

## **SB 716: Issues of Concern**

**Probable large-lot parcels would take prime farm land out of production; sufficient industrial and commercial lands already exist within the present UGB; and a preferable strategy would be supporting agricultural industry within rural areas and the development of existing industrial and commercial lands within the UGB**

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I was born on my family's homestead in Washington State and, after a move to Oregon at age 12, graduated from high school in McMinnville. For the past 40 years, I have lived in the Portland metropolitan area: Gresham and Troutdale, the Sunnyside area, southwest Portland, and for the last 10 years, Wilsonville.

Throughout that time, as a property owner and taxpayer, I have followed the land use planning process and development of the UGB. Because of my farming background, I have favored living on the edge of the urban development and recreating in rural areas just across the UGB. In both Gresham and Wilsonville, for example, I enjoy bike riding in the nearby rural areas. I have also biked with friends west of Hillsboro in the Washington County, again just past the UGB.

My perspective on SB 716, therefore, comes from my experience living and recreating along the UGB of Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. Based on this experience and my rural upbringing, I have strong reservations about SB 716.

### **1. Probable large-lot parcels would take prime farm land out of production**

The Oregon Department of Agriculture calls the French Prairie area "foundation farmland." Anyone driving south out of Wilsonville can see for themselves the high quality, agricultural use this "foundation farmland" supports: farm produce, dairies, nursery stock, seed production, iris & tulip tubers, onion fields, even turf for your yard project. It is because of this intensive agricultural use, in fact, that Oregon State University established one of its agricultural research stations immediately south of the Willamette River, just 2 miles east of I-5, and very near Langdon Farms Golf Course. This is where one of the world's finest agricultural valleys begins, and unlike California, our farmers do not have to worry about severe drought. In this French Prairie area, and indeed throughout the Willamette Valley, we should be supporting the agricultural sector of Oregon's economy, not undermining it.

### **2. Sufficient industrial and commercial lands already exist within the present UGB**

The land use process completed just two years ago provided sufficient inventory for the foreseeable future. In the three-county area encompassed by the UGB, 7,821 acres of industrial and commercial land are available, according to METRO. If new large-lot

tracts are added, who is going to pay for the infrastructure needed for added large lot parcels? As one example, according to ODOT, the Boone Bridge would need 500 million dollars of upgrades were the agricultural land just south of Wilsonville turned into industrial developments. Who pays for that? The nearby cities, the counties, the state are all stretched to the limit now. Ultimately, it would fall primarily on taxpayers, of course, and I am very concerned about any added tax burden from unneeded industrial development south of the Willamette.

**3. A preferable strategy would be supporting agricultural industry within rural areas and the development of existing industrial and commercial lands within the UGB**

Finally, SB 716 it represents a solution in search of a problem. With sufficient industrial and commercial land available within the existing UGB, where is the demonstrated need of adding more? Last year's "grand bargain" came about because of a botched planning process in Washington County. Where are the instances of comparable magnitude that rise to the level of legislative action needed now to override a multi-year and multi-jurisdictional process? No such problem has been established. In fact, just the opposite: the process in the Wilsonville area has been found by the Oregon Court of Appeals to have been completed fairly, according to the law. This being the case, why are we not expending our efforts to help local governments build infrastructure for the existing industrial and commercial tracts, thereby attracting developers and creating employment now?

**Summary: More good news than bad**

Ample industrial land is available within the present UGB and local governments are eager for help in turning those tracts into employment lands. Meanwhile, French Prairie farmers are creating a strong brand for their dairies, plant nurseries, hazelnut and fruit orchards, wineries, seed production, and farm produce activities. This superb agricultural land south of the Willamette River supports the very substantial agricultural traded sector of Oregon's economy. This is our lifeblood and we need to protect it.

**I urge the committee to recognize that SB 716 does not offer a productive way forward.**