

## North Plains UGB Expansion Re-Look

### Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated November 12, 2024*

This Frequently Asked Questions document is intended to be a living document that will change over time to reflect community questions and evolving information over the course of the Re-Look process.

### What is an Urban Growth Boundary?

An urban growth boundary (UGB) is a line drawn on planning maps map to manage urban development and address challenges posed by unplanned urban growth and the encroachment of cities upon rural land. Each city within Oregon is surrounded by a UGB (UGB) that shows where urban growth and development is expected and what areas are to be preserved. UGBs are intended to accommodate a 20-year supply of land for housing, employment, open space, and recreational needs. Urban development outside the UGB is restricted to protect farm and forest resource land.

A UGB delineates an entire urbanized area and is used by local governments as a guide for [zoning](#) and land use decisions. Utility and other infrastructure providers use the UGB to improve efficiency through effective long term planning, such as optimizing sewerage catchments, preparing transportation plans, and forecasting school enrollment.

Areas outside of the UGB can be classified as an urban reserve, rural reserve, or have no designation.

**Urban reserves** are lands that local governments have designated to be developed in the future. Urban reserves aid in long-term planning efforts for urban development. By designating urban reserves, the agriculture and forest industries, private landowners, and public and private service providers are aware of future long-term (for the next 30 to 50 years) expansion locations of the UGB. Currently the City of North Plains does not have any existing urban reserves surrounding it.

**Rural reserves** are intended to provide long-term protection for large blocks of agricultural land, forest land, and other important natural landscape features that will limit urban development. These reserves help to keep rural land preserved for farming, forestry, and other rural uses.

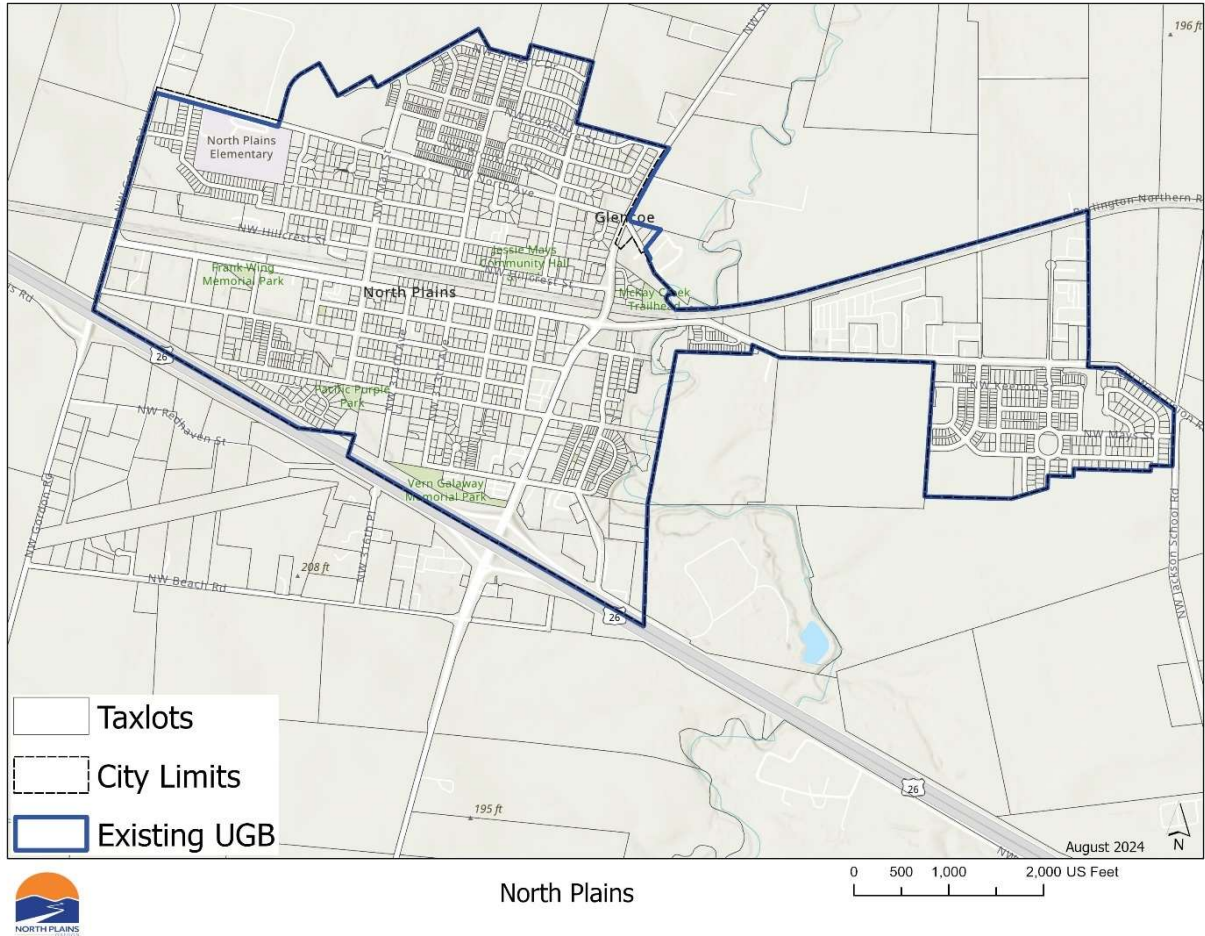
**Undesignated lands** do not carry either designation.

