

Understanding some of the history of planning policy in Oregon gives perspective on the current issues and challenges neighborhoods face through everyday land use proceedings. Here is why the planning process exists in the city of Portland:

In the 1960's, Oregon was the sixth fastest growing state in the nation. Within the state, there was growing concern for the environment (which was realized in the passage of legislation to protect shoreline, forests and rivers.) It became clear to citizens and state politicians alike that with the pressure of growth, protection of viable farmland was needed to maintain the state's agricultural economy, particularly within the Willamette Valley, home to some of the state's most productive farmland and also the most densely populated region of the state. The most active players in creating a strict growth policy within Oregon were a small group of republican farmer-legislators, as well as a relatively liberal citizens group led by Republican Governor, Tom McCall. The long term effects of the policies created during this time was to sustain farmland base, sustain strong urban centers and keep the network of infrastructure affordable and sustainable over time. The statewide policies also provided protection for other environmental aspects of the state, such as the coast line, the Willamette River Greenway, wetlands and state forests.

Three major legislative acts laid the groundwork for controlled growth in Oregon. The first was Senate Bill 10 passed in 1969. This bill required every city and county in the state to have a comprehensive land use plan that met specific standards for development and density targets. This law was initially ineffective due to lack of enforcement, but it paved the way for the stronger Senate Bills 100 and 103 passed in 1973.

The effects of Bills 100 and 103 were widespread. Initially, Bill 100 established a new state commission appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate to adapt goals for city and state comprehensive plans. This created an agency to implement land use laws within the state, making the Senate Bills stick. The governor appointed commission held 80 hearings statewide to assess what citizens thought the statewide planning goals should be. Out of the hearings, the commission created and adopted 19 statewide planning goals for city and county planning. The goals required all cities and counties to have a comprehensive growth plan, required state agencies to comply with the goals, and allowed enforcement of the goals by citizens as well as government agencies. There is also a requirement within the goals for the creation and maintenance of Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB), which ideally allow for an adequate supply of buildable land to be developed with urban infrastructure services, but also protects existing farmlands outside the Boundary from urban encroachment. Bill 100 gave the state's Land Conservation Development Commission (LCDC) power to review and approve all comprehensive plans depending on the conformation with statewide goals.

Statewide Planning History

Statewide planning goals are currently reflected in Portland through the revision of the citywide comprehensive plan, now called the Portland Plan. Over the next three years, the Bureau of Planning will revise the comprehensive plan to reflect the planning needs of Portland for the next 20 years based on the assessments of their own bureau as well as a Citizens Advisory Committee, which has not yet been created, but is currently being developed.