

5-1-1996

Metro 2040 Framework Update, Spring 1996

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Recommended Citation

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2040 framework

Metro 2040 Framework Update

Spring 1996

Dear citizens and local government partners,

As the agency responsible for managing this region's growth, Metro – along with citizens and our local partners – has developed an important policy for how and where this region grows during the next several decades. That policy calls for the region to preserve its livability by keeping a tight urban growth boundary, creating urban communities within the region, making sure growth occurs along major transportation and transit corridors, preserving open spaces, keeping new lot sizes smaller, and creating business and employment areas that use land efficiently.

We must begin today to make the tough decisions that will result in positive change. We start making those changes in Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan, required to be adopted by Dec. 31, 1997, by the voter-approved Metro Charter. The framework plan outlines specifically what changes the region – and the three counties and 24 cities within it – must make to implement the growth management policy.

Seventy-five more people live in this region every day. The longer we wait to begin implementing the growth concept, the more we lose our grip on a livable future.

This update describes specific changes and provides a general description of where the region is on Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan and how it will affect people both regionally and in their own communities. Inside you'll also find information about the Regional Transportation Plan, currently being updated to better meet the needs of our communities and to support growth management policies.

As always, Metro will keep you informed – and ask your opinions – about upcoming regional decisions so that you can continue to help keep our community livable. See the back page for a schedule of upcoming open houses to provide input into Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan.

Sincerely,

Mike Burton
Mike Burton
Executive Officer
797-1502

Susan McLain
Susan McLain
Chair, Growth Management Committee
797-1553



Metro is the directly elected regional government that serves more than 1.2 million residents in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties and the 24 cities in the Portland metropolitan area.

Metro is responsible for growth management, transportation and land-use planning; regional environmental management; operation of the Metro Washington Park Zoo; regional parks and greenspaces programs; and technical services to local governments. Through the Metropolitan Exposition-Recreation Commission, Metro manages the Oregon Convention Center, Civic Stadium, the Portland Center for the Performing Arts and the Expo Center.

Metro is governed by an executive officer and a seven-member council. The executive officer is elected regionwide; councilors are elected by district. Metro has an auditor who is elected regionwide.

For more information about Metro or to schedule a speaker for a community group, call 797-1510.

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Patricia McCaig – 797-1889

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Metro's growth management timeline

The Regional Framework Plan must be adopted by the Metro Council by the end of 1997 as mandated in the voter-approved charter. Below is a brief description of the major milestones leading up to that important decision, which will affect this region's livability for the next several decades.

Bear in mind that regional planning is a flexible process that frequently requires adjusting the timeframe to meet the needs of public input, technical analysis and local governments. This timeline will be updated as necessary to meet the Dec. 31, 1997, deadline.

March 1996 – Executive Officer proposes Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan, which provides a set of regional standards (such as those involving zoning for town centers and main streets) to which local governments must adhere in their own communities.

March 1996 – Metro staff completes three key technical studies: population and job forecasts, buildable lands inventory and housing needs analysis.

March – April 1996 – Open houses held throughout region for citizens and local governments to talk about Phase I of Regional Framework Plan.

April 1996 – Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) makes recommendation on Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan.

Comment period on discussion draft of Regional Transportation Plan ends.

May 1996 – Final recommendation on Regional Transportation Plan released for public comment; Metro Council holds public hearing.

May – June 1996 – Open houses held throughout the region for citizens to discuss urban reserve study areas.

June 1996 – Metro Council holds series of public hearings on Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan.

Metro Council adopts Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan. Executive Officer and MPAC make recommendation on urban reserves.

July 1996 – Executive Officer makes recommendation on urban growth boundary.

July – August 1996 – Metro Council holds public hearings on urban reserves.

August 1996 – Metro Council votes on urban reserves.

MPAC makes recommendation on urban growth boundary.

September – October 1996 – Metro Council holds public hearings on urban growth boundary.

October 1996 – Metro Council makes decision on urban growth boundary related to possible expansion, location, timeframe.

For more information, call Metro's growth management hotline, 797-1888, or the transportation hotline, 797-1900.

Phase 1 – Regional Framework Plan

Getting there by zoning and mixed use

Perhaps nothing is more key to achieving the regional growth concept – and hence regional livability – than actions taken by local jurisdictions regarding their zoning laws. Metro’s local partners were instrumental in designing the Region 2040 growth concept and now must make that concept a reality through changes at the local level.