### Why do we need a UGB?

UGBs are a key component of Oregon's Land Use Planning Program. Their purpose is to help preserve agricultural lands, forests, open spaces, protect urban investments, and to control urban sprawl. The UGB is a vital method in planning for the future needs of cities.

## When was North Plains current UGB established?

North Plains current UGB, shown in Figure 1, was established in 2001.



**Figure 1. Current North Plains Urban Growth Boundary**

## Can a UGB be changed?

Cities of more than 10,000 people are required to periodically compare their 20-year land supply for housing and jobs to the 20-year land demand. Cities of less than 10,000 population are not required to do so, but are encouraged to do so for best practices planning within the Oregon planning system. In order to expand a UGB, cities must show state regulators that they need more developable land than they currently have. State regulators then look to see that cities followed the state's goals, rules, and statutes in managing their growth. This includes addressing current housing needs, determining if the city is using existing land efficiently, making sure that there is adequate public engagement, and choosing land with minimal impacts

to farm and forest (resource) lands. The UGB is meant to motivate the region to think about growth, not to stop it completely.

## **How does a city know when to expand its UGB?**

A mix of factors determine when a city knows it needs to consider expanding its UGB. Growth projections, current land use analysis, infrastructure capacity, and goals set forth at the state level to maintain a 20-year supply of land within the UGB. For residential land, cities typically conduct a Housing Needs Analysis (HNA) to determine if there is enough land within the UGB to accommodate 20 years of population growth. Likewise, an Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA) determines if a city has enough land to accommodate 20 years of employment growth.

North Plains most recent HNA and EOA were adopted in 2021 and 2022 respectively. Per State law, North Plains' housing need is based on the 2020 population forecast from Portland State University's Population Research Center (PRC). The forecast assumed North Plains' population would grow from about 3,400 to more than 7,000 between 2020 and 2040. The HNA determined a need of 167 acres; 111 acres for housing, 40 acres for parks, trails, and open space, and 16 acres for infrastructure. The EOA determined a need for 687 acres; 172 acres for commercial uses and 515 for industrial uses. 25 percent of the employment land need is for infrastructure.

## **Why is North Plains using a population forecast from 2020 when a more recent forecast was released in 2024?**

PRC updates population forecasts every four years. Each forecast is a snapshot in time based on the best available information. Amending a UGB is a lengthy and costly process that requires multiple studies, community discussions, reports, and adoption processes. State law accounts for this by allowing cities to "lock in" a population forecast once they have formally initiated a UGB expansion by notifying the state. This allows cities to move forward with certainty and avoid having to finance multiple updates to those key documents. The City has already updated the HNA and EOA, which were previously based on 2017 forecasts. Due to recent legislation, North Plains will receive another housing forecast allocation in January 2025.

## **Is North Plains required to expand its UGB?**

As a city with a population of less than 10,000, North Plains is not required to update its land needs, which then may point to need to expand its UGB to accommodate future growth. However, planning for future growth and development is encouraged by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD). Adopting an HNA does trigger a requirement to accommodate determined residential land need. Therefore, North Plains is required to accommodate the 167-acre residential, parks and infrastructure land need identified in the HNA adopted by City Council in 2023.

