

GREAT COMMUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

January, 2007

Introduction

The Oregon Statewide Planning Program provides a framework of goals to foster development inside urban growth boundaries (UGB) in an orderly and efficient manner and to expand the UGB consistent with a land use hierarchy designed

to protect agricultural and forest land. Utilizing this framework of goals, the Portland metropolitan region has successfully met many significant growth challenges over the years. However, growth pressures, governance, agricultural and natural resource protection and finance issues have

contributed to more controversial decisions over time. Consequently, Metro launched a New Look at the where and how the region should grow, that balances regional agricultural land needs with the protection of natural features and the creation of great communities.

Metro, in partnership with Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties, the State Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) were tasked with identifying urbanization factors or characteristics that could be used to accommodate growth while ensuring the continued successful implementation of the Metro 2040 Growth Concept Plan and the Statewide Planning Program. This Great Communities project, which focuses on urban issues, is part of a regional effort to reconsider

urbanization decisions that also includes agricultural and natural landscape features research.

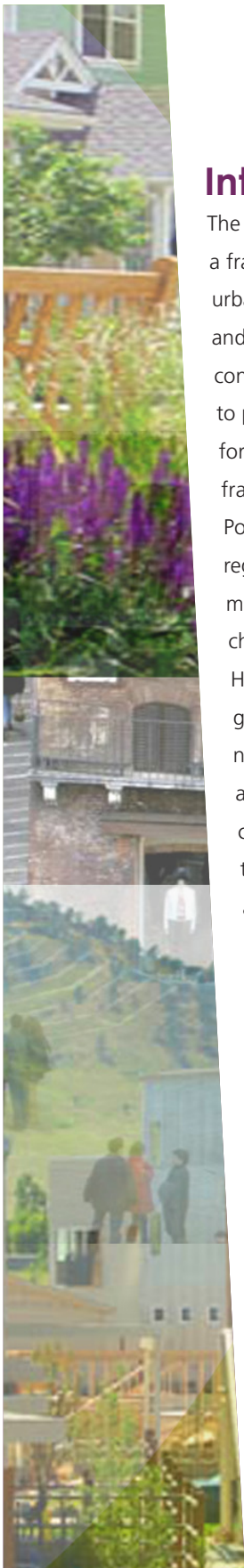
A consultant team, led by Cogan Owens Cogan and assisted by SERA Architects, ECONorthwest, Economic &

Financial Analysis, Kittelson & Associates and David Evans and Associates, completed the Great Communities work program. They were aided by a four-member national Advisory Panel and guided by a Project Management Team consisting of planning directors and growth management staff from Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties, Metro, DLCD and ODA. The Ag/urban Coordinating Committee,

comprised of elected officials from throughout the region and the Department Directors of DLCD and ODA, provided oversight. Funding for the project was provided by DLCD.

Scope of Work

The purpose of the study was to define and describe community characteristics that should be included in urbanization decision-making processes, as well as applied to existing communities, to ultimately create Great Communities in the region. The study focused on characteristics related to land use, governance, urban services infrastructure and finance issues. The study was composed of two parts. Phase one was devoted to research – to define the characteristics and attributes of “great communities” both domestic and



international. Phase two included the application of a refined set of characteristics and attributes to three test areas throughout the region. The purpose of this application was to test the characteristics and attributes and define those most important to urbanization decisions.

The three test areas, the Stafford area in Clackamas County, the Northwest Hills area in Multnomah County and the Forest Grove/Cornelius area in Washington County, were recommended by the Project Management Team to test different agricultural, topographic, governance and infrastructure conditions. Their selection does not reflect a priority for future expansions of the UGB nor does the work completed represent future concept planning for the areas.

Great Community Characteristics

1. Community Design

Well-designed areas are more likely to enjoy cohesive community interaction, an

involved and active populace and thriving business districts. Density, walkability, connectivity and legibility are important attributes of good community design. For example, to support the Great Community feature of walkability, the area should contain sufficient densities and diversity of uses within a quarter-mile radius of centers of activity. A minimum of 12 to 16 dwelling units per acre in these areas is recommended. Connectivity both to and within the area is important for automobiles, freight, bicycles, pedestrians and transit-riders. The ideal block size is between 250 to 350 feet on each side. A community's legibility describes those areas that have rich, distinctive and site-specific characteristics and forms that capitalize on its unique and significant natural features. Features could include views to natural elements such as Mount Hood; the presence of and visual access to significant landmarks; the ability to create edges or boundaries; pathway systems through the area; and gateways into and out of the community.

