Exploring possible improvements to the region's urban growth management process

Draft framework for discussions in 2016

Proposal for improvements to the region's residential urban growth management process

Acknowledgment of urban and rural reserves – when complete – will represent an important milestone for our region and can change the way we manage growth going forward. Unlike the past, we will have already decided where to grow for the next several decades. With the debate about the region's potential urban footprint settled, we could refocus dialogue on the ingredients needed to get housing built (including city governance, infrastructure finance and market feasibility). The Metro Council has indicated its willingness to explore alternative paths for regional consideration of modest (to be defined) UGB expansion requests for housing[1].

Proposed problem statement

Currently, the Metro Council is unable to act on city requests for small residential urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions unless there is a quantified 20-year regional need for more land. The Metro Council believes that there are other compelling reasons to consider modest expansions into urban reserves when there is a city that can govern and finance the area and that is also making progress on creating jobs and housing in target areas.

Core values and concepts guiding this process

The following core values and concepts frame the Metro Council's interests in policy discussions:

- Consistent with Oregon's land use planning program, locally-adopted community plans and the public's core values, cities and counties are planning for most housing growth to occur in existing downtowns, main streets, corridors and station communities.
- Carefully made residential UGB expansions into acknowledged urban reserves are another source of future growth, are consistent with the 2040 Growth Concept, and can support its implementation.
- Acknowledged urban reserves represent the maximum residential urban footprint for the region through the year 2060. Consistent with existing law, urban reserves will be revisited in 2031.
- Rural reserves will remain off limits to urban development through at least the year 2060.
- As previous growth management discussions illustrate, identifying a regional need for residential UGB expansions, as required under existing state law, includes both policy and technical elements.
- UGB expansion requests made by cities will be considered in a regional dialogue, with recommendations made by the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) and decisions made by the Metro Council.

[1] Under existing state law and Metro policies and code, Metro already has a fair amount of discretion regarding urban growth management decisions for employment uses, including a fast-track UGB expansion process for large industrial sites that the Council adopted in 2010.

- UGB expansions into urban reserves will be considered based on the practical outcomes that they could produce for the region and requesting city. Policymakers will consider factors addressing topics such as governance, finance, market, housing choice, affordability, and how to best achieve development in centers, corridors, main streets and station communities.
- Metro will continue to improve data and forecasting tools used for mandated growth analysis, design ways for those tools to better inform the planning process as it evolves, and meaningfully engage stakeholders in those technical efforts.

Proposed discussion topics

In its initial conversations about this concept, the Metro Council suggested consideration of the following topics, which can happen after agreement on the problem statement:

- Consider placing limits on:
    - The size of individual UGB expansion requests (to remain true to the purpose of this concept, providing an alternative path for "modest" UGB expansions).
    - The cumulative size of UGB expansions made over a to-be-defined planning period.
- Consider requiring that cities requesting UGB expansions demonstrate:
    - That governance, infrastructure finance, and market conditions will result in housing development in a requested UGB expansion area.
    - That the city has taken actions to increase housing choices and affordability in its jurisdiction.
    - That requested UGB expansions would support regional and local goals.

Engagement framework

Beginning in spring 2016, Council President Hughes will convene a regional discussion with a task force that includes Metro councilors, mayors and key stakeholders. The Metro Council will have periodic work sessions to discuss concepts that are emerging in the task force with the intent of clarifying Metro's position when needed. Likewise, MPAC would be given periodic updates on task force discussions. MTAC would serve as a technical resource when needed. The proposed sequence for discussions is as follows:

Time period	Topic or action
2nd quarter 2016	Agreement on problem statement
2nd – 3rd quarter 2016	Discussion of possible mechanisms for addressing the problem statement
3rd quarter 2016	Task force recommendation to MPAC on process improvements
4th quarter 2016	MPAC recommendation to Council on next steps
4th quarter 2016	Metro Council direction to staff on next steps