



City of Medford

Planning Department

Working with the community to shape a vibrant and exceptional city

January 29, 2016

House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water
900 Court Streets, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301Address

RE: Support for HB 4126

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee:

This purpose of this letter is to notify you that the City of Medford is in support of the passage of HB 4126. By way of background information, the City's involvement in expanding its urban growth boundary actually goes back to 1994. As a result of Jackson County's denial of the City's proposed Urban Reserves at that time, Medford, Jackson County and six other cities joined in a lengthy process that came to be known as Regional Problem Solving. A regional plan for the County and the participating cities eventually was approved by the Land Conservation and Development Commission in 2012. One of the direct benefits of the plan was the identification of urban reserves for each participating jurisdiction. These areas are intended to supply enough land for a doubling of the population.

The City of Medford did not wait on the approval of the Regional Plan however, to begin its work on the UGB expansion. In 2007, the City conducted its Buildable Lands Inventory; in 2008, its Economic Element; in 2010, its Housing Element. With support of the Planning Commission and the City Council, the City successfully addressed what we considered to be the "efficiency measures" of ORS 197.296 (6)(a-c) by changing the comprehensive plan designation on over five hundred acres of land within the current city limits to allow for higher density development. The City went to great efforts to guarantee that lands within the current UGB would be used as efficiently as possible before trying to expand its UGB.

In the meantime, countless meetings and outreach to the public occurred to insure excellent communication and opportunities for community input. This included meetings with private property owners, their agents, County staff, staff from the Department of Land Conservation and Development, staff from 1000 Friends and various committees involved in implementation of the Regional Plan.

Finally, the Planning Department staff presented a recommended Urban Growth Boundary amendment, in accordance with the requirements of our Regional Plan, to the Planning Commission on March 12, 2015. After completing its hearings and forwarding

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a recommendation, the City Council then began its hearings in August, 2015. While the public testimony portion of the hearings has closed, the record is still open and the Council is formulating its final decision.

Although we followed the passage of HB 2254 and the ensuing rulemaking, we understood that the new UGB amendment procedures were optional for a city of Medford's size. We also believed the new rules would not affect the City because we had notified DLCD of its upcoming hearings on the proposed UGB amendment prior to passage of the bill.

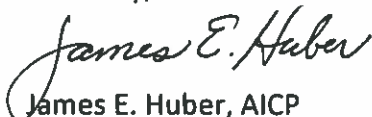
Simply put, we are not in a position to begin another UGB amendment process, regardless of how streamlined the new process may be. The amount of time, money and effort spent not only by the City but also by involved parties is enormous. Our Planning Commission and City Council have taken and continue to take the process very seriously by evidence of the amount of time dedicated to it and by their care in making a final recommendation (Planning Commission) and decision (City Council). To inadvertently allow that the ground rules for the City of Medford (and other cities) might change and that the City would have to start over would be a serious and costly mistake.

We urge you to pass HB 4126 to allow the City of Medford to complete its work on the Urban Growth Boundary amendment under the rules it has carefully followed to date.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 541 774 2380 or via e-mail at james.huber@cityofmedford.org.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



James E. Huber, AICP
Planning Director

cc: File