



Testimony In Support of

**Metro Ordinance 11-1264**

Presented by

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Beaverton Public Library

Welcome to Beaverton and to Washington County. I have the privilege to serve as Executive Director of Westside Economic Alliance, but I am also proud to be a 37-year resident of Washington County, and a 17-year resident of the City of Beaverton.

WEA thanks Metro for conducting this public hearing in the City of Beaverton, which is the most culturally and ethnically diverse city in the State of Oregon. The slogan for our city, "The Best of Oregon," is more than a boast, it is also our goal, and should be for the rest of our region as well.

To help us reach this goal, the policy values our organization applies to the regional planning process that is being used in all three urban counties, and in all corners of our region, are:

- 1) Provide choices and diversity, in housing and employment opportunities
- 2) Promote regional equity, with business and community growth opportunities
- 3) Support healthy communities with sustainable local tax bases

To explain what we mean, let me focus on the communities I know best. Beaverton has been one of the fast-growing cities in our state.

In fact, in the 38 years that I have been living in Oregon, the population of Washington County has tripled, while the employment base here has quadrupled. By all indications, this growth will continue in the next several decades, and for the economic future of Oregon, we hope it can.

Westside Economic Alliance believes Metro's chief operating officer was correct in choosing seven Westside locations for possible expansion of the urban growth boundary, in order to accommodate the anticipated population growth of our region, and provide for the residential and employment demands of our region over the next 20 years.

WEA bases this support on four key factors:

- 1) This is where growth has been happening, and will continue to occur. The population growth in Washington and western Clackamas Counties grew by an annualized rate of 2.0 percent for the past 40 years. Through boom times and busts, the population here on the Westside has continued to grow faster than most other parts of our state, with one in four new residents to our state now settling in Washington County. (see attachment #1)
- 2) Communities on the Westside welcome this growth. Throughout Metro's ambitious planning process for designating urban and rural reserves, developing the urban growth report and regional transportation plan, community leaders in Washington and western Clackamas Counties have consistently said we welcome and need continued population growth to build the local tax base, create the vibrant communities, make the greatest places, develop prosperous economy, and become the places Metro promises we can be.
- 3) The taxpayers on the Westside are willing to support this growth. WEA is very proud of the fact that voters and taxpayers here on the Westside of the metropolitan region have been stepping up to the plate and paying for the public infrastructure we need to create "vibrant communities."

In fact, in the last four election cycles (again, during good times and bad) taxpayers have agreed to pay for new libraries, public schools and community colleges, parks and zoo funding; roads and bridge projects, public safety and emergency response services. The list goes on, but the point remains the same. Voters here on the Westside have consistently shown we are willing and ready to invest in deserving projects that make THIS the greatest place to live and work.

- 4) Westsidiers welcome and seek diversity and choice. Whether it's in the homes where we live, the places we work, the schools where we learn, the modes of transportation we choose, or the stores where we shop, people here in Beaverton and on the Westside appreciate and expect to have choices. The challenge for urban planners and policy makers is to provide these choices that allow Westside communities to develop the tax base to create vibrant communities and make OUR communities the greatest places.

Based on these four factors, Westside Economic Alliance supports and recommends the seven Westside locations proposed for expansion of the urban growth boundary as being appropriate, timely, and necessary.

Our concerns, however, are that these recommendations simply don't go far enough. While Metro has forecast our regional population to grow by a million more residents in the next 20 years, the total number of acres being proposed for discussion tonight, and later this month, represents a barely-perceptible increase of 1.25% in the current UGB. (3,194 gross acres÷254,000 acre UGB)

This rate is considerably lower than the historic growth trends in our region, less than Metro's own projections for population and employment growth in the next 20 years, and is being concentrated here on the Westside.

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More importantly, these recommendations are being contemplated at a time when 77,500 of your constituents and our neighbors are unemployed; when one in ten is living in poverty; when one in seven has no health insurance; and when one in five is dependent on food stamps and emergency food services to sustain themselves. Faced with these realities, we can no longer ignore the fact something is terribly wrong.

Councilors, these are not the indicators for a “vibrant community.” These are not the measures for “Making The Greatest Place.” These are not the standards of livability we would choose to describe our region. But they cannot be ignored.

Councilors, this is not the time to be cautious, or timid. If our local and state economies are going to be allowed to recover, we must provide choices, and find options to accommodate future growth and economic development opportunities. We cannot short-change the economic opportunities of future generations.

Westside Economic Alliance is concerned that Metro---and its advisory committees--have set our regional sights too low. By confining future expansion areas for employment in Hillsboro, and future residential development in Aloha and South Cooper Mountain, we limit choices, deny access, and restrict economic opportunities in Multnomah / Clackamas counties for generations.

In doing so, we also limit the financial resources needed to create the “vibrant communities” and “make the greatest places,” we say we want in this region. And with half the jobs and income tax produced in the state of Oregon concentrated in these three counties, the decisions you make about future growth opportunities in this region, will have a significant influence on the kind of state we enable Oregon to become.

If we are willing to accept one in eleven workers being unemployed, here is our blue print. If we are willing to accept chronic funding shortages and cutbacks in public school years, here's the plan. If we can look the other way, when one in ten of our neighbors is living in poverty, Metro Ordinance 11-1246 will limit our view. And if we can accept one of every five Oregonians going hungry, we can hold more meetings and public hearings during the dinner hour to talk about it.

But the members of Westside Economic Alliance do not accept these conditions as inevitable, and we challenge the Metro Council to aim higher, and to take a more holistic approach to our regional planning efforts, so that our region can deliver on the promises, and potential we are given.

Let us make the tri-county metro region, “The Best of Oregon.”

For additional information, we invite you to contact us at

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