Even after determining a land need, a city must first seek to accommodate the need inside the current UGB. This can be accomplished by adopting “land use efficiency measures”. These efficiency measures can include actions such as rezoning land to accommodate different uses or to increase the density of current uses. North Plains adopted several efficiency measures, but, due to the lack of vacant land inside the UGB, they were insufficient to accommodate the land need.

## **Can North Plains choose to not accommodate forecasted growth?**

North Plains is not required to accommodate employment growth identified in the EOA. The HNA has been formally adopted by City Council. For North Plains to avoid its obligation to accommodate population growth identified in the HNA, the city would have to formally reverse its decision to adopt the HNA.

## **Why did North Plains feel it was important to expand the UGB?**

The City decided it was important to expand the UGB for a few different reasons: to bring more shopping and services closer to home, to bring a greater variety of jobs closer to home, and in twenty years’ time have a far more balanced tax base to fund programs such as parks and recreation services and facilities, greater public safety protection, and of services to be a more complete but still smaller city for its residents. Significant residential growth has created a highly imbalanced property tax base (currently approaching 80% residential and only 20% businesses). City Council decided that adding much opportunity for new businesses, who then help pay for services provided to North Plains’ residents, was considered a preferable plan to depend upon increasing property taxes in the future. North Plains’ property tax rate of \$2.17 is among the lowest rates in Washington County and under Oregon’s property tax system, North Plains property tax bills only increase by 3% each year when inflation can frequently exceed that. In other words, expanding the UGB was decided in part to broaden and diversify the tax base so that residents have help funding both the limit services we currently have and to grow the types of services the City can offer.

## **What is the long-term vision for North Plains? Are we aiming for a style like a mini-Hillsboro, or more of a unique character like McMinnville, Ashland, Bend, or Joseph?**

North Plains adopted a [Vision Statement](#) in 2016 that was created through a robust, year-long community engagement process. The vision statement guided development of the subsequent [Comprehensive Plan](#) Update which guides growth and development in North Plains.

## **What process did North Plains use for its proposed UGB Expansion?**

The North Plains UGB Expansion project was initiated in August 2020, but discussion of a UGB expansion goes back to 2015 with the North Plains 2035 Vision and Comprehensive Plan Update

processes. Both processes included a series of advisory committee and public meetings. The North Plains UGB Expansion project was guided by a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) that made a UGB expansion recommendation for Planning Commission and City Council consideration. The PAC consisted of representatives from City Council, Planning Commission, county and state agency representatives, the North Plains business community, and the North Plains community at large.

## **How was public input sought on the UGB Expansion?**

This process has included more than 20 public meetings over five years, including eight PAC meetings and three Planning Commission and City Council public hearings which were noticed and open to the public. In addition, a separate public meeting was held to gather community input on the proposed UGB expansion study area. The City promoted these meetings and shared periodic project updates on the City website, in the monthly print newsletter distributed with utility bills, in the monthly e-newsletter, on Facebook, and in newspaper articles. There were also presentations given to the North Plains Chamber of Commerce and at Washington County public meetings. The City conducted direct outreach with property owners in the study area.

## **How does a city expand its UGB?**

Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 14 and supporting rules and statutes regulate the process for amending a UGB. A city must follow the steps below to amend its UGB.

1. Establish the land need
2. Establish the study area (OAR 660-024-0065)
3. Analyze the study area
  - a. Establish parcel prioritization (ORS 197A.320)
  - b. Apply suitability analysis (OAR 660-024-0067(5))
  - c. Apply boundary location factors (Goal 14)

## **Where is North Plains allowed to expand its UGB? What was the Study Area?**

State rules dictate how cities with a population of less than 10,000 establish an expansion study area. The preliminary study area must include:

