

Overview of Oregon's UGB Process

Goal 14, the "Urbanization" goal, was one of the first goals adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission in 1973. The main objective of Goal 14 is to focus urban development inside urban growth boundaries in order to conserve farm and forest land and to foster the efficient use of land and public facilities. These objectives were originally derived from ORS 215.243, enacted in 1973 as Senate Bill 101, along with SB 100, which established LCDC and the statewide land use program.

Throughout the late 1970's and early 1980's, LCDC acknowledged 215 urban growth boundaries encircling all 240 cities. These included a few UGBs that surround two or more jurisdictions, and also included the Metro UGB, which provides a land supply for 24 cities and 3 counties. Throughout the acknowledgment process LCDC was required to interpret Goal 14's UGB amendment provisions, thereby establishing a considerable amount of "precedent" with regard to the goal. A number of court decisions established additional interpretive precedents regarding UGBs. When Goal 14 was amended and division 24 adopted in 2005-2006, the department attempted to "codify" important precedents, but many LCDC and Court precedents are not codified in rules or the goal.

In general, evaluating the adequacy of a UGB and, if necessary, amending it, involves several steps:

1. A forecast of long range population,
2. A determination of 20-year land needs,
3. An inventory of the existing land supply in the UGB, and
4. A determination as to whether the current UGB is adequate. If a UGB is not adequate, local governments must
5. Evaluate alternative areas around the UGB to decide which land to add, and
6. Land added must be zoned to provide the particular needs determined in #2, above.

A primary objective of Goal 14 is to concentrate urban development inside urban growth boundaries (UGBs), and to provide a sufficient supply of land for urban development needs while at the same time protecting the state's farm and forest lands. There are 215 UGBs in Oregon, all acknowledged with the finding that they included a 20-year supply of buildable land. Goal 14 establishes that UGBs must include developable land for housing and employment needs, and for livability, and early in the program LCDC interpreted this to mean a 20-year need (later rules and statutes further solidified this). The term "employment needs" has been interpreted to include industrial, retail, and office needs. The term "livability" has been interpreted to include parks and open space, but other interpretations have also been proposed, including interpretations about urban form.

Currently, the process and standards governing UGB amendments are located in three official state documents: State Law (primarily ORS 197.296 through 197.298), Statewide Planning Goal 14 (OAR 660, Division 015), and certain LCDC administrative rules (especially OAR 660, Division 24).