

From: Dave Vanasche                      Cherry Amabisca  
Washington County Farm Bureau      Save Helvetia  
36130 NW Wren Road                      13260 NW Bishop Road  
Cornelius, OR 97113                      Hillsboro, OR 97124

Date: June 11, 2010

To: Chair Brian and Washington County Board of Commissioners

RE: Unused Properties within the UGB  
Agricultural Infrastructure with the UGB and Urban Reserves

Attached are aerial maps of three areas within Washington County: Cornelius/Forest Grove, South Hillsboro and North Hillsboro.

**Vacant Properties within the UGB**

Noted on the maps are numerous vacant, unused, for sale and for lease properties within the UGB.

Intel’s 92 acres located south of West Union Road has been vacant since it was purchased in 1999. Intel has no plans to develop it, since they already have unused facilities at other nearby locations, such as Ronler Acres. This property continues to lie fallow, growing noxious weeds, whose weed seeds contaminate nearby seed crops, reducing the purity of the crops for those agricultural operations. Numerous other parcels in this industrial park, ranging from 30 to 50 acres, have remained vacant for years.

The City of Cornelius currently has over 150 acres of *vacant, buildable* land inside its portion of the region’s urban growth boundary. This includes over 50 acres of land that Metro added to Cornelius only a few years ago for industrial use. That land is still being farmed, because no one has offered to purchase it for development. The city has not even bothered to annex it yet. Another 35 acres of land, with full urban services located in an industrial park, has had a “For Sale” sign up for years. Several of our Farm Bureau members continue to farm other large parcels inside the city of Cornelius because there apparently is no demand for that land for businesses that are not farm-related.

**Underutilized properties within the UGB**

There are numerous properties that are underperforming and in various states of disrepair along major roads, such as Highway 8 and in Cornelius. Typically, they are located in strip shopping malls with large parking lots. Other cities have developed these types of properties into 3-4 story mixed use buildings. These properties serve as another source of re-developable capacity inside of Hillsboro and Cornelius. One example of a long-term underperforming

property is Holliday Street Industrial Park in Cornelius. It was built on approximately 50 acres in 1980. In the last thirty years, it has been built out only 25%, with a 10% occupancy. The majority of the tenants are agriculture suppliers.

### **Agricultural Infrastructure**

Irrigation and drainage is agriculture infrastructure that supports farming operations within the UGB and Urban Reserves. TVID pipeline system is infrastructure that is buried underground throughout farmland in the UGB and Urban Reserves. There are also miles of “pattern tiling”, an extensive inter-connected network of underground drainage infrastructure. When this underground drainage is damaged in any one location, as happens during construction when farmland is converted to development land, it affects the drainage on adjacent farms, causing flooding and taking that land out of production.

Also noted on the maps are the various suppliers of agriculture infrastructure to the farming industry, located within the Urban Growth Boundary and within the Urban Reserves. Page 2 and 3 of the attached letter dated May 20, 2010 to Metro Council describes in more detail the describes in more detail the commercial farm infrastructure that is endangered by urbanization represented by the designation of urban reserves in this area. This commercial farm infrastructure services the farming industry in Washington County, as well as the farming industry in Tillamook County, North Yamhill County, Clatsop County, Columbia County, Multnomah County (Sauvie’s Island), Clark County and Cowlitz County. As farmland is converted to development land, this loss of critical mass in the farming industry creates a domino effect, causing vital agricultural suppliers to move away. Farmers that remain must transport their crops longer distances for seed cleaning and shipping, resulting in increased emissions and higher costs. We know of food processors and other farm businesses that are hoping to grow in western Washington County over the next few years, but only if the farming industry on which they depend remains healthy and close-by.

### **The Findings**

We would like to take this opportunity to correct some misinformation in the Washington County Findings for A-Engrossed Ordinance No. 733 dated June 15, 2010. The county states that less than three percent of all land zoned as EFU (excluding “conflicted” land) in the three counties is included in the 28,443 acres of urban reserves. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, in Washington County, the 9,567 acres of foundation agriculture land proposed as urban reserves accounts for 7.4% of the foundation agricultural land in Washington County, not the three to four percent stated in the Findings. This 7.4% is a huge bite out of the foundation agriculture land in Washington County, especially considering that in the fifteen years from 1982 to 1997, 1.04% of agricultural lands were converted to development lands in Oregon (according to the USDA Natural Resources Inventory).

Ordinance No. 733 fails to satisfy OAR 660-027-0050(8) - Land can be designed to avoid or minimize adverse effects on farm and forest practices.

The proposed urban reserves in the Cornelius area, for example, will double the size of Cornelius. It can be expected that the roads in and out of Cornelius through rural areas will experience increased traffic. Trying to move farm equipment on highly-traveled rural roads has significant safety issues. Page 2 of the attached memo dated May 20, 2010 to Metro Council describes in more detail the adverse effects on farm practices as a result of the designated urban reserves. Pages 4 and 6 show the traffic count on some of our rural roads used to move farm equipment as well as the higher rate of accidents in Washington and Multnomah Counties.

Washington County agrees that “the existing UGB has sufficient capacity - on vacant land and through re-development over the 50-year reserves period - for overall employment growth in the reserves period. However, this supply of land does not account for the *preference* (our emphasis) of some industrial employers for larger parcels.” To convert productive foundation agricultural land to development land based on preference and on subjective extrapolation of assumptions incorrectly applies OAR 660-027-0040(2) in that the amount of land designated for urban reserves is the amount deemed necessary to satisfy demand. There is no finding of a need for large parcel industrial land or any OAR provision suggestion that a desire for large parcel industrial land can trump the job demand determinations. As noted in the findings, the vacant land and re-development opportunities that exist within the current UGB reduces the demand for large lot industrial sites. In addition, the constant churn of high-tech companies in Washington County means there is a constant supply of large lot high-tech industrial sites: Solar World bought existing facilities from Komatsu; IDT has announced it is leaving and its facilities will be available; Credence is leaving and its facilities are for sale.

Ordinance No. 733 fails to comply with Goal 2, alternative courses of action, making no findings that it considered meeting the identified demand with non-Foundation designated lands. OAR 660-027-0040(11) appears to impose this requirement.

Respectfully,

Dave Vanasche  
Washington County Farm Bureau

Cherry Amabisca  
Save Helvetia