

Frequently Asked Questions: Urban Reserves Project Background

What are Urban Reserves?

Urban Reserves are a special designation, allowed by state law, for lands outside the urban growth boundary (UGB) that can be considered a first priority if and when a city needs to expand for a growing population. Currently, we have enough land within our UGB to meet forecasted population growth until 2032. The goal of Urban Reserves planning is to identify where Eugene may grow to serve up to 30 years of population growth beyond the 2032 UGB, or as late as 2062. Similar to a UGB, Urban Reserves are supposed to include enough land needed for housing and jobs, as well as public lands such as parks, schools and other services. However, Urban Reserve lands remain rural, and cannot be urbanized, unless they are brought into a city's UGB through the formal process for expansion. Urban Reserves must be jointly agreed upon and designated by the Eugene City Council and Lane County Board of Commissioners.

Why are we planning for Urban Reserves?

Eugene's future rate of population growth is uncertain, and our best predictions are likely to be wrong. If we grow faster than anticipated, we need to be prepared. This means having options identified, like Urban Reserves, so we can respond once we know how quickly we are growing and what type of land we will need. Urban Reserves can also help landowners surrounding the UGB plan for their future by clarifying which properties will be reserved for possible urban use and which ones will not. Similarly, with Urban Reserves in place, Eugene, Lane County and service providers like EWEB, LTD, and others will be better able to plan for the costs and coordination needed to serve future neighborhoods with public facilities and services.

What is the urban growth boundary (UGB)?

The urban growth boundary (UGB) is the cornerstone of land use planning in Oregon. It is the line that separates urban uses from rural uses with the aim of protecting our farm and forest lands while making sure we have enough space for the needs of a growing urban population to live, work and play. Every city in Oregon is required to have an urban growth boundary, which must contain enough land for housing, employment, parks and schools for the next 20 years of projected population growth.

Will Urban Reserve areas be managed by City of Eugene or Lane County?

Land within areas designated as Urban Reserves will remain rural and within Lane County's jurisdiction. Designating land as Urban Reserves does not make it part of Eugene. This means that land use decisions and applications for building permits will still go through Lane County.

How long until Urban Reserves are brought into the UGB?

That depends on how fast Eugene is growing and how quickly we are using up the supply of developable land within the UGB. Eugene's new [Growth Monitoring Program](#) will allow us to regularly analyze how quickly the City's land is developing and when a UGB expansion may be needed. Any future UGB expansion onto urban reserve land will go through a state-guided process which requires a rigorous analysis of 20-year land needs using the most up-to-date population forecasts and identifying strategies to develop more compactly inside the current UGB before expanding.

Which Urban Reserve land is likely to come into the UGB first?

Land already abutting the UGB will most likely come in first, depending on the type of land needed and the results of the UGB analysis. It will be incrementally brought into the UGB as we grow and know what types of land we need.

How would the Urban Growth Boundary expansion process be different with Urban Reserves in place? Would we still need to go through all that analysis?

Designating Urban Reserves does not change if and when the urban growth boundary gets expanded. The process for UGB expansion is tightly controlled by state law and we would still need to complete the required analysis, including identifying ways to grow more compact inside the current UGB. If that analysis does find a need to expand, City Council could then initiate the UGB expansion process. Once Urban Reserves are designated (by the City and County), they automatically become the first priority of land to analyze when it is time to determine where to expand the UGB. The final step is bringing urban reserve land into the UGB to meet the type of land needs identified. Urban reserve land will be further analyzed and planned based on our expansion needs, then brought into the UGB for those specific uses, such as housing or jobs. The Urban Reserves technical analysis will help streamline the UGB process, such as the development of the study area and land supply model, which will also be used for UGB expansion analysis.

Does designating Urban Reserves limit our options for future UGB expansions?

No; by undertaking urban reserves planning now our goal is to provide better options for any necessary UGB expansions later. Urban Reserves planning analyzes and ultimately designates land that is most suitable for future urbanization according to state rules. These large areas of land will then become the first priority lands we can select from for future UGB expansions. So, the planning we are doing today will help us grow into areas better suited for future neighborhoods later--areas with land for homes, jobs, parks and schools that can be efficiently served by roads, transit, water, sewer, fire protection, and other important utilities and services.

What's the timeline?

Urban Reserves planning has been underway since 2018. The Eugene City Council and the Lane County Board of Commissioners have directed staff to have urban reserves in place by the time we have our first growth monitoring report ready. Staff brought an Urban Reserve proposal to the [Eugene City Council](#) and the [Lane County Board of Commissioners](#) for their direction in November 2020. They directed staff to begin the formal adoption process, with the goal of public hearings beginning in Summer 2021.

Why are Urban Reserves important now?

Housing supply and affordability are critically important issues for our community. We are coordinating our Urban Reserves planning with the work of our Growth Monitoring program so that Urban Reserves are in place before the UGB is re-examined. Without Urban Reserves in place, state law would likely limit future UGB expansions for housing to exception areas and non-resource lands. These include properties like the airport, LCC, and rural residential lands scattered around the City. The problem is, many of these areas are already developed to some degree and have a low likelihood of redevelopment if brought into the UGB. You may remember from the UGB process that our studies showed most of these lands are extremely expensive to serve and may not meet our community's needs. This is a key point, because if

we don't have Urban Reserves in place when there is a need to expand our UGB, then our choices will be limited to only these areas. Urban Reserves gives us additional options for smart growth and for meeting the goals of Envision Eugene if and when there is a need to expand.

Will Urban Reserves change the current Urban Growth Boundary?

Planning for Urban Reserves will not change Eugene's current Urban Growth Boundary. Urban Reserves planning simply identifies first priority land for when Eugene needs to expand. Any future UGB expansion onto urban reserve lands will go through the same state-guided process, which requires a rigorous analysis of 20-year land needs using the most up-to-date population forecasts.

Will this process include planning for Rural Reserves?

State law currently only allows communities to designate Rural Reserves in the Portland Metro area. Even though Rural Reserves will not be designated as part of Urban Reserves planning, rural residents should benefit from the greater clarity over what land could be brought into the UGB in the future. By default, any land that is not included in Urban Reserves should remain rural for at least the next 50 years. In addition, rural landowners could work with land trusts to put conservation easements on their property which would limit the future development potential of their land in perpetuity.

How many people are we planning for?

The 2019 draft Portland State University (PSU) population forecast for Eugene shows a 2062 population of 262,411 people. Urban Reserves will plan for *up to* approximately 49,000 additional people expected between 2032 and 2062.

So, how large will Urban Reserves be?

In November 2020, the [Eugene City Council](#) and the [Lane County Board of Commissioners](#) directed staff to move forward with the 27-Year Urban Reserve Option. It includes 5,940 acres of land, enough to accommodate population growth between 2032-2059. For more information about the [27-Year Option](#), visit the [Urban Reserves Options Story Map](#).

If the proposed Urban Reserve area is planning for as far out as 2059, won't your projections and analysis be outdated by then?

Eugene's future rate of population growth is uncertain and our best predictions are likely to be wrong. Urban Reserves help us plan for that uncertainty by identifying land for *potential* future UGB expansion. Urban Reserves land is not assigned a specific use at this time; it is simply identified now so that we can incrementally bring it into the UGB in the future, as needed.