

## Why LCDC should approve Urban and Rural Reserves

### Submitted by:

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On August 18, Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission will consider designating 13,500 acres of urban reserves and more than 150,000 acres of rural reserves in Washington County. If approved, this decision will be the culmination of a decade of work to protect farm and forest lands and ensure smart development and future economic opportunity.

The Coalition for a Prosperous Region, a group of organized labor, economic development and job creation advocates from across the Portland region, is urging LCDC to approve these urban reserves.

No other region in the U.S. has attempted such long-range planning. Once designated, these rural reserves will protect agricultural lands from development for 50 years, allowing farm and forest land owners to plan for and invest in their long-range future.

Urban reserves give the region a thoughtful and deliberate path to ensure continued economic growth, directing new development to areas that can support significant new job creation.

Some land-use absolutists will likely suggest that approving urban reserves will be the end of land use planning in Oregon as we know it. Frankly, that's the kind of unhelpful hyperbole and sky-is-falling rhetoric that made the debt ceiling debate so divisive. Let's look at the facts.

- Setting urban reserves doesn't expand the urban growth boundary one square foot. Urban reserves simply identify the areas that might some day be added to the urban growth boundary. But before that happens, Metro must go through a separate process to determine if additional land is needed for economic growth.
- Adopting this proposal protects farm and forest lands for 50 years from any urban development. For every acre of urban reserves, LCDC will designate more than 11 acres of rural reserves; more than 150,000 acres in Washington County alone. Within the three counties, urban development will be prohibited for the next 50 years on 267,000 acres of farm and forest lands.

- Less than half the urban reserve acres are Foundation or Important agricultural lands. Even if all of the urban reserves are added to the urban area over the next 50 years, that will represent only 4 percent of the farmland base of the three-county area.

If we develop all of the urban reserves during the next 50 years we will have accommodated an estimated 74 percent increase in population on an 11 percent increase in the urban area. No other region in the nation can boast this kind of growth management success.

Frankly, this proposal is radical in how little new urban area it will allow over the next 50 years. There are very real concerns that it doesn't allow enough room for economic growth, housing and job creation. We wish LCDC would provide more flexibility in case our ability to predict land needs decades into the future is wrong and we need more. But we should be able to agree on the basics: promise farmers that they will not be pressured to sell their land for at least two generations and identify the most reasonable areas to grow our economy, if and when that is needed.

[510 words]