

Dear,

In case you are short on time and want to cut to the chase, I'm a constituent of yours and I encourage you to vote no on SB 1537, the expansion of the UGB.

While expansion of the boundaries may seem like a viable option, it is very shortsighted, in my opinion. First, it reduces arable land needed to produce food, provide jobs and a substantial portion of Oregon's tax base. But perhaps more importantly, expanding the growth boundary sends the message to citizens here and elsewhere that there is no limit on the land's carrying capacity for more people.

As has been said, and proven, time and again: We cannot build our way out of congestion. The answer is restraint, and humanity is not keen on restraint.

An essay that really impacted me some years ago, written by a molecular biologist and author, held that the human species, like all other life on earth, is programmed to reproduce to satisfy a primal urge to survive. He likened our covering the Earth to bacteria in a petri dish...it knows no boundaries; it eats until there is no more to eat, and then there is a huge die off. I can't see that our attitudes about land use and resource use aren't proof of what he postulates. When we show no restraint on development and consumption, war is a barbaric manifestation. Pandemics are another sure way to reduce the strain.

Before humans settled into permanent villages, domesticated plant and animal life, and then created stratified societies to accommodate fewer hours of labor and much more supply (wealth), we had a biological choice about the consequences of those acts. Obviously, we didn't see the consequences, any more than bacteria can see the future consequences of their behavior. Despite our massive problem solving capability, humans were unable to see the consequences of harnessing the power of fire, steam, fossil fuels, the atom and AI. If you look at any graph showing the trends in population growth, pollution, and reduction of natural resources such as air, water, oil, and arable land, it's a very steep upward curve starting at the dawn of civilized societies, but most pronounced beginning 200 years ago, with the "Industrial Revolution." It doesn't take a genius to see that the chart leads to a peak, and then a drop, perhaps precipitous.

I don't see politicians talking in any meaningful way about restraint. Nobody wants to be the generation that says "no" to the present or next generation. But if we don't, our impulse to grow and hoard and go to war over scarcity will end in an immense die off, and it will be painful, ugly and perhaps unavoidable. But, as an elder in a society that is heading off the cliff, I want to be talking about Personal Floatation Devices and lifeboats. That's what saying "no" to getting rid of the UGB amounts to for me.

While I haven't read the details of the bill, a panelist (a retired university professor of economics) said last week, after [viewing the movie](#) (An Oregon Story, Saving Our Beaches, Farmland and More) that the proposed expansion will not preclude the building of McMansions and single family developments at market value. And, once the door to expansion is opened, there is no guarantee of it ever closing again. So, the urgency for affordable housing will not be fully addressed. Nor will the law deal with the untenable inflationary conditions, which include the predatory practices of lending institutions, which only fuel inflation.

There's a novel project in Salem, and perhaps elsewhere, that is looking at removing the profit motivation from affordable housing development. I've put a [link here to an article](#) I wrote about it. So, while debating the boundary limits, why not also debate the economics of home ownership. Is it a right or a privilege? If it continues to be treated as a privilege, we are going to eat up the fuel in our petri dish rather quickly.

Tim Buckley
Salem