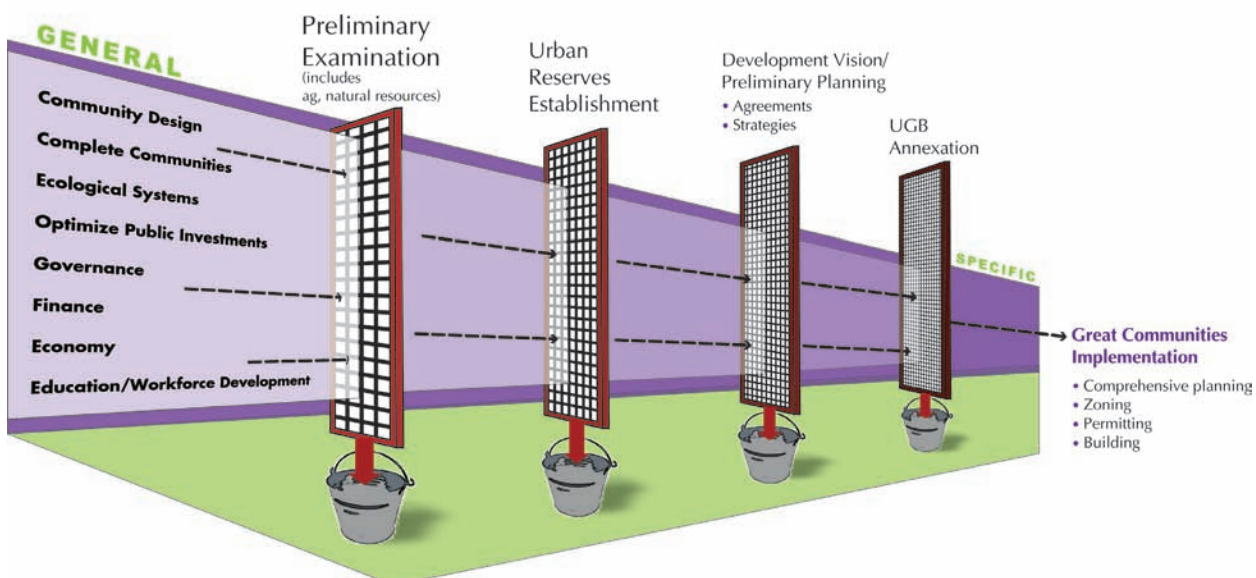
2. Complete Communities

It is important to consider how to support the viability of existing communities when adding land to the UGB. Areas should be considered for addition to the UGB only if they fulfill a recognized need. For example, land could be added to a community for educational facilities or housing to serve employment areas or when a new, complete community can be created, e.g., Damascus. Affordable housing, parks and recreation and the accommodation of age and income diversity are factors that may be made conditional upon approval of the decision to expand the UGB.

3. Ecological Systems

When creating new Great Communities or when enhancing existing ones, ecological systems can and should be preserved. It is critical to the long-term health of the region that urbanization occurs in a way that preserves essential regional natural systems, e.g., providing wildlife habitat and corridors, and preserving air and water quality. Current local, regional, state and federal laws provide for some of these protection and preservation strategies. Opportunities to utilize sustainable infrastructure, the regional "greeninfrastructure" and to integrate natural ecological services should be maximized.

SCHEMATIC FOR APPLYING GREAT COMMUNITIES URBANIZATION CHARACTERISTICS





4. Optimize Major Public Investments

When the region is making decisions for the long term, it is timely and appropriate to consider previous and future infrastructure investments. Additions to the UGB should optimize existing and/or identify likely future major regional public investments for transportation, sewer, water and other utility infrastructure such as light rail alignments, as well as parks or open space areas.

5. Governance

One of the most important aspects associated with urbanization is the governance question: specifically, is there a vision for the area and service providers or a jurisdiction that are willing and able to provide urban-level services to an area if added to the UGB? Without this commitment in place, it will be difficult to evaluate how any new area could cost-effectively and efficiently urbanize. As regional and local commitments will be needed to accommodate a share of the region's growth, additions to the UGB should not be made prior to having urban service agreements to implement the vision in place. Review of the statutory limitations on annexation, alternate forms of governance, and service provisions may be needed to help forge new strategies. Larger areas might be able to support

their own local governments and service provisions. Smaller areas brought in to complement or complete existing communities also should have governance agreements in place to assure

their efficient connection to existing communities.

6. Finance

The feasibility of urbanizing a specific area depends on the cost of supplying public services and the governments' ability to finance the capital costs of extending services. Three financial issues are critical to this analysis and development of Great Communities. First, to finance public services, a financially-capable local government, or set of local governments, needs to be established with financing authority. These could be cities, counties, special districts or regional agencies. Second, before bringing an area into the UGB, the cost per unit of development (e.g., per housing unit, per capita, per employee) of extending primary linear-public services, such as streets, sewer, water and storm drainage must be evaluated. The costs need to be evaluated in relation to the costs of services in existing urban areas, or in relation to other possible areas for expansion. A cost-revenue evaluation tool that summarizes basic infrastructure costs and introduces the implication of underlying land use and planning decisions is necessary for use in future urbanization decisions. Finally, a plan to finance at least the capital costs of each system needs to be developed prior to bringing an area into the

UGB. A number of creative public, private, and public-private partnership methods are in use in many parts of the country and would have practical value to local governments. Oregon, in general, does not prohibit the utilization of new financing methods used elsewhere in the US that offer value capture opportunities and a greater role for private sector investment in public services. Great Communities are catalyzed by the role of the public sector in helping to encourage higher-quality development. Local governments can help provide and/or encourage the introduction of investment funds that are more "patient" in their need for financial return. This can make the difference in the development of higher-quality urban environments.