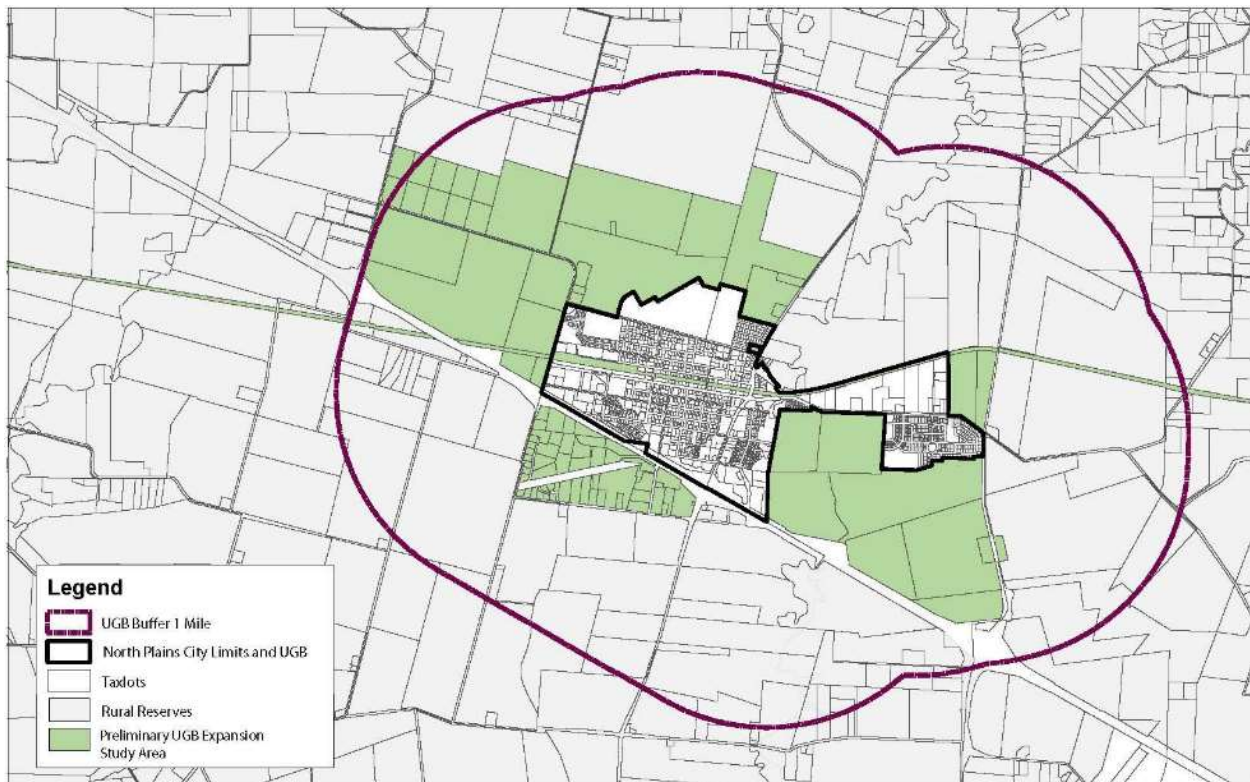
- All lands within a city's acknowledged urban reserve (North Plains has no urban reserves)
- All lands within one half mile of the current UGB

The preliminary study area for North Plains is shown in Figure 2.

The study area is later revised by removing lands that are not suitable for urban development. This includes rural reserves, areas that are subject to natural hazards or have other natural, recreational, or significant scenic features. Rural lands and lands owned by the Federal Government are also removed during this process. Once rural reserves were removed, the Preliminary Study Area for North Plains consisted only of adjacent “undesigned” lands.

The resulting study area must be twice the size of the expected land need. For this reason, North Plains’ preliminary study area was expanded to include all lands within one mile of the current UGB.

**Figure 2. North Plains Preliminary Study Area**



### **Were any lands removed from the study area?**

Yes. Several areas included in the Preliminary Study Area were not included in the final Study Area. The exclusion consists primarily of the Sunset Air Strip and surrounding Air Acres and Sunset Orchard Estates residential subdivisions that are bound to the airport by restrictive covenants. The continuing operation of the Sunset Air Strip is a significant impediment to development at urban intensities. Development within the Air Strip and surrounding residential development is unlikely to occur during the planning period as the property owners intend to continue to operate the airport and additional development could impact its operations. Also, the cost of further developing the airport at urban intensities, and specifically developing the transportation network, would be prohibitively expensive, if not impossible in light of ORS

836.608 which protects airport operations as a matter of state concern. The final Study Area for North Plains is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Area**



### How were potential areas for UGB expansion prioritized?

Lands in the Study Area are evaluated against priorities set by OAR 660-024-0067. The First Priority includes urban reserves, exception land, and non-resource land. North Plains does not have any acknowledged urban reserves as it is surrounded by rural reserves and “undesigned” land. The Study Area does contain an area of exception land south of Highway 26, as shown in Figure 4. The exception land has County zoning designations of Rural Residential-5 Acres (RR-5), rural Commercial (R-COM), Rural Industrial (R-IND), and Agricultural and Forest District-5 (AF-5).

