

## Memorandum

Date: August 27, 2008

To: Chris Jordan, City Manager

From: Bryan Brown, Planning Director

Subject: Assessment of Local Community Aspirations to Inform Making Regional Growth Management Choices

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### **Integrating Local Aspirations in Metro's Long-Range Planning Efforts**

The Metro regional government is currently engaged in an unprecedented variety of long-range planning activities aimed at "Making the Greatest Place." A "Regional Choices Engagement Architecture (2008-2011)" chart (attached) has been prepared by Metro to bring many of the components and milestones together in a single place for this multi-year endeavor. As a stakeholder, West Linn and other local communities in the region have an opportunity to provide input as the various scenarios are developed, strategies are debated, priorities are raised and final choices are determined.

The Metro Council makes growth management decisions for the region. They must partner with the region's 26 local communities and counties to arrive at regional agreement on prioritizing public investments and capacity expectations. The end result of all of the planning efforts will be a growth management plan for the region based on identified "desired outcomes" measured through identified performance indicators. This growth management plan will determine where, when, and by how much the Urban Growth Boundary will be expanded to accommodate and provide for a 20-year urbanized land supply. The region will have a growth concept scenario, and individual cities will be expected to do their part to implement efficiency measures to achieve the growth management plan.

The process being utilized to get to the agreed upon growth management plan at this juncture includes a new emphasis on recognizing the unique individualized aspirations and visions of each community and therefore their ability and willingness to contribute to the capacity building that is needed for the region to achieve its growth management goals. It is my hope that Metro sees this process of identifying local capacity expectations based on achieving our own visions as a means leading to "Making Great Communities," which in turn when combined under the umbrella of an agreed upon regional growth concept plan and corresponding efficiency measures will also result in "Making the Greatest Place" for the region.

The process as being implemented has the potential to result in local capacity building that will be more pragmatic and realistic and engender greater buy-in by each local community to utilize the tools being researched and made available to us by Metro to work toward our agreed upon portion of our "capacity commitment." A possible concern about this planning process for West Linn and other communities who may have a somewhat limited ability or desire to absorb increased density or employment opportunities is if the growth scenario resulting from the collected local aspirations is found to fall short of achieving the desired outcomes and our regional partners agree to move

toward a more aggressive compact growth scenario which may again impose capacity building mandates contrary to our local vision.

Metro is now seeking local guidance and assistance in assessing individual “Local Community Aspirations.” Metro desires to assist local jurisdictions to achieve their visions within the context of the overall 2040 Regional Framework Plan. The key planning component activities which our input can contribute include:

- 1. Capacity analysis for the next Urban Growth Report**
- 2. Urban/Rural reserves process**
- 3. Voicing needs for additional technical assistance**

Metro’s “Local Aspirations” key work tasks and timeline is outlined in a 4/11/08 draft schedule (attached) showing both Phase 1 and Phase II activities. The “Goal” of this exercise is to seek mutually reinforcing commitments from regional partners to use tools and investments in ways that reinforce our regional and town centers, downtowns, main streets, and employment areas consistent with the Region 2040/Making the Greatest Place desired outcomes as articulated in Metro Resolution (No. 08-3940). Those regional desired outcomes as currently drafted are:

- 1. People live and work in vibrant communities where they can choose to walk for pleasure and to meet their everyday needs.**
- 2. Current and future residents benefit from the region’s sustained economic competitiveness and prosperity.**
- 3. People have safe and reliable transportation choices that enhance their quality of life.**
- 4. The region is a leader in minimizing contributions to global warming.**
- 5. Current and future generations enjoy clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems.**
- 6. The benefits and burdens of growth and change are distributed equitably.**

The above desired outcomes will be tested through a series of recommended “indicators” or “outputs” in the MetroScope scenario building model. Additional outputs are detailed in the performance measures which will be available from the Regional Transportation Plan travel forecast model.

### **Determining Our Own “Local Aspirations”**

A key mandate from Metro is to determine how much of the expected future population growth (see the 2060 Regional Population and Employment Forecast) will occur as infill within the current Urban Growth Boundary of the region or will move to the yet to be designated urban reserve areas as a future expansion of the UGB. It is incumbent upon Metro, counties, and cities to understand the development capacity within the existing urban area, the factors affecting that capacity, and the need for investment decisions to be made that can support that capacity. The recommendations for urban reserve areas are linked to capacity expectations in existing urban areas.

