

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS



The 50% Solution

If you had to add 50% more homes (of all types) to your neighborhood, over the next 25 years, how would you do it?

I've asked that question of myself for two reasons.

First, because the Metro Council is considering the challenge of accommodating one million more people in this region (a 50% increase) over the next 25 years.

I believe this growth could be accommodated without expanding the urban growth boundary. By growing up, and not out, we can improve our neighborhoods, save world-class natural areas, farmland, and forest, and save billions in dollars in additional taxes needed to pay for new roads, schools, water lines and other infrastructure. This approach also cuts down on the amount of driving we need to do and thereby reduces our impact on global climate change.

Second, as I noted in a prior column, this approach is, in fact, how we are growing right now.

Statistics show that over the last decade the vast majority of the Metro region's growth has actually taken the form of infill and redevelopment rather than development of the land added to the urban growth boundary.

Across the part of the region I represent, infill and redevelopment takes both good and bad forms. Some of it is attractive and brings with it new public and private amenities such as parks, transit, grocery stores and restaurants. In other instances it is not attractive, and brings burdens like crowded schools, increased traffic, and loss of open space with no compensating public investments or private improvements.

Can we devise a strategy that accentuates the positive aspects of infill and redevelopment and avoids the negative?

This summer I consulted with about 20 residents of my district about how to involve citizens in discussions of infill and redevelopment strategy. Working together, and with help from our intern Brendan Moriarty, we have developed a simple 3-hour exercise in which residents are asked how to add a 50% increase of homes in their neighborhood. The participants are asked to identify both the locations and the design of the homes, and identify the kind of public improvements that should be packaged with that increase.

I carried out a test-run of the exercise for my own neighborhood of Richmond. Portland architect Rick Potestio also tackled the challenge (and offered several suggestions for improving the exercise.) Next, residents of Richmond, joined by two people from other neighborhoods, undertook the exercise. In August nine residents of southwest Portland, working in three separate teams, developed three different approaches to accommodating 50% more houses in the Hillsdale neighborhood.

continued

Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and Southwest
Portland.

Despite the simplistic nature of the exercise, the results stimulated a lot of valuable new insights about opportunities for improving, not harming, neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment.

I believe these exercises will help citizens participate more effectively in discussions at the city and regional level about our growth strategy. Your neighborhood-level perspectives on the issue of how we grow will make our regional and local government decisions more sophisticated and sensitive.

If you and your neighbors would like to help find the right 50% solution, please contact my office.

– Robert Liberty

Metro Council approves locally preferred alternative for Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Project

In July, the Metro Council unanimously approved the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the 7.4-mile Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Project. The line will provide new transportation options for communities in North Clackamas County, Southeast Portland and the South Waterfront area.

The new line will run from Portland State University and Park Avenue in Oak Grove, and will follow the Tillamook Branch railroad in the North Milwaukie industrial area through downtown Milwaukie. The project includes a Willamette River crossing beginning at SW Porter, ending near SE Sherman Street. The bridge will carry light rail, buses and any future Portland Streetcar routes, and will include 12-foot pathways for cyclists and pedestrians.

The LPA was originally recommended by a steering committee comprised of elected officials from the corridor, based on technical work, a similar recommendation from the Citizen Advisory Committee and responses from a 45-day public comment period.

The line is slated to begin construction in 2011 and is projected by 2030 to service 25,000 light rail riders a day. The project is expected to cost between \$1.25 and \$1.4 billion. Funding will come from the Federal Transit Administration, lottery-backed bonds approved by the Oregon Legislature and local shares with contributions from Metro, TriMet, Clackamas County and the cities of Portland and Milwaukie.

Metro and TriMet are leading the Portland-Milwaukie Project in partnership with the Oregon Department of Transportation, the cities of Milwaukie, Portland and Oregon City, and Clackamas and Multnomah counties.

Metro Council awards grants to three neighborhood enhancement projects

The Metro Council has dedicated \$389,500 in matching grant funds to improve water quality, support local wildlife and increase access to nature for residents. The Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Program is designed to fund projects that preserve or enhance natural features and their ecological functions on public lands in urban neighborhoods. The grant program strives to help ensure that every community enjoys clean water and nature as an element of its character and livability.

A committee, comprised of citizens, local government officials and natural resource experts from across the region, was appointed by the Metro Council to review grant applications and make recommendations for funding. The projects selected for funding include the creation of a new park designed with native plantings next to a mixed-income housing development in Northern Clackamas County, a nature discovery and demonstration garden called “Conservation Corner” at the new offices of the East Multnomah County Soil and Water Conservation District and restoration of Crystal Springs Creek, a tributary of Johnson Creek, at Westmoreland Park.

For more information on the Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Program, please visit www.oregonmetro.gov/nature.

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region’s economy.

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