The Second Priority is marginal lands, of which North Plains has none. The Third Priority is forest or farmland tracts, defined as contiguous parcels under common ownership, that are not predominantly high value. The Study Area does not contain predominantly low-value farmland. Figure 5 illustrates areas of predominantly high-value and low-value farmland.

The Fourth Priority is areas of predominantly high-value farmland. All land in the Study Area, minus the exception land area to the south, is considered predominantly high-value farmland.

As shown in Figure 6, an analysis of prime or unique farmland shows the majority of the Study Area, almost mirroring the high-value farmland area, consists of prime soils as defined by the USDA NRCS.

**Figure 4. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Area with Zone Designations**

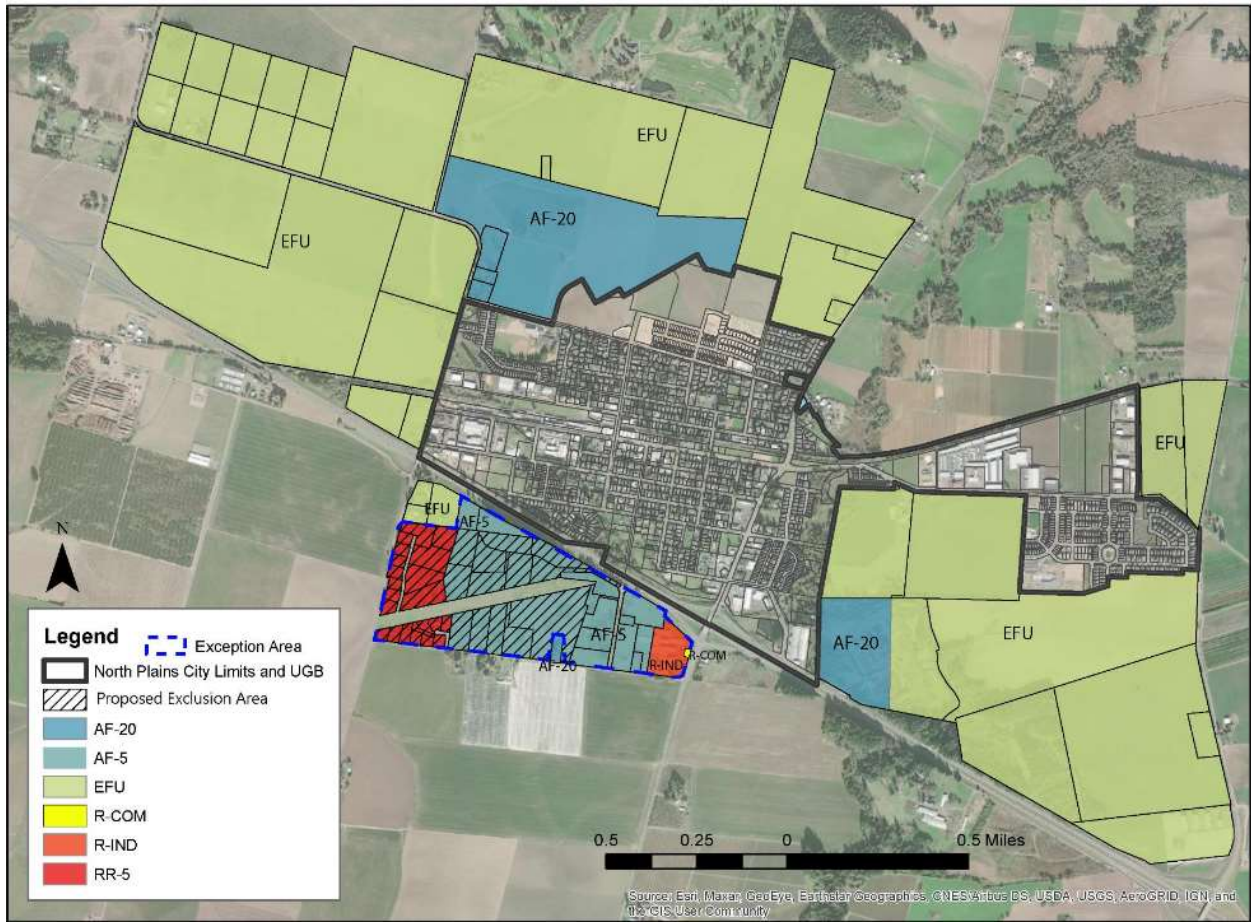


Figure 5. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Area, Low Value and High Value Farmland