Changes entail re-shaping local zoning ordinances to allow and encourage more innovative types of residential and business growth. In many communities in the region, zoning laws make it difficult – or even impossible – to go beyond the traditional methods for accommodating growth.

If those traditional zoning laws remain, we would grow like other communities and sacrifice some of our rich tradition of livability. For the past four years of Metro’s Region 2040 program, our regional partners and citizens have said they are unwilling to sacrifice livability and will work together, both as a region and as individual communities.

Sometimes that will mean making tough decisions. Frequently it means change, to which most people by human nature are initially averse. By working through the changes together, we will create a better region as we continue to have children and as people discover the Portland metropolitan region and decide to move here.

Metro has been working with the three counties and 24 cities within the region

*Zoning plays a key
role in creating urban
“villages” around the
region that provide a
mixture of uses.*

so that local jurisdictions can change their zoning laws and maps effectively. No two jurisdictions are alike but each must accommodate its portion of the regional growth capacity. Metro has forecast the level of population and employment the region can expect by the year 2015. Each jurisdiction must absorb its share of that forecasted growth.

Each city and county, for example, must adopt a specific zoning minimum for its residential areas so that land is used efficiently. Traditionally, local jurisdic-

tions have mandated a maximum number of housing units per acre. Now they must put into local law the minimum number of housing units as well.

Zoning also plays a key role in creating urban “villages” around the region that provide a mixture of uses. These mixed-use areas will feature a compact urban design in which shopping, restaurants, multi-family housing, businesses and professional services will be designed and developed together. Pedestrian access and high-quality transit service are a must for mixed-use areas.

Under Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan local jurisdictions must begin the process of altering zoning codes to accommodate mixed uses in regional and town centers, in main street areas and along transit corridors. Having more mixed use will result in a more efficient use of land, a heightened sense of neighborhood community, fewer miles traveled by car, and less water and air pollution.

There will be minimum densities for mixed-use areas so that local jurisdictions can meet their responsibility in accommodating population growth. Communities are encouraged to think of innovative ways to design and implement their compact urban form, whether it be in the form of new development or in redeveloping existing areas.

Parking and a more compact urban form

One of the most significant consumers of land is large commercial parking lots – with 550,000 parking spaces using 5,000 acres of land throughout the region. If we continue adding parking spaces according to the current rate for new shopping centers, commercial parking will eat up another 5,000 acres by the year 2015.

These parking lots may be full at a few peak shopping times but sit half-vacant most of the time. It's important to provide adequate parking for customers, but how much is adequate and how much is excessive in light of

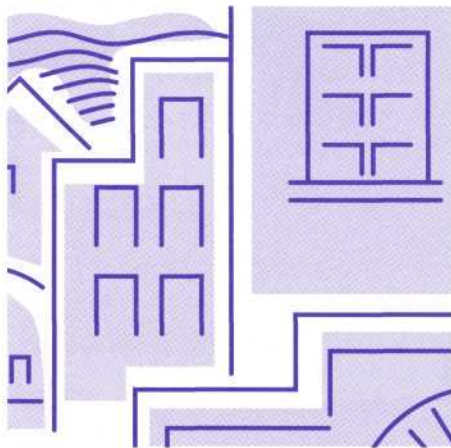
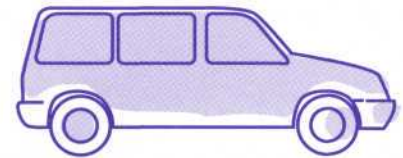
growth pressures and the region's desire to use land more efficiently?

Metro, its local partners and the business community have wrestled with those questions as part of Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan. The consensus was that there should be a regional policy and action for reducing off-street parking in a way that meets the needs of the business community and adheres to the regional growth concept.

First, local governments must require less parking for new commercial developments. In a recent state Department of Environmental Quality study, most local jurisdictions required more off-street parking than was used 80 percent of the time. Second, there is ongoing discussion of establishing limits that would control how large parking lots should be.

As in the issue of mixed use, local governments and developers are encouraged to develop innovative techniques for dealing effectively with parking ratios. One example is to have several businesses in a main street area share a common parking lot, rather than each business having a parking lot.

