

Urban Growth Readiness Task Force

Proposed concepts and implementation suggestions

Background

The Metro Council seeks more flexibility to respond to city requests for modest residential urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions into urban reserves. This document provides an overview of the concepts discussed by the Urban Growth Readiness Task Force as well as recommendations for how those concepts could be implemented to provide the Council with greater flexibility.

Overview of the proposed concept

- Acknowledged urban reserves represent the maximum anticipated urban footprint for the region through the year 2060.
- The Metro Council will consider cities' requests for modest residential UGB expansions into acknowledged urban reserves. Metro will maintain the existing six-year urban growth management decision cycle and also consider mid-cycle¹ city requests for modest residential UGB expansions. Mid-cycle UGB expansions would be done through UGB exchanges or through minor amendments to the most recent Urban Growth Report to recognize housing needs that were not anticipated.
- Cities requesting UGB expansions will demonstrate that they are taking actions that will advance regional and local desired outcomes and that the expansion area will produce housing in fewer than 20 years.
- Mid-cycle UGB expansions will be limited to a region-wide total of 900 gross acres.

Implementation suggestions

Four tracks of work could implement this concept. Each of these tracks could be pursued separately, but developing all four would create a system that provides the Metro Council with the flexibility to respond to city requests and better achieve regional and local desired outcomes.

1. Clarify expectations for cities requesting modest residential UGB expansions:

The Task Force and Metro Council have expressed their interest in having cities demonstrate that they are using best practices to encourage the development of needed housing. Amending Metro's code would implement this direction. The suggested amendments would focus on having a city demonstrate that it is taking a holistic approach to addressing housing needs in existing urban areas. No additional requirements for concept planning in urban reserves are suggested at this time.

2. Seek greater flexibility for determining regional housing needs:

The Task Force and Metro Council have stated that they want the region to have the ability to:

- Have a broader perspective when determining regional housing needs, including consideration of commute distances and greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ Three years after a legislative urban growth management decision.

- Have the ability to be more responsive to city proposals for UGB expansions.

Within its existing legal authority, the Metro Council can exercise greater discretion when determining regional housing needs. Decisions could give additional consideration to how the region might minimize spillover growth into neighboring cities outside the Metro UGB. Changes to Metro code and state law would provide more flexibility by allowing the Metro Council to make mid-cycle urban growth management decisions (between regular decisions made every six years) based on minor amendments to the most recent Urban Growth Report analysis.

3. Seek greater flexibility when choosing among urban reserves for UGB expansion:

The Task Force and Metro Council have indicated that they want urban growth management decisions to be more responsive to city requests. Amendments to Metro code as well as state law would grant the Metro Council additional flexibility when choosing among urban reserves for UGB expansion with greater emphasis on responding to city requests to develop areas when governance, finance and market conditions make desired future development likely.

4. Facilitate the UGB exchange process:

The Task Force and Metro Council indicated an interest in exploring UGB exchanges – taking non-performing areas out of the UGB in exchange for expansions into urban reserves. Though Metro has legal authority to conduct exchanges, amendments to Metro code and state law would more fully address Task Force interests. Suggested Metro code amendments would remove acreage limitations for an exchange. Suggested changes to state law would allow Metro to remove a larger non-performing area from the UGB and exchange it over time with expansions in order to avoid a piecemeal approach to UGB exchanges.

Suggested overall timeline for implementing these concepts

- Fall 2016: Task Force makes recommendations to the Metro Council
- Fall 2016: MPAC recommends Metro code amendments based on Task Force suggestions.²
- Fall 2016: Metro Council provides direction on its 2017 legislative agenda.
- Spring 2017: Metro region coalition pursues legislative agenda.
- Summer 2017: Metro Council considers changes to Metro code as recommended by MPAC.
- Summer 2018: Metro releases draft 2018 Urban Growth Report.
- Winter 2018: Metro Council, with MPAC's advice, makes 2018 urban growth management decision.
- Winter 2021: Metro Council, with MPAC's advice, considers mid-cycle city requests for UGB expansions.

² To ensure that the Metro code works with possible changes to state law, the Metro Council would not take action on its code amendments until after the 2017 state legislative session.