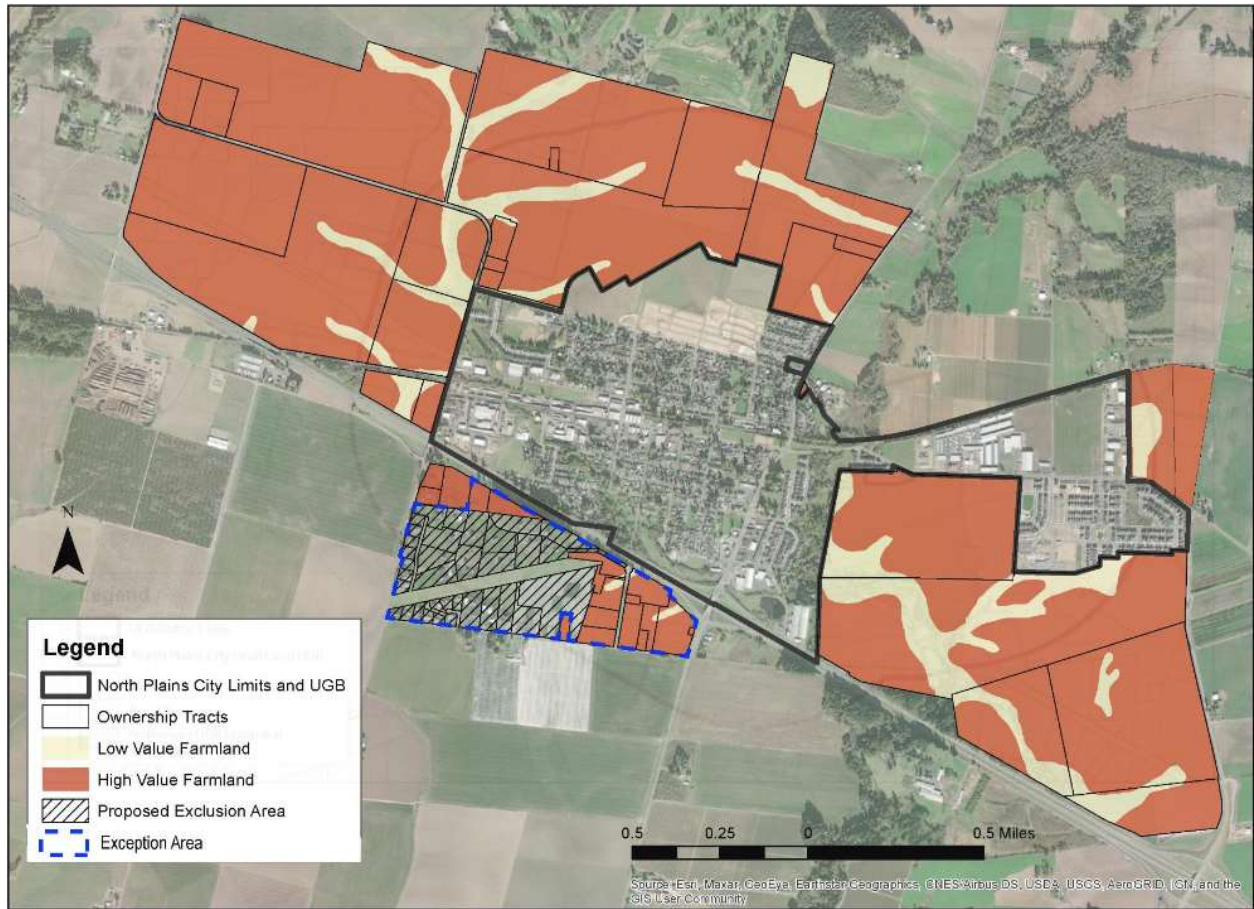
