Statewide Land Use Planning

Since 1973, Oregon has maintained a strong statewide program for land use planning. The foundation of the program is a set of 19 statewide planning goals. The goals express the state's policies on land use and related topics, such as citizen involvement, housing, and natural resources, and carry the weight of law. Most of the goals are accompanied by “guidelines,” which are recommendations about how a goal may be applied. Following the guidelines is not mandatory, but observing the goals is critical to the success of the planning program. The goals are listed at right.

Oregon’s statewide goals are achieved through local comprehensive planning. State law requires each city and county to develop a comprehensive plan and the implementing policies needed to put the plan into effect. In effect, the planning program becomes a partnership between state and local governments. Local governments do the planning and administer most of the land use regulations and the state sets the standards for such planning. The resulting mosaic of state-approved local comprehensive plans covers all of Oregon.

Local Comprehensive Plans

A local comprehensive plan guides a community’s land use, conservation of natural resources, economic development, and public services. As citizens play a crucial role in all aspects of planning in the state, the plan reflects the objectives citizens have for their community. Each plan has two main parts: a factual base and a policy element.

The factual base is a body of data and information that inventories and describes a community’s resources and features. It must address all of the topics specified in the applicable statewide goals. The policy element sets forth the community’s long-range objectives and the policies by which it intends to achieve them. The policy element of each community’s plan is adopted by ordinance and has the force of law. Every comprehensive plan is accompanied by a set of implementing measures. There are many different kinds. The most common measures are land division ordinances, zoning, and urban growth boundary (UGB) agreements.

Local plans may be changed through plan amendments or periodic review. Plan amendments are small, unscheduled adjustments to a plan. Periodic reviews are broad evaluations of an entire plan that occur every four to ten years. A plan may be modified extensively after such a review.

Review of Local Plans

Because local comprehensive plans must be consistent with the statewide planning goals, plans are reviewed by the state’s Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). LCDC directs Oregon’s statewide planning program. The commission’s seven members are unsalaried volunteers, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. The term of appointment is four years. When LCDC officially approves a local plan, the plan is said to be “acknowledged.” It then acts as the controlling document for land use in the area covered by the plan.

Mapped Representations

Map 18 depicts LCDC’s summary classification of the zoning in the Willamette River Basin. Land use zoning determines the types of activities that can occur on the land. A density of housing or timber harvesting activities. While an area may be zoned for a particular type of use, some or all of that area may not be used as zoned (an example would be an area zoned for residential use that is still partially in agricultural use). As such, the zoning designations the map portrays reflect both current conditions and anticipated conditions.

As these zoning classifications are developed at the county and metropolitan levels, zoning classifications vary from county to county. This results in several analogous classifications on the map, as well as some unique ones. All counties have “exclusive farm use” (EFU) categories, though the specific regulations of these categories may vary. The Tangent EFU represents a unique occurrence of an EFU zoning, occurring within Tangent’s urban growth boundary (UGB) (Fig. 91).

| Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals | 1. Citizen Involvement—Goal 1 calls for “the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process.” It requires each city and county to have a citizen involvement program with six components specified in the goal. It also requires local governments to have a committee for citizen involvement (CICU) to inform and encourage public participation.
| 2. Land Use Planning—Goal 2 outlines the basic procedures of Oregon’s statewide planning program. It states that land-use decisions are to be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan, and that a local comprehensive plan is required for every city and county. It also requires that plans be based on factual information. The local plans and ordinances must be coordinated with those of other jurisdictions and agencies, and that public notice be given periodically and amended as needed. Goal 2 also contains standards for taking exceptions to statewide goals. An exception may be taken when a statewide goal cannot or should not be applied to a particular area or situation.
| 3. Reviews of Agricultural Plans—Goal 3 defines “agricultural lands.” It then requires counties to inventory such lands and to “preserve and maintain” them through exclusive farm use (EFU) zoning.
| 4. Forest Lands—This goal requires forest lands and requires counties to inventory these lands and adopt policies and ordinances that will “conserve forest lands for forest uses.”
| 5. Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas and Natural Resource Protection—Goal 5 encompasses 12 different types of resources, including wildlife habitats, mineral resources, wetlands, and waterways. It establishes a process through which resource use must be evaluated. If a resource or site is found to be important, the local government has three policy choices: to preserve the resource, to allow the proposed use, and to require that the proposed use be applied in a manner that is “in harmony” with the resource.
| 6. Air, Water, and Land Resource Quality—This goal requires local comprehensive plans and implementing measures to be consistent with state and federal regulations on matters such as groundwater pollution.
| 7. Areas Subject to Natural Disasters and Hazards—Goal 7 deals with development in places subject to natural hazards such as floods or wildfires. It requires that jurisdictions apply “appropriate safeguards” (floodplain zoning, for example) when planning for development there.
| 8. Recreation Needs—This goal calls for cities to develop inventory, analyze, and plan for recreation and develop plans to deal with the projected demand for them. It also sets forth detailed standards for expanded sized of development resulting from recreation needs.
| 9. Economy of the State—Goal 9 calls for diversification and improvement of the economy. It sets standards to inventory commercial and industrial lands, project future needs for such lands, and plan and zone enough land to meet those needs.
| 10. Housing—This goal specifies that each city must plan for and accommodate needed housing types (typically, multifamily and manufactured housing). It requires each city to inventory its buildable residential lands, project future needs for such lands, and plan and zone enough buildable land to meet those needs. It also prohibits local plans from discriminating against needed housing types.
| 11. Public Facilities and Services—Goal 11 calls for efficient planning of public services such as sewers, water, and roads and to “preserve and maintain” them through exclusive farm use (EFU) zoning.
| 12. Transportation—Goal 12 calls for a “safe, convenient and economical transportation system” and also for communities to address the needs of the “transportation disadvantaged.”
| 13. Economic Development—Goal 13 requires local governments to inventory Oregon’s major economic resources and to “preserve and maintain” them through exclusive farm use (EFU) zoning.
| 14. Urbanization—Goal 14 calls for efficient planning of public services such as sewers, water, and roads and to “preserve and maintain” them through exclusive farm use (EFU) zoning.
| 15. Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas and Natural Resource Protection—Goal 15 aims to provide “natural beauty and quality” to the state by protecting open spaces, scenic and historic areas, and natural resources.
| 16. Estuarine Resources—Goal 16 sets plans for developing estuarine resources. It requires that plans include a “management plan” for the state’s estuarine resources.
| 17. Coastal Shorelands—Goal 17 calls for efficient planning of coastal shorelands. It requires that plans include a “management plan” for the state’s coastal shorelands.
| 18. Beaches and Dunes—Goal 18 sets plans for developing beaches and dunes. It requires that plans include a “management plan” for the state’s beaches and dunes.
| 19. Ocean Resources—Goal 19 calls for efficient planning of ocean resources. It requires that plans include a “management plan” for the state’s ocean resources.

Figure 91. The exclusive farm use zone within the urban growth boundary of the City of Tangent. The EFU and urban zone are bordered in black.
Map 18. 1990 Land Use Zoning

Category | Percent of Basin Area
---|---
Forestry | 63.46
Agriculture | 25.30
City Limits | 4.29
Urban Growth Boundary | 6.09
Other Urban | 0.23
Rural Residential | 3.45
Rural Commercial | 0.01
Rural Industrial | 0.01
Rural Service Center | 0.07
Parks & Recreation | 0.28
Public Facility | 0.00
Natural Resource | 0.49
Water Bodies | 0.43
County boundaries | Not applicable

NOTE: Percentages do not total to one hundred. City limits are not in all cases within urban growth boundaries. Urban-growth boundary represented here includes city limits. 1995 UGBs outside of city limits occupy ~1.8% of the WRB.
Finley Wildlife Refuge, Benton County
Photo: Mike Flaxman

Downtown Portland, Multnomah County
Photo: Kenny Helphand

Brice Creek Road, Lane County
Photo: Allan Branscomb

South Santiam River Watershed, Linn County
Photo: Allan Branscomb

Covered Bridge over Marys River at Harris Road,
Benton County Photo: Allan Branscomb

Main Street Cottage Grove near Old River,
Lane County Photo: Allan Branscomb

Tualatin River Watershed, Washington County
Photo: Allan Branscomb

Clackamas River, Clackamas County
Photo: Allan Branscomb