7. Economy

The role of the market cannot and should not be ignored when evaluating areas for UGB expansion and future great community development. A challenge to land use planning is to provide for a sufficient supply of developable land to meet regional needs while maintaining the quality of life that keeps this region a desirable place to live. To ignore the market would be as inappropriate as allowing the market to dictate urbanization decisions. The threshold economic question to be considered is whether an addition of land contributes to the region's economic vitality by supporting existing and growing economic clusters and niches at a regional and/or sub-regional level.



8. Education and Workforce Development

Historically, schools have been a defining element for how citizens relate to their communities; they are commonly one of the central building blocks of a community. However, a school district's ability to accommodate projected growth has not been integrated into the urbanization decision-making process. As a result, some districts are speculating on land outside the urban growth boundary separate from other transportation, infrastructure and land use planning efforts. The region should consider utilizing school population forecasts and other needs at all levels to help identify the appropriate amount of land to include in a UGB expansion. This includes post-secondary educational facilities that are important to create and maintain skilled workforces that help keep the economy moving.

Spatial/Temporal Application of the Criteria

These eight characteristics should be considered when the region creates urban reserves and adds lands to the urban growth boundary. The successful application of these characteristics increases the likelihood that certain land areas can develop into Great Communities. The level of analysis associated with each of the characteristics will vary at different scales and over different time periods. The schematic drawing on page 2 illustrates the need to apply the characteristics differently, with different questions asked, at various scales. For example, some characteristics are more relevant in making decisions about large areas that should be considered for urban reserves while others can be of assistance when considering specific urban growth boundary additions. Governance,

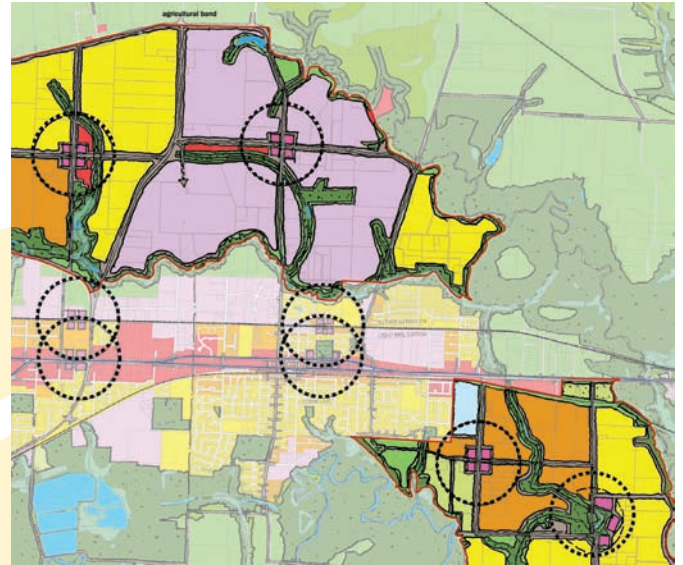
finance, and community design are critical characteristics at every scale.

Conclusion

These eight Great Communities characteristics should be integrated into the region's urbanization decision-making processes and included in the Statewide Planning Program, Metro's Regional Framework Plan and local government initiatives.

The Great Communities report recommends the following:

- A greater level of planning is necessary prior to all urbanization decisions, from the designation of urban reserves to the inclusion of areas into the UGB. This type of planning is intended to balance urban, natural resources and agricultural and forest interests early in the process. It also provides for the creation of a vision for an area and certainty for urban service providers, local governments, property owners and developers. Transferable development rights and other tools to increase the shared benefits of urbanization should continue to be explored.
- A 50-year capital improvement plan for regional facilities is necessary to facilitate the pre-planning that is integral to the development of Great Communities. The public facilities that are most land extensive and most likely to vary in cost among geographic areas are transportation, sewer, water, storm drainage and transit. Other services



such as police, fire, social services and libraries use insignificant amounts of land and can be placed in numerous locations within an urban area.

- Advance regional financing is necessary to provide the backbone needed to accommodate future growth and development in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This should be a comprehensive financing package that addresses all of the major development needs from land assembly and other investment assistance for infrastructure and other service provisions.
- Recognition by the development community, stakeholders, public and private sectors of the importance of land use, infrastructure, finance and governance incentives and barriers to the development of Great Communities is necessary. This work should support the opportunity for public-private partnerships to address the essential needs of infrastructure, financing and implementing community vision throughout the region.

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