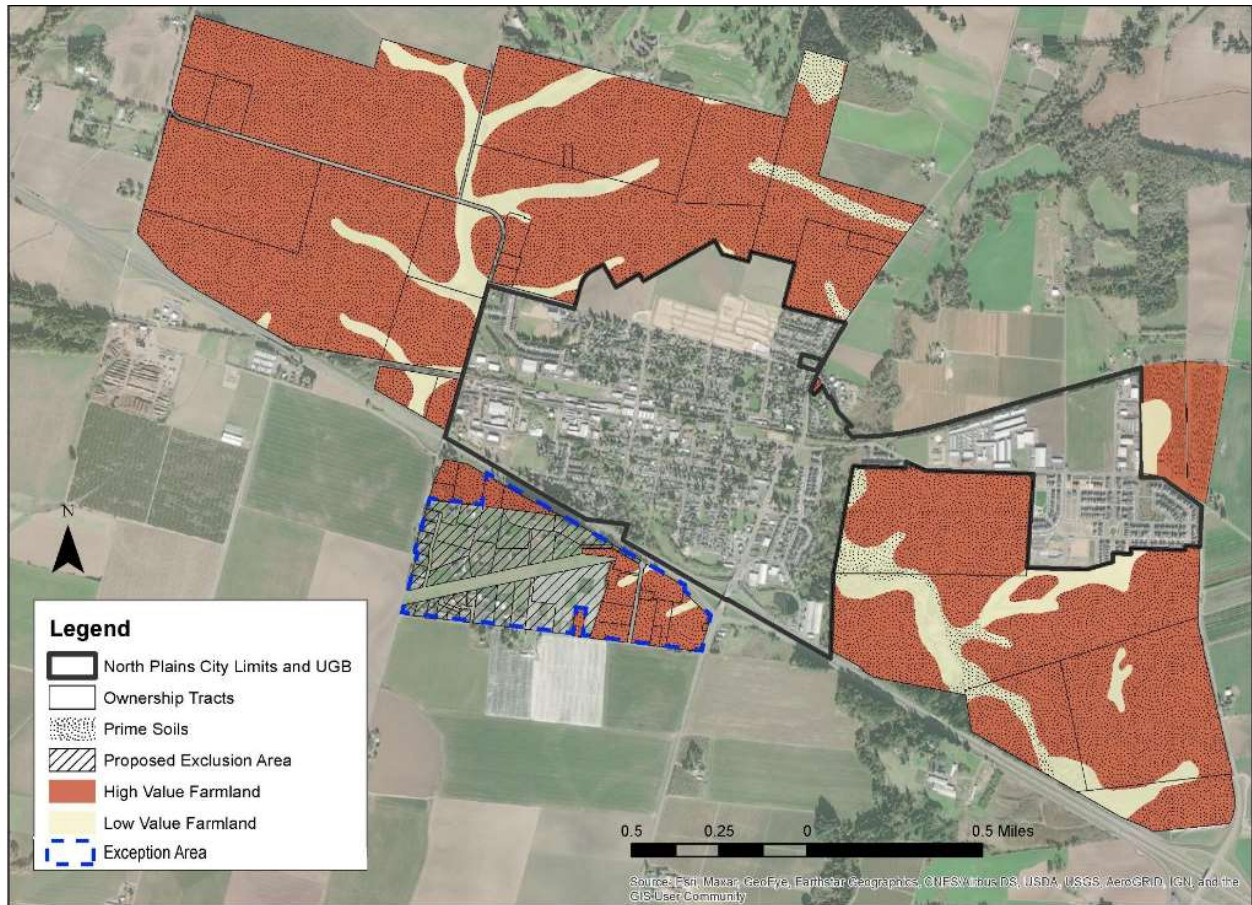


