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*Sustaining Quality of Life in the Southern Willamette Valley*

December 16, 2003

**TO:** Metropolitan Policy Committee  
**FROM:** Carol Heinkel, Principal Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Status Report on Region 2050

This memo provides a status report on Region 2050, an effort to improve and sustain quality of life in Oregon's Southern Willamette Valley through regional collaboration.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

No action is requested at this time. This item will be presented for MPC discussion by Mike Dean, Regional Policy Advisory Board Chair. Staff will be available at the meeting to respond to questions.

**CURRENT STATUS**

Region 2050 is a voluntary, collaborative effort to sustain and improve quality of life in the Southern Willamette Valley.

On November 13, 2003, the Regional Policy Advisory Board gave formal approval to evaluate and obtain public input on three Alternative Regional Growth Scenarios, which have now been digitized at the land use level using the Regional GIS: Compact Urban Growth, Satellite Communities, and Rural Growth. The results of the evaluation, along with public input on these alternatives, will inform the development of a Preferred Growth Scenario, which will become part of a Regional Growth Management Strategy.

When the project is complete, Region 2050 participants will seek formal endorsement of the Regional Growth Management Strategy from the Lane County Board of Commissioners and the region's ten city councils. The strategy will be integrated. It will contain goals, objectives, and actions that address seven major areas affecting the region's quality of life, as well as the agreed-upon population and employment each jurisdiction will serve and accommodate over the next 50 years.

## **BACKGROUND**

Region 2050 began in 1999 with formal resolutions adopted by Lane County and the ten cities in the region, endorsing the concept of a Regional Growth Management Strategy and directing LCOG to seek funding.

Two local elected officials from Lane County and the ten cities, a member of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board, and staff from the Governor's office, working collaboratively with state and local agencies, serve on the Regional Policy Advisory Board that meets regularly to guide the Region 2050 process. Staff from these governments along with LTD and local utilities serve on a Regional Technical Advisory Committee (RTAC) that meets monthly.

In the first year of the process, the Policy Advisory Board unanimously agreed to a preliminary set of goal and objectives that provide broad policy guidance for the project. Region 2050 does not address the question of whether the region *should grow*. The project assumes the region *will grow* in the future and provides a collaborative means to determine how, when, and where it would best grow in order to meet the region's quality of life goals and objectives.

Region 2050 participants recognize that:

- Growth presents major challenges and opportunities.
- If growth is managed effectively at the regional level, we can maintain and improve key aspects of our livability.
- To be effective, we must work together because the actions, or inactions, of one community affect other communities.

The next step was to prepare a "base case" scenario and model that paints a picture of the region in the year 2050 if we continue to grow as we have in the past and implement current policy direction.

## **ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIOS**

In March, 2003, we began the process of designing alternative future scenarios. Seventy experts in seven fields from throughout the region were invited to participate in small groups to distribute residential and employment growth over the next 50 years on base maps of the region. The base maps showed constraints to development (floodway, steep slopes, etc) as well as opportunities for expansion of existing urban growth boundaries (i.e., rural lands that were divided and tax lotted prior to the adoption of comprehensive plans).

The workshop resulted in seven maps, each portraying a picture of the region in the year 2050. These maps had many common elements. They also had key differences. Staff incorporated these common elements and highlighted these differences in three alternative growth scenarios. These three scenarios will serve two objectives: 1) to evaluate the impacts of these growth patterns in preparation for a *preferred* growth scenario; 2) to use in public outreach to help prepare a *preferred* growth scenario that has public support.

### **Compact Urban Growth Scenario**

The Compact Urban Growth Scenario has population and growth concentrated primarily in the metro cities at the highest urban densities. In this scenario, Eugene and Springfield expand their boundaries more than in the other scenarios; three rural communities become part of the metro UGB: Alvadore, Goshen, and Pleasant Hill; and regional commuter services are provided throughout. In this scenario, all UGBs increase their share of the regional population, and there is more growth in the metro cities than in all the small cities combined. Of the small cities, Creswell and Veneta, the fastest growing cities in Lane County, are targeted to experience the most growth.

### **Satellite Communities Scenario**

The Satellite Communities Scenario paints a picture of the region with a much greater share of the region's people and jobs locating in the small cities and three rural communities or "growth centers:" Alvadore, Goshen and Pleasant Hill. Regional housing density is lower in this scenario than in the Compact Urban Growth Scenario because more growth occurs at small town densities. The boundaries of most of the small cities increase dramatically in this scenario and there is much less growth in the metro area; and this growth pattern is reflected in the regional distribution of the population. Almost all of the small cities, and the three growth centers, experience a greater share of growth, especially Veneta, Creswell, and Cottage Grove.

### **Rural Growth Scenario**

The Rural Growth Scenario makes bold assumptions about development on rural lands. It assumes that, by the year 2050, the UGBs have not expanded sufficiently to accommodate growth, and pressure to develop rural lands has led to relaxation of state land use laws. In this scenario, rural communities are assumed to develop at one acre lots and other rural residential lands at two acre lots. It also assumes two acre residential lots on some low quality farm and forest lands. In this scenario, Eugene's share of the regional population declines, Springfield's stays about the same, the small cities' increases slightly, and there is dramatic growth in the rural population. Of the small cities, Veneta and Coburg are the only two that show a noticeable increase in population. In terms of job growth, the metro cities and rural areas show a slightly higher share of jobs in the rural growth scenario. This is due to the assumption that, with more people, there will be more jobs in the rural area and, for the most part, rural residents will commute to the metro area for jobs as they do today.

## **THE NEXT STEP**

Staff are in the process of evaluating these scenarios. The evaluation now underway is comprehensive. It will provide the basis for an integrated strategy with goals, objectives, and actions addressing the seven areas of livability: land use, jobs, housing, transportation, natural resources, community facilities and services, and education.