

Urban Reserves FAQs



Background FAQs

1. [What are urban reserves?](#)

Urban reserves are 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. Urban reserves planning identifies where Eugene may grow to serve up to 30 years of population growth beyond the UGB planning period. 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.

2. [Why did we create 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.

3. [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.

4. [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.

5. [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 [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.

6. [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.

7. [How will the Urban Growth Boundary expansion process be different with urban reserves in place? Will we still need to go through all that analysis?](#)

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. Urban reserves automatically become the first priority land to analyze when it is time to determine where to expand the UGB. Urban reserve land will be further analyzed and planned based on our expansion needs, then brought into the UGB incrementally for those specific uses, such as housing or jobs. The Urban Reserves Technical Analysis will help streamline the UGB process, for example work undertaken in developing the development of the study area and land supply model, which will also be used for UGB expansion analysis. So, urban reserves planning 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.

8. [How many people are we planning for?](#)

The 2019 draft Portland State University (PSU) population forecast for Eugene shows a 2059 population of 257,563 people. Urban reserves will plan for *up to* approximately 43,944 additional people expected between 2032 and 2059. In April 2023, the Eugene City Council and the Lane County Board of Commissioners adopted Eugene urban reserves. Eugene urban reserves contain approximately 5,900 developable acres which is enough land to meet the projected needs of 27-years of growth beyond 2032, to 2059, while preserving the highest value farmland and additional properties with higher value soils.

9. [If the 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.

10. [Are urban reserves managed by the City of Eugene or Lane County?](#)

Land within urban reserves will remain rural and within Lane County's jurisdiction. Land identified 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. For property specific questions contact the Lane County Land Management Division at (541) 682-3577.

11. [Does the urban reserves analysis assume that Eugene will continue to grow in the same way? What if Eugene grows more densely?](#)

The capacity calculations in the urban reserves analysis are based on existing development patterns inside the UGB over a ten-year period completed for the previous UGB expansion analysis, included in the adopted Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI) and acknowledged by the state of Oregon in January 2018. This was the best data we had when the urban reserves analysis began in 2018, and when Council and the Board of Commissioners initiated the adoption process in 2020.

[House Bill 2001](#) allows Eugene to develop more densely in areas previously zoned for single-family residential uses. New middle housing code amendments were finalized in June 2022 and began to take effect then. These code amendments may affect overall city density, how much land is needed when the UGB expands, and how quickly we would need to expand into urban reserves. However, there is no way yet to know future development patterns or market conditions. Because of this uncertainty, the bill states that local jurisdictions can increase their density estimations by only 3%, which may impact the amount of land needed at the next UGB analysis.

When it is time to do this analysis, new [Growth Monitoring](#) data will be used, which will include any changes in development patterns and densities, including from new middle housing code amendments.

12. [Which Urban Reserve Option was chosen?](#)

The Lane County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a motion in support of the Eugene City Council’s initiation of a public review and adoption process of Option 3. Option 3 included almost 6,000 acres of developable land, enough to meet approximately 27 years of growth beyond 2032 (to 2059). This option strived to protect our highest value soils by removing all agricultural properties with predominant Class 1 land and directly adjacent agricultural properties with predominant Class 2 land. This direction was consistent with the majority of the input received through our public engagement process, the Envision Eugene Technical Advisory Committee recommendation to staff, and the Eugene Planning Commission recommendation to City Council.

13. [Once the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners have adopted Urban Reserves, can it be changed in the future?](#)

Yes, urban reserves could potentially change in the future, if the City Council and the Board of Commissioners agreed to do so. For example, at their [November 10, 2020, meeting](#), the Lane County Board of Commissioners moved to include in the adoption package wording to revisit Urban Reserves within 10-years of UGB adoption.

Property Owner FAQ’s

1. [How do I know if my land is in urban reserves?](#)

To see if your property is included in the urban reserves, visit the [Urban Reserves Web Map](#) and use the address search function in the upper right corner. Click on your property, and a pop-up will appear on the left side of the page detailing if your property is included.

2. [What will happen if my property is included in urban reserves?](#)

Being included in urban reserves means your property will be among the land considered first when a UGB expansion is necessary. Land included in urban reserves will remain rural until it is brought into the City’s urban growth boundary (UGB) through the formal state-directed process for UGB expansion and then you apply for annexation into the city limits.

3. [Will I get City services, such as water and sewer, if my property is included in urban reserves?](#)

Having your land included in urban reserves will not change your current service provision. Property is eligible for services, such as sewer and EWEB water, when it is annexed into the City of Eugene. To receive City services, property in urban reserves would have to first be

brought into the urban growth boundary and then meet the requirements for voluntary annexation. (See the next question for more information on this.)