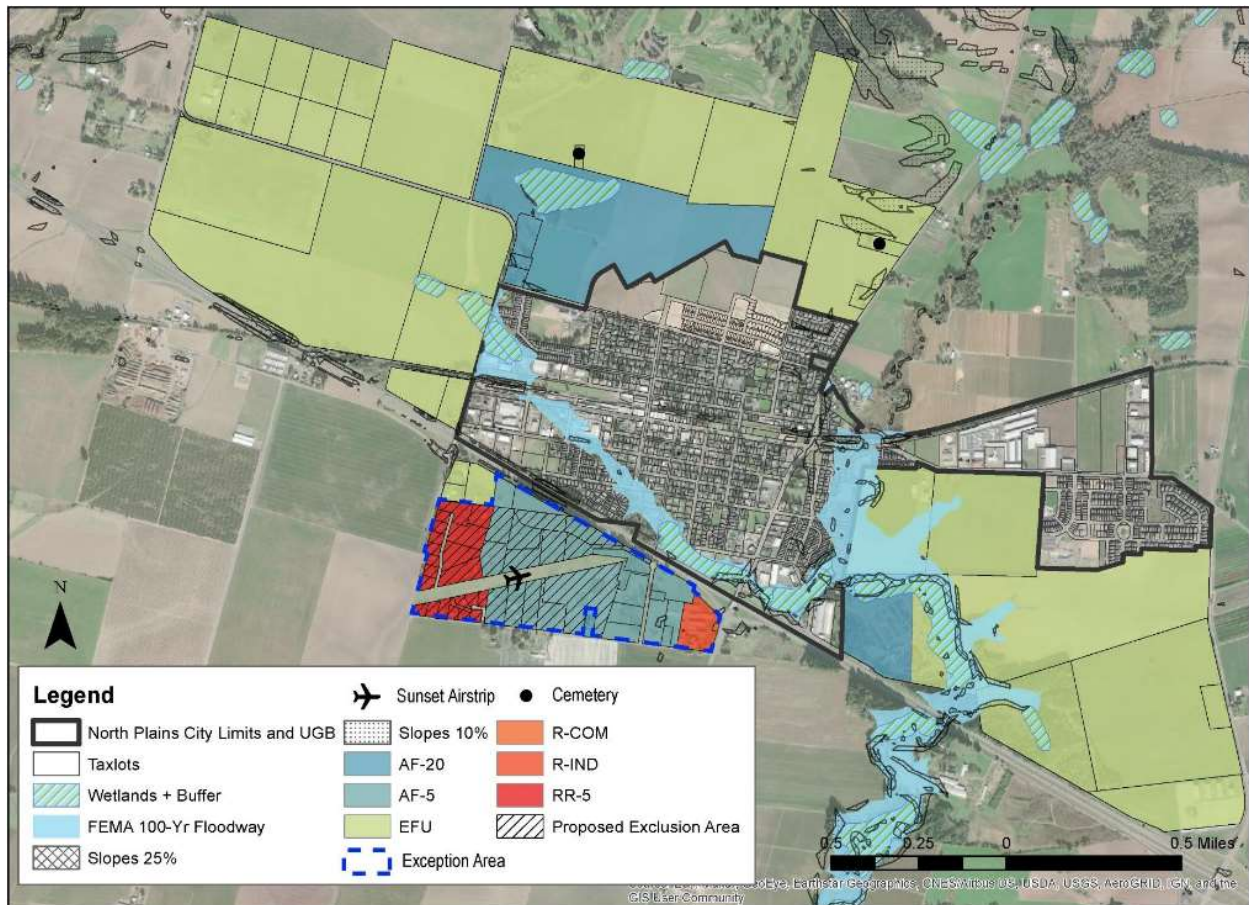
Figure 6. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Area, Prime and Unique Soils



## What are “suitability criteria” and how did they impact the analysis?

Applying the suitability criteria analysis to the areas of high-value farmland and prime soils, the “undesigned” lands, contain several areas of natural resources and two cemeteries, as shown in Figure 7. These areas were included in the analysis, but did not contribute to the acreage needed to meet future housing and employment needs. The acreage of areas listed as wetlands or floodplains was not removed as those areas may be viable for parks or public facilities. There was a total of 1,307 acres of undesigned land (non-exception land) in the study area, and 1,302 acres after the two existing cemeteries were removed. All of the undesigned lands consist of predominantly high-value farmland and prime soils and are eligible to help meet the land need that remains after the exception lands are considered.

**Figure 7. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Area “Suitability”**



## How is a Boundary Location Analysis conducted?

To expand the UGB, North Plains completed a boundary location analysis, comparing alternative locations and considering which addition to the UGB will result in the most accommodating and cost-effective boundary, while creating the fewest conflicts with neighboring land uses, and causing the fewest negative environmental, economic, social and energy consequences.

