exempt from many of the challenges cities and regions across the country are facing today, including many places that don’t have urban growth boundaries.

Even if the growth boundary expanded this year, these would still be challenges to address. Among them:

- How do we create and protect housing options that fit people’s budgets and preferences, while protecting qualities of existing neighborhoods?
- How do we build stable middle-income jobs and help more people have access to them?
- How do we pay for roads, pipes and basic infrastructure for new development, while also maintaining our existing infrastructure?
- How do we get more job land ready for development, clean up polluted sites, attract new employers and retain the employers already here?

In making its 2015 growth management decision, the Metro Council recognized these challenges and agreed to keep working with local governments, non-profits, businesses and the public to find solutions.

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy, and sustainable transportation and living choices for people and businesses in the region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges and opportunities that affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to providing services, operating venues and making decisions about how the region grows. Metro works with communities to support a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. Together we're making a great place, now and for generations to come.

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More information on the urban growth boundary can be found at oregonmetro.gov/ugb



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Next steps for managing our growth

A lot of attention gets paid to the decision about whether to expand the urban growth boundary. But it's just a small part of what local and regional leaders do to create housing and job opportunities for the residents of today and tomorrow. When making its growth management decision, the Metro Council also agreed to keep working with partners around the region on these vital efforts.

The Council also included these directions for Metro staff:

1. Take another look at the urban growth boundary in three years.
2. Continue working with Clackamas County and Multnomah County to finalize a 50-year plan for where we will grow if urban growth boundary expansions are needed, and get approval of that map from state regulators. (Washington County's portion of the map is already final.)
3. Work with partners to explore possible improvements to the region's growth management process.
4. Monitor and report on housing and job trends on an ongoing basis, including through regular Regional Snapshots, and work with regional partners to complete more research on housing preferences and needs.

Stay informed: Regional Snapshots

Everyone who lives in this region has a stake in its future. And the future can change quickly. Metro's new Regional Snapshots program tracks key issues like housing, jobs and transportation.

Every quarter explores a different topic, using infographics, interviews with experts and residents, and thought-provoking conversations and events.

Follow the stats and read personal stories of our changing region on Metro's Regional Snapshots. Visit oregonmetro.gov/snapshot.