4. [If my property is in urban reserves, then brought into the UGB, will I be required to annex into the City?](#)

Annexation into the city is currently voluntary. Annexation typically occurs when a property owner proposes to develop a property that is within the UGB but is not within the city limits and their annexation application is approved. There has been no discussion of requiring properties to annex if they are brought into the UGB. To annex into the city limits, property must:

- border the city limits and
- be within 300' of services (water, wastewater, streets), or
- be willing to extend those services to the project site at the developer's cost.

See the [property owner matrix](#) for more information on City and County differences in services, land use, and taxes.

5. [Can I keep doing what I'm doing on my land if it is included in urban reserves?](#)

Yes, property that is included in urban reserves can continue to be used as it is currently. Urban reserves do not trigger any changes in use.

6. [How will the county regulate my land if it is included in the urban reserves?](#)

Inclusion in urban reserves will not trigger any change in the use of a property, meaning current uses can continue. Based on [state rules](#), some land-use policies have been developed to ensure that land in urban reserves will remain rural while also being prioritized for future urban growth. For example, under the adopted policies, single-family dwellings will still be allowed on legal lots if the County's regulations would have allowed them prior to inclusion in urban reserves, but requests for zone changes allowing more intensive uses on exception areas and non-resource land (e.g., land with residential or industrial land use designations) will not be allowed until the land is brought into the UGB. Similarly, property owners cannot request designated farm or forest land in urban reserves to be changed to a non-resource designation (like residential or industrial) until after it is included in the UGB. Requests for zone changes or re-designation are very complex, include a lengthy application and review process, and approval is never guaranteed. The policies can be reviewed in the plan amendments which are part of the adoption materials posted on the [Urban Reserves web page](#).

7. [Will urban reserves impact agreements set out by Homeowners Associations \(HOAs\) or through Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions \(CC&Rs\)?](#)

CC&Rs and other types of HOA agreements are private contracts and are not enforced by the City or County. Urban reserves do not change private neighborhood agreements. These private agreements can be more restrictive than zoning laws and may include details on things like accessory dwelling units and minimum lot sizes. The City enforces its zoning laws; it will not enforce CC&Rs even if a property owner applies for a permit to use property in a way that conflicts with their CC&Rs. If a neighborhood is eventually brought into the urban growth boundary, the zoning would change to allow for future urban uses.

8. [If my septic system fails and I am within the UGB but outside of city limits, will I be required to annex?](#)

No, if your septic system fails and you are within the UGB but outside of city limits you may be required to connect to the City's sewer system depending upon the distance between your property and a sewer line. If this is the case, then you may need to enter into an annexation agreement. An annexation agreement details that at some point in the future your property will be annexed, however, even with such an agreement in place, annexation still remains voluntary based on existing City Council policy.

9. [What's the likelihood that my property will come into the UGB if it's in urban reserves?](#)

This is hard to say. Eugene urban reserves include enough developable land to meet the city's growth needs through 2059. In the future, if analysis shows that we need more land to accommodate more people, we will consider expanding the UGB and will look to urban reserves first. Essentially, urban reserves become the first priority land to grow into. However, how much the UGB expands, where within urban reserves the UGB expands, and when, will depend on several factors, including how fast Eugene's population grows, how densely we are growing within the UGB, and what kind of land we need (residential, employment, etc.). Our [Growth Monitoring Program](#) is tracking this.

10. [If my property is zoned Exclusive Farm Use and is in urban reserves, would I lose my farm tax deferral? What if my property was brought into the UGB?](#)

Being identified as urban reserves will not change your farm tax deferral. Property owners who currently farm their land and receive the farm deferral can continue to do so, even if their property is brought into the UGB. The farm deferral program is tied to the use of the land, so property owners can continue to receive the farm deferral even if their zoning changes when they are brought into the UGB. For land currently zoned for Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), property owners would need to reapply for the farm deferral if they were brought into the UGB, but can continue to receive it. When a farm deferral property changes use (i.e., is no longer farmed), it will be disqualified from the deferral. Lane County Assessment and Taxation staff can discuss this process in detail with individual property

owners. For property specific questions contact the Lane County Land Management Division at (541) 682-3577.

11. [How will the value of my land change if it is in urban reserves, the UGB or the city limits?](#)

There is no effect on the taxable value of land as a result of solely including property in urban reserves. For private property, the taxable value is equal to the property's 'assessed value,' which is, by law, lower than the market value of the property. Unless property redevelops or changes use, Oregon state law limits the increase in a property's assessed value to 3 percent per year, and it cannot exceed the property's real market value. It is normal for the market value of a property to fluctuate year-to-year and this does not trigger a recalculation of the assessed value.

If a property in urban reserves was later brought into the UGB it is likely that its market value would change, but this alone would not necessarily change the tax rate or the assessed value. If a property is annexed into the City limits, the tax rate applied to the taxable value of the property will increase, and the overall tax burden will increase accordingly. See the [property owner matrix](#) for more information.