



# Concept plans: supporting development in new urban areas

*Over the last 15 years, the Metro region has made an intentional shift towards focusing on city readiness for urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions. The goal has been to ensure that any lands added to the UGB result in housing or employment development in a timely fashion.*

When the Metro Council adopted urban reserves in 2010, it also adopted a policy to only add urban reserve areas to the UGB if they have been concept planned by a local jurisdiction. Since 2006, Metro has provided grant funding for those planning efforts through the 2040 Planning and Development grant program.

In 2017, Metro and its partners undertook additional work with the Urban Growth Readiness Taskforce, which – in addition to leading to gaining statutory authority to consider mid-cycle residential UGB amendments – led to the adoption of Metro code factors describing what a city must include in a proposal for UGB expansions. Among other requirements, these code changes reiterated the importance of concept planning for urban reserves before adding them to the UGB.

This approach accomplishes several goals:

- Shortens the time between UGB expansion and development of housing or economic uses.
- Prompts city coordination with service providers whose services would be required for development of an urban reserve.
- Daylights potential community concerns about, or support for, development of an urban reserve.
- Allows policy makers to have an opportunity to discuss the merits of adding an urban reserve to the UGB based on expected housing and job outcomes.
- Provides a foundation for more detailed comprehensive planning and zoning that must occur before development.

Since this policy has been put into place, Metro has said yes to all grant funding requests received for concept planning. Metro has also said yes to all city-proposed UGB expansions for concept planned urban reserves. Even with these policies, the time from UGB expansion to development can be lengthy. For instance, none of the areas added to the UGB in 2018 have broken ground (Beaverton, Hillsboro, King City, and Wilsonville).

There are a number of examples of past UGB expansion areas predating this focus on readiness that have languished. Damascus, added to the UGB in 2002, is the most notable example and had the additional challenge of trying to incorporate a new city to adopt and implement a plan. However, Damascus is just one example of past expansion areas that have been slow to develop or have not developed at all. In 2023, Metro had ECONorthwest assess development outcomes in past expansion areas (see attached). Several of these areas were discussed for possible inclusion in Metro's 2023 UGB

exchange, which was conducted to add the River Terrace 2.0 area, currently in comprehensive planning stages, to the UGB at the request of the City of Tigard. A memo summarizing staff's analysis of possible UGB exchange candidates is also attached.

With the exception of Jackson East, which was added to the UGB in 2014 by the state legislature without a concept plan, all other areas listed below have been in the UGB for over 20 years with little to no urban development.

- West Hayden Island: (Multnomah County)
- Pleasant Valley (Gresham)
- Damascus (Clackamas County)
- Springwater (Gresham)
- Brookman Rd. (Sherwood)
- North Cooper Mountain (Beaverton)
- David Hill (in 1979 UGB) (Forest Grove)
- Beaver Creek Rd. (OR City)
- South End (OR City)
- Park Place (OR City)
- Jackson East industrial area (Hillsboro)

Even when areas are developing, they can move slowly. Other past expansions that predate Metro's focus on city readiness have either begun to develop or are approaching buildout after having been in the UGB for many years. Except for South Hillsboro, which was added to the UGB in 2011, all other areas listed have been in the UGB for 20 years or longer.

- Frog Pond (Wilsonville)
- Bonny Slope (Washington Co.)
- North Bethany (Washington County)
- South Hillsboro (Hillsboro)
- River Terrace 1.0 (Tigard)
- Tonquin industrial area (Sherwood and Tualatin)
- Basalt Creek/Coffee Creek (Tualatin and Wilsonville)
- North Hillsboro industrial area – Shute Rd., Evergreen (Hillsboro)
- Villebois (Wilsonville)
- Western portions of Happy Valley (Happy Valley)
- Witch Hazel Village (Hillsboro)

In its analysis, ECONorthwest concluded that Metro's policy changes – including urban reserves and requirements for concept planning – were likely helping to lead to development in expansion areas and also notes that “Metro can guide growth, but can't create a market where it doesn't exist or overcome topographic, ownership, or resource barriers to development.”