

Fix to growth plan OK'd by Metro Council, awaits approval from Clackamas County

Metro News, by Nick Christensen

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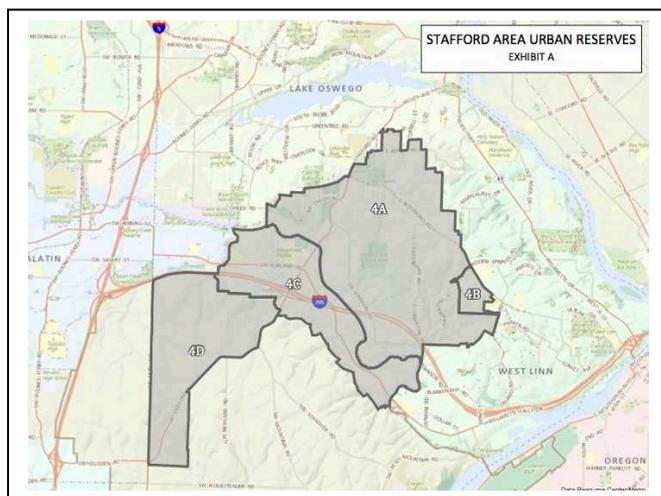
The Metro Council voted unanimously Thursday to send a landmark 50-year growth plan back to state regulators, saying they'd made the technical fixes requested by the Oregon Court of Appeals. The plan set aside urban reserves as areas the Metro Council would target first for urban growth boundary expansions in the next half century. Rural reserves were blocked off from future development.

But the Oregon Court of Appeals rejected parts of the plan in 2014. The Legislature intervened and finished the designation process for Washington County, where significant legal and technical issues necessitated a fix in Salem. But the Legislature left it to Metro, Multnomah County and Clackamas County to make the fixes requested by the court.

"If you think about it from the point of comparing this remand to Washington County's remand, it's a little bit like comparing the Geico gecko with Godzilla," said Metro Council President Tom Hughes. "This is a straightforward, simple request to show your work."

Thursday's vote finished that process on Metro's end. Metro attorneys say they expect the new submission will be enough to meet the approval of regulators and the courts. The plan calls for an urban reserve in the Stafford area, near Interstate 205 between West Linn and Tualatin. But the plan will face resistance from Clackamas County leaders, who want Metro to set aside the years of public involvement that went into designating reserves, and start over by changing the map dramatically.

County leaders say there isn't enough industrial land inside the county boundaries to hit their aspirational goal of creating 10,000 new jobs in the county. Metro officials say there's plenty of industrial land in the region to provide for job growth for Clackamas County residents.



Map of the Stafford Basin urban reserves

Clackamas County leaders want Metro to leave the door open for development to occur along Interstate 5 in the Willamette Valley, south of the Boone Bridge in Wilsonville. It's a development that Hughes himself once advocated for, when he served as a lobbyist for the property's owners.

"For Clackamas County to spend a half million dollars examining lands that have already been considered and rejected by local governments, and that we heard from people coming into testify are rejected by the people who live around them, it seems to me quite frankly to be sort of pointless," Hughes said. "That money could be working with us to help develop the North Milwaukie industrial area, continue working on Willamette Falls, and maybe areas already added to the UGB like east Oregon City successfully develop."

Without Clackamas County's support, Metro would be limited in the areas it could look in Clackamas County for a UGB expansion. Wilsonville has already indicated it might seek a UGB expansion in 2018. Because Metro is required to look at urban reserves first for UGB expansions, it would have to pass on all the reserves in Washington County before considering an expansion in Clackamas County.

"We need to be acting in good faith to honor the commitment of all of those groups that came together through this complicated process to designate those urban and rural reserves," said Metro Councilor Sam Chase. "If we aren't doing that we are betraying that compromise that everybody around the region came together to do."