As always, local governments, with help from Metro, should promote and implement good urban design so that regional centers and urban villages include adequate parking that is clean, safe, aesthetically pleasing and accessible.



Managing retail in employment areas

Future major retail businesses will be examined more closely in relation to their proximity to large employment areas, under Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan. Metro and local governments are re-thinking the retail trend in which an extremely large, single-use retail business with hundreds of parking spaces is located away from major centers and occupies land designated for industrial uses.

The issue is a complex one, with varying opinions among retail businesses, customers, land-use planners and local governments. The need for this type of retail certainly exists, but there are downsides as well. Having

a large business with hundreds of parking spaces in an area designated for industrial and warehousing can quickly overwhelm the transportation system and make moving goods and services in these areas more difficult. Also, it diverts business from the regional centers, which are envisioned as business districts with a mix of retail, office and services.

Still, there is a high customer demand for this type of retail business. Regional leaders, local elected officials and the business community are discussing innovative methods for dealing with future retail outlets. No conclusions have been reached yet, but it is likely to remain a visible and controversial topic.



Growing but keeping our natural resources

Part of what makes this region unique and livable is its long-held commitment to the preservation of open spaces, natural areas and stream corridors within an urban environment. As the region grows more urban, there are more pressures to develop green areas into residences and businesses.

Also subject to development pressure is the quality of our watersheds, streams, wetlands and floodplains – which can suffer if growth is not handled correctly.

In Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan, Metro has identified a number of measures that should be taken regionally and locally to protect the natural system of existing stream corridors, wetlands and floodplains.

Some measures include having local governments require through their land-use permit process that developers eliminate or reduce water runoff from rooftops, parking lots and other flat surfaces as they develop residential, commercial and industrial areas. In addition, all transportation projects must take similar measures as roads, highways and streets are being built.

Another measure is to allow the use of generous on-site “density transfers,” which means development can be grouped together on a site of land so that nearby wetlands or other environmentally sensitive areas still can be protected. This is a much more flexible way of handling the needs of both urban density requirements and environmental concerns. Many current zoning laws do not allow that type of flexibility.

Taking these and other related measures will help reduce environmental problems caused by growth, such as water temperature fluctuation, stormwater runoff and sediment control, flood control and loss of important natural habitats.

Emphasizing the separation between rural and urban

The premise behind this aspect of the Regional Framework Plan is simple: keep urban *urban* and rural *rural*. That means separating the two, primarily through very limited zoning designations and a series of green areas. By doing so, there will be a border between the urban lifestyle some people prefer and the distinctly rural way of life that others value.

Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan calls for affected agencies in the region to sign intergovernmental

agreements that would put green corridors into effect. These green corridors will be located along major highways that buffer the urban and rural areas.

Phase I also outlines areas to be considered as rural reserves, meaning they would not be subject to development pressures found in the more urban area. Rural reserves are areas outside the urban growth boundary that allow only limited types of development, such as those involving farm and forestry use.

The use of rural reserves would separate neighboring cities such as Sandy and Canby from the metropolitan region. The result will be an



enhanced sense of community for the metropolitan area and the neighboring cities. It would ensure that while growth is accommodated, these communities would never grow together.

Taking it to the streets

Envision your neighborhood in the year 2015. Imagine living close to your job, to the store, to a neighborhood cafe or to the light-rail station in your community. Picture being able to walk easily to some of these destinations. The streets close to where you live accommodate cars, buses, pedestrians and bicyclists safely. Transit service by bus or light rail is readily available.

We've heard this vision – of livable communities served by transportation options that meet people's needs – expressed by many citizens of the region at open houses and public meetings. And we know that transportation is a critical element of making the growth concept a reality. But what will it take to achieve this future? What kind of priorities must we set to make this vision of the future a reality?

These are some of the questions that Metro's regional partners and a transportation Citizens Advisory Committee have been discussing during the past few months as they work with Metro to update regional transportation policies in the Regional Transportation Plan. The plan provides a blueprint for transportation in the region during the next 20 years.

Policies established in the RTP are an important part of Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan and will guide local jurisdictions in the development of local transportation plans. The RTP establishes guiding principles for our transportation system, as well as goals and objectives for all modes of travel in and through our region. These goals and objectives will form the basis for future decisions about transportation funding. The policy component of the plan will be considered for adoption by the Metro Council this May.

