

13900 NW Old Germantown Road
Portland, Oregon 97231
September 10, 2009

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214

RE: Urban and Rural Reserves

Dear Chair and Commissioners,

In a world of PowerPoint and sound bites, the Reserves process is a unique chance to stretch our minds to encompass the Region in space and at least half a century in time. We are able to work together towards a truly sustainable future. Yet in many of the sessions we've attended there are many voices talking past each other. Agencies often focus on current regulations and responsibilities. Business advocates often focus on the hoped-for next iteration of the past 50 years of practice. Many landowners on the UGB fringe hope to cash in soon on speculative value increases of a rural-to-urban transition. Advocates for long-term agriculture, forest, and natural features values have not succeeded in changing the perceptions of those other groups.

You, our elected officials, must speak for our continued economic health; for the animals, plants, streams, and soils which enrich this region; and also for the many people struggling to cope due to poverty, chronic illness, age, or misfortune. In our common future there must be vision to not merely balance, but rather to synthesize these many factors. We literally cannot live long with a degraded or despoiled environment. We also do not want our grandchildren to be impoverished.

Many trends for the next 50 years are already becoming evident: a much higher proportion of older people, a greater need for smaller and cheaper dwellings, less driving and more transit requiring more compact development, higher food prices with greater demand for local food, much less energy use, an increased need for community-supporting neighborhood interactions, and a desire for natural experiences and education to be within 5 miles instead of 50 miles. In our judgment, to continue urban sprawl will deliver us poverty, inequality, and a ruined environment. To replace historically-successful agriculture with speculative and often short-term commercial and industrial uses and with unsustainable sprawl subdivisions is an error of Biblical proportions. It is trading our common birthright for a bowl of pottage.

The only way to meet all the Factors in the Reserves Administrative Rules is to maintain the Rural areas which still survive, while improving the utilization of our existing Urban areas within the UGB to create thriving and accessible urban uses. This is not an unrealistic dream. For two generations, Fred Meyer stores had parking lots on the roof. At SE 11th and Division is a Ford assembly plant which functioned for more than two decades on one acre along the rail lines and streetcar. What knowledge and sensibility did our forebears have, which our times have lost?

It is with these thoughts in mind that we implore you to follow through on the recommendation of the Multnomah County Reserves Citizens Advisory Committee, and make all of rural west Multnomah County a Rural Reserve. The shared vision of five contiguous neighborhood groups spanning the

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Multnomah/Washington County border is for extensive Rural Reserves north of Highway 26 which will provide clean streams, accessible farms, healthy wildlife populations, continuing forestry, rural recreation, protection for Forest Park, and a strong sense of place for the Region. We also know that many infrastructure costs would be extreme if urbanized, and some, such as mitigation for heavier traffic on cross-mountain roads such as Cornell and Germantown, are virtually impossible.

The letters submitted by Forest Park Neighborhood Association, Hillside Neighborhood Association, Northwest District Association, and in Washington County, Citizens Participation Organization 7 and Save Helvetia, contain myriad examples and rationales explaining the regional value of Rural Reserves in this northwest quadrant of the region. To those let us just emphasize one more: our descendants will have more options available to meet their needs 50 years hence if we bequeath them a Rural Reserve today instead of initiating a one-way process of urbanization via Urban Reserves. Please make northwest Multnomah County a Rural Reserve.

Thank you for your consideration and vision.

Sincerely,

Jim Emerson
Forest Park Neighborhood Association President

Judith Emerson

cc: Rex Burkholder, Metro Councilor