



November 6, 2023

To: Corvallis City Council  
Benton County Board of Commissioners

From: League of Women Voters of Corvallis Board of Directors

Re: Urban Fringe Management Agreement

The League of Women Voters of Corvallis has a standing position that supports long-term comprehensive planning that involves consideration of social, cultural, and aesthetic factors, as well as land use, utilities and transportation facilities. Based on that position, **we strongly encourage the City of Corvallis and Benton County to work together to guide development in the Urban Fringe in ways that are purposeful, productive and align with community values expressed through vision statements and other planning documents.** The 1990 Urban Fringe Management Agreement (UFMA) is overdue for revision and is a logical place to embed the foundation of this values-based collaboration to lead us into the future. This collaborative approach will help the city meet its goals for affordable housing without increasing sprawl.

At a time when more housing is desperately needed in Corvallis, the Urban Fringe is an important resource. Many other cities in Oregon are anxious to expand their urban growth boundaries so they can meet their housing needs. In Corvallis, we still have an adequate supply of land within our boundary so this is not necessary. We can utilize higher density housing and infill opportunities within the city, along with development in the Urban Fringe, to meet our housing needs without sprawl and without encroaching on our natural features.

The Urban Fringe has seen development that has been haphazard and reactive. Many examples exist, especially in the northeast part of the Urban Fringe. Large lots that were not developed with reasonable set-asides for transportation or adequate infrastructure for future development have created challenging dilemmas for city planners. Areas such as those in the triangle northeast of Philomath Blvd. and 53<sup>rd</sup> have properties that could be ideal for infill development if, again, street easements had been created. Collaborative planning could ensure that such omissions can be avoided.

The city and county visions, city-specific plans, and many other documents include bits and pieces of good planning ideas. But the UFMA doesn't incorporate these ideas. The city's 1998 Comprehensive Plan, cited in the county's Comprehensive Plan, says the provisions of the 1990 UFMA are "...the primary mechanisms for coordinating planning and review of land use applications..." However, there are no guiding principles within the document that would demonstrate the shared goals of the city and county to be used in reviewing development.

Our "Recommendations for Revisions to the UFMA" are on the following page. These recommendations are based on elements of the city and county visions and discussions in the LWV of Corvallis Housing Committee, Community Planning Committee, and Board of Directors.

Please move quickly to revise the UFMA in a way that encourages development in the Urban Fringe that will provide additional needed housing and help implement Imagine Corvallis 2040 as a "compact, well-planned, livable city...that advances the well-being of all residents".

## **Recommendations for Revisions to the Urban Fringe Management Agreement**

The League of Women Voters of Corvallis recommends that any agreement between the City of Corvallis and Benton County concerning development in the Urban Fringe be forward-looking and strategic. To do so, it should extend the principles and values of *Imagine Corvallis 2040: Our Community Vision in Action* and *Benton County 2040 Thriving Communities Initiative* beyond the city limits and to the urban growth boundary.

We recommend consideration of the following:

1. Any agreement should cite the Plan and Change section of *Imagine Corvallis 2040*: “Corvallis is a compact, well-planned city with extensive mixed-use development, including jobs in downtown and along major corridors. Vibrant neighborhoods contain a diverse mix of housing, retail and affordable housing, parks and open spaces – all accessible by transit, biking, and walking.”
2. Any agreement should include a purpose statement to guide future planning.
3. Any agreement should align with the goals and intent of the state’s Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities program.
4. Any agreement should encourage the sound planning and development of infrastructure, including active transportation, efficient energy practices, and effective public safety.
5. Any agreement should plan for an adequate supply of affordable, workforce and middle housing that supports the growth of a diverse population.
6. Any agreement should encourage incentivizing growth in targeted areas of the Urban Fringe that meets the community’s needs, utilizing methods that have been tried successfully in other Oregon communities and using resources that may have become available recently through changes in Oregon law.
7. Any agreement should honor the community’s value in natural features.
8. Any agreement should honor the community’s value in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.