

Urban Area Boundary Revision Policy
Workshop Summary
August 14, 2019

The Gorge Commission staff held its sixth urban area boundary revision policy workshop on August 14, 2019. Twenty-five people attended.

This was the first meeting on this topic in several months, as other legal matters at the Commission drew staff's attention away from the topic. The meeting started with an open floor to discuss urban area boundary revision policy generally, which touched on continuing to identify what a "minor" revision is, preferences for a clear and objective standard for boundary revision applications, and the issues of doing long term planning in unincorporated areas where there is no existing analysis of population growth or economic needs.

The conversation transitioned into discussion of the latest draft concepts, which were based on discussions from the earlier workshops that proposed an expanded land trade concept and a new regional planning concept. Jeff Litwak answered questions related to integrating Oregon's new housing standards into the policy, on the data needs for the regional planning process, and the complication of drafting a policy that responded to the National Scenic Area Act's requirement in for long-term population growth and economic needs in section 4(f) while only allowing minor revisions to the boundary.

Jeff Litwak and Aiden Forsi then walked the group through the expanded land trade concept, which incorporated the previous land trade concept and the *de minimis* boundary expansion concept into a single, more expansive land trade option, allowing land trades for 1% or 20 acres, whichever is less. They also walked through the new regional planning process, including possible characteristics and requirements of the process. The regional planning process was based on Oregon's Regional Problem-Solving process, ORS 197.652–658. It requires Urban Areas seeking boundary revisions and their counties to identify regional solutions that accommodate long-range urban population growth or economic needs. The outcome of a regional planning process may not be an application for an urban area boundary revision if there are other ways to accommodate regional long-range urban population growth or economic needs. In this way, regional partners can achieve mutually beneficial long-range planning goals while protecting National Scenic Area (NSA) resources.

Comments on the concepts included:

- Increases in density will require improvements to infrastructure, so funding should be part of the urban area policy.
- The Commission should only allow a small increase in land area to allow urban areas to reach the exterior of the National Scenic Area and then grow outside the National Scenic Area ("cherry stem" concept).
- Inventories should be done regionally. The Commission should have these inventories before drafting new urban area policy.

- The Commission should use a simple objective number, like 20 acres or 1%, whichever is less. Anything else gets too complicated.
- Urban area policy should consider livability factors, such as the Blue Skies program in The Dalles.
- The Commission has no jurisdiction on land uses within Urban Areas, so land traded into an Urban Area should not be subject to development agreements with the Commission.
- The proposed 30-year development agreement on lands traded into an Urban Area is either too long or too short depending on who you ask.
- Ensuring that vacancy on land traded into an Urban Area was not a trigger to revert the land back to the NSA.
- The policy must ensure that land trades meet the need they say they will address.
- The Commission needs to determine if the methodology of Oregon's new simplified UGB expansion requirements would be incorporated into our rules directly, or just by reference.
- The Commission needs to check the definition of constrained lands in Oregon, and ensure that the definition meets the standards of the NSA Act, or the Commission needs to adjust the definition in the policy to meet the standards of the NSA Act.
- There was significant discussion on whether the regional planning process was useful to Urban Areas and NSA counties, and whether it adequately addressed the distinction between a major and a minor urban area boundary revision.

Scott Edelman with DLCD suggested that a subgroup examine Oregon's simplified UGB expansion process and see what parts of that policy could be useful for the Gorge Commission to consider. Another suggestion was for Josh LeBombard, the project manager for the Jackson County Regional Planning Process, to give us a presentation on Oregon's Regional Problem-Solving process that was the basis of the proposed regional planning policy, to give more context to the concept for the National Scenic Area.

The group discussed whether to restart with a look at high-level concepts and goals and reach agreement on those, and whether there should be a facilitated consensus process that worked on the core issue of identifying and developing proposals for urban area boundary revision policy.

Staff will schedule the next workshop after presenting an update on the results of the workshop discussions to date at the Commission's September 10, 2019 meeting, and will use the outcomes of the Commission's discussion to identify next steps and any additional concepts for consideration.

REMINDER: All of the Commission and Staff Workshop Agendas, Staff Reports, and Workshop Summaries are on the Gorge Commission's Gorge2020 webpage at <http://www.gorgecommission.org/management-plan/gorge2020/> (click on "Focus Topics and Technical Teams" tab).