Some of the central issues under discussion as a part of Phase I of the Regional Framework Plan concern developing street and road designs that integrate transportation and land-use needs.

The proposed designs generally fall into four categories:

Throughways (freeways and highways) that emphasize auto and freight mobility and connect major activity centers

Boulevards that serve major centers of urban activity and emphasize transit and pedestrian travel while balancing the many travel demands of these areas

Streets that serve transit corridors, main streets and neighborhoods with designs that balance many modes of travel and provide easy pedestrian and transit travel

Roads that are traffic oriented, with designs that serve all modes but primarily serve motor vehicles.



Proposed new Regional Transportation Plan goals include:

- Use the transportation plan to leverage development envisioned in the growth concept.
- Develop street designs that provide for a mixture of transportation modes.
- Improve traffic circulation through new street connections.
- Provide appropriate levels of access to transit service for everyone living within the urban growth boundary.
- Promote the continued vitality of the region's industries through efficient freight movement.
- Increase bicycle trips in the region and encourage bicyclists and motorists to share the road safely.
- Encourage walking for short trips and improving access to the transit system through pedestrian improvements.

The **measures** being considered in the RTP update would require local jurisdictions to amend comprehensive plans and implement supportive ordinances. These would include amenity-oriented boulevard designs that better serve pedestrian and transit travel for existing and planned arterials in the central city, regional centers and station areas. This is a key step in the overall implementation of the growth concept. Some of the design elements for these boulevards include: wide sidewalks, landscape strips that create a buffer for pedestrians between the curb and the sidewalk, marked pedes-

trian crossings at all intersections, landscaped medians where appropriate, bikeways and on-street parking.

Design **standards** aimed at improving local circulation by increasing the number of street connections are also under discussion. Connections that allow people to make local trips to nearby commercial areas, schools and parks will facilitate walking or biking to destinations that are nearby and decrease traffic on regional roads.

The width of new streets in the region also is being discussed. The discussion includes a "skinny streets" policy that

will maximize the use of land and create more livable streets.

The Regional Transportation Plan Citizens Advisory Committee is working to develop a final policy recommendation to the Metro Council. The committee will release a discussion draft of its recommendation for public review and comment on March 22.

For additional information or to request a copy of the Citizens Advisory Committee discussion draft call Metro's transportation hotline, (503) 797-1900.

To comment on Regional Transportation Plan policies:

phone – call the transportation hotline, (503) 797-1900

fax – (503) 797-1794

e-mail – trans@metro.or.gov

mail – Metro, Transportation Department, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232-2736



Citizens support reasonable density to prevent sprawl

Portland metropolitan area residents want to protect farm and forest land and guard against urban sprawl, according to a recent public opinion survey conducted by Davis & Hibbits, Inc. in the tri-county area.

Though respondents reacted negatively to the phrase “higher density development,” the survey indicates they are willing to support projects that increase density if they have specific information about the level and type of density being proposed. The poll was commissioned by the 2040 Means Business Committee, an advisory group to Metro Executive Officer Mike Burton.

“Preservation of forest and farmland is important to people in the Portland metropolitan area,” said Adam Davis, a principal in the public opinion research firm, Davis & Hibbits, Inc.

“They don’t want to see the Portland area fall victim to the same problems experienced by other cities.

“A majority do not want to see the urban growth boundary moved outward. And they are a lot less hostile toward

Major findings of the survey include:

- Forest and farmland ranked highest in importance when respondents were asked to make tradeoffs among a range of regional issues. The next three highly ranked issues were: lower property taxes, areas protected for wildlife and more household income.
- Sixty-seven percent rated the statement, “there will be more mixed residential, commercial and industrial development so that people can work closer to home,” as somewhat to very desirable.
- Fifty-seven percent agreed that having one more housing unit per block in their neighborhood is a “reasonable price to pay for less urban sprawl.”
- Fifty-five percent rated the statement, “the urban growth boundary will be moved outward to accommodate population growth,” as somewhat to very undesirable.

proposals to accommodate more people within the existing boundary than some government and business leaders may think,” Davis said.

The sample size for the telephone survey was 608, with respondents selected from the tri-county area using random digit dialing. The margin of error for the survey was plus or minus 3.97 percent.

For more information, send e-mail to 2040@metro.or.gov or call Metro’s growth management hotline, 797-1888.