

February 20, 2024

Dear Chair Fahey and members of the committee,

I am not alone in being surprised by the process in North Plains and I am part of a small group of local residents who have been working to become part of the solution to a reasonable, sustainable, and attainable urban plan for the city of North Plains. I hope to continue being part of a solution either before or after the referendum process. I also encourage you to vote to honor the referendum as a legal process that is enshrined in Oregon’s constitution as a specific remedy for residents to respond to decisions of this type. North Plains’ UGB expansion though is a unique one that should not be construed as typical: its resident engagement has been cursory and the proposed expansion is among the largest in Oregon’s history. This should not be seen as a typical situation that requires a global remedy.

However, since learning of this in early 2023 I worked to provide feedback and supportive engagement as the city council wrapped up their initial process. My concerns fall into three areas:

1. **The engagement process has been cursory**, with a focus on informing residents and neighbors and has not invited feedback or engagement;
2. **The referendum process has been misconstrued**. At its best, is an invitation to a conversation. In this case, **it is a narrow remedy to pull back a single ordinance in a timely fashion** rather than pursuing a recall of city councilors or other broader response.
3. The conversation about **land use has not engaged with the quality of the farmland nor the actual status of the lots due to the Grand Bargain**.

First, the engagement process. The city’s [own evidence](#) (linked to Tom Holt’s list of North Plains engagement activities) shows a list of passive postings that have not brought city staff into dialogue with other residents over this project. While I understand that public engagement since 2020 has required ingenuity and commitment, this list does not even include common practices including Zoom Q/A sessions, presence at public celebrations and festivals nor a presence at any place that is not already a city meeting. North Plains is a small, highly engaged town with several annual festivals, a library with compelling programming, a valuable senior center and multiple spaces for gatherings of this sort. When I compare their activities to Goal 1 with an international group that sets best practices, the [International Association for Public Participation](#), I see that Goal 1 requests that communities commit to engaging residents at the “Consult” or “Involve” level, while North Plains has stayed at the

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

© IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved. 20181112_v1

lowest level of “Inform”, if we take their engagement in the most favorable light.

In the canvassing I performed as part of the referendum, I further learned that many residents and homeowners within the city are non-citizens. I have not seen North Plains independently request their opinions on these changes, which would substantially impact their lives. I hope this is an opportunity to commit to investing in relationships and shared visioning with residents, regardless of their voting status.

Second, the referendum is only for voters to decide whether to approve or retract the UGB ordinance.

It does not inform or affect other supporting documents, such as the EOA, the HNA or other work that the city and its consultants have provided. Representing that this threatens the full process or hijacks the land use powers of the city is not true: should the city choose, they could propose a different UGB expansion right now, or, should the referendum vote down the present UGB ordinance, the City Council could pass the same UGB expansion again.

I will say that much of the feedback we received during canvassing was about the sheer size of the expansion because the 855 acre expansion more than doubles the size of North Plains, and a fatalistic sense that individuals could not affect the city’s process.

Third, the land under discussion has been misrepresented. The land surrounding NP was classified as undesignated through the Grand Bargain ([this link is to the urban and rural reserves map managed by Metro](#)). The Grand Bargain did not commit this land to the UGB as a guarantee and it did not create a process where those land owners were guaranteed a specific city’s incorporation in that timeline. And in the case of a UGB, North Plains must both demonstrate its need and fulfill Goal 1 of engaging with residents as it develops a plan. As you can see in the testimony submitted, residents and owners of this land outside the UGB, have different expectations and hopes for the land. I see North Plains existing next to Metro while benefiting from the opportunity to not do comprehensive planning with other metro communities.

Other folks have said this better, but the land around North Plains is valuable for more than growth. The quality of the soil, the investments made in the irrigation infrastructure and the commitment to farming from residents contribute to this valuable soil with local human capital and knowledge to make incredible amounts of food, fiber, and forest products.

I appreciate your engagement with the range of concerns here and hope that you uphold and support engaged, respectful and committed local decision making

Victoria Demchak, Helvetia OR