Metro will be asking local elected officials to provide feedback, or eventually make a commitment on how our priorities integrate with land use, investment and transportation choices. Metro intends to lead local discussions regarding individual community visions and choices for their future and will provide an explanation of the consequences that may come with those choices. If this is not provided, then we should ask for this information to be made available. We will be looking to Metro to further define what their questions are and what analysis, methodology, and format they want our response reported. They want us to:

- **Discuss if we are willing to support regional priorities and strategies that limit expansion of the UGB into the urban reserve areas to be designated.**

- **Decide which land use, transportation and investment strategies best support our community vision.**
- **Advise on which combinations of land use, transportation and investment will best support capacity needs and local and regional visions.**
- **Determine how many additional housing units or employment areas we can accommodate within our own local community. In other words, how many people will live and work in our community.**
- **Determine what intensity we are willing to transform our town centers and corridors into. They want to know what our vision is for the form future development will take.**
- **Recognize Metro’s current commitment based on the region’s 2040 Growth Concept to invest in centers and corridors that help to increase capacity (population and employment) building within the current UGB rather than expanding .**

It should be emphasized how important it is to understand how the local land use choices we make will likely lead to certain consequences later for the community. The need to target investments grows more critical each day. Those jurisdictions or areas willing and able to accommodate increased population growth (provide for additional housing units of a wide variety and type, or incorporate more dense mixed use commercial developments) will be able to more successfully compete for an increasingly limited source of investment funds.

It is important that local citizens and elected officials understand that as increased land use intensification occurs elsewhere, that various investment resources will also likely move to those locations as well. Should we as a community choose to maintain our current land use designations along our primary corridors we are less likely to be able to secure or compete for federal, state, or regional funds if our land use model does not conform to the capacity building form needed for the region as a whole? This will become particularly evident as we contemplate securing Highway 43 improvements or the extension of high capacity bus service or contemplate the possible future extension of the street car from Lake Oswego.

Metro wants local jurisdictions to understand that their willingness to listen to and accept local “choices” or “aspirations” will in turn partially determine consequences. We need to make our self-deterministic choices with a full understanding of what we may be giving up.

### **Local Capacity Insights**

It is commonly understood that the more housing units and commercial office or employment areas that we are able to accommodate or commit to both locally and as a region, the less need there will be to expand the UGB; thus preventing sprawl and protecting our rural environment, open spaces, farming and forest lands. It is now becoming equally clear that we must also reserve adequate open spaces, natural areas, food production lands, riparian and wildlife ecosystem corridors, along with residential housing, commercial areas, and employment lands within our urbanized areas in order to maintain a high quality of urban life. We also find ourselves immersed in a changing world where sustainable practices must become the norm as we combat climate change, switch to alternative, renewable, and more efficient forms of energy production and use and means of transportation. These factors are all impacted by the built form that our cities or population centers take. We are by necessity becoming increasingly adept at not only maintaining but improving the quality of life for people living in tighter and tighter patterns of socialized existence through improved urban design, providing for alternative means of getting around, better buildings

and infrastructure, and incorporating nature and environmental concerns and qualities back into our urbanized settlements.

It is from these findings in a changing world, and as a part of a larger Metro region from which we gain much local sustenance, that we as a community must continue to seek the proper balance between preservation of our community and continual evolution and investment to create the best opportunities for a continued high quality of life for this community in the future. Metro's "Investing in Communities Milestones" project chart dated 4/01/08 (attached) outlines some of the key steps and activities planned to enhance and support local capacity building in light of our own identified goals. It appears that the "local aspirations" endeavor may be a bit behind schedule making it essential that they continue to provide guidance in obtaining their needed response.

### **Specific Capacity Observations**

West Linn predominantly consists of low density single-family residential neighborhoods. We are a generally a suburban bedroom community. The limited commercial areas that we have are very important to us and continued efforts should be made to ensure that they continue to survive and evolve to meet the needs of the community. We currently have two town centers identified on Metro's 2040 Growth Map – the Willamette Old Town incorporating the nearby surrounding 10<sup>th</sup> Street commercial areas, and the Bolton neighborhood's West Central Village and nearby highway corridor areas. We also have acknowledgment in the designation of the Robinwood commercial area as a corridor main street. These designations are important as they place those areas of West Linn in a more favored position in terms of competing for possible regional investment opportunities over time.

Metro's newly evolving "Centers Spectrum" intends to recognize a large gradation and type to centers, each with varying levels of size, population, activity, commercial and residential mix, urban form, and residential density. The characteristics of successful "Centers" at each end of the "Spectrum" are expected to be defined to assist jurisdictions in maintaining or transforming if desired, their unique centers by identified benchmark metrics such as: minimum dwelling units/acre, desirable building heights, FARs, and various activity level goals achievable through the mix of land uses and transportation options and connections available. With Metro's focus on centers and corridor investments, the greater a center's capacity for accommodating future expansion needs while maintaining or transforming itself into a high quality urban environment, the better it will compete for available regional investments.

### **What's Next?**

This memorandum has summarized Metro's approach to including "local aspirations" into the current ongoing regional growth management planning efforts. It is obvious that Metro and their regional partners are involved in a very complex and time consuming process which is still in the relatively early stages.

It is important that West Linn be a part of the decision making process. As the avenues for participation are more clearly defined by Metro, staff will keep the Council and citizens informed. Metro has indicated they intend to help guide discussion on "local aspirations." Staff welcomes any suggestions that the Council or Planning Commission may have on how we might prepare for providing our input and response at this time. We will be glad to make further inquiries as to the format that Metro may like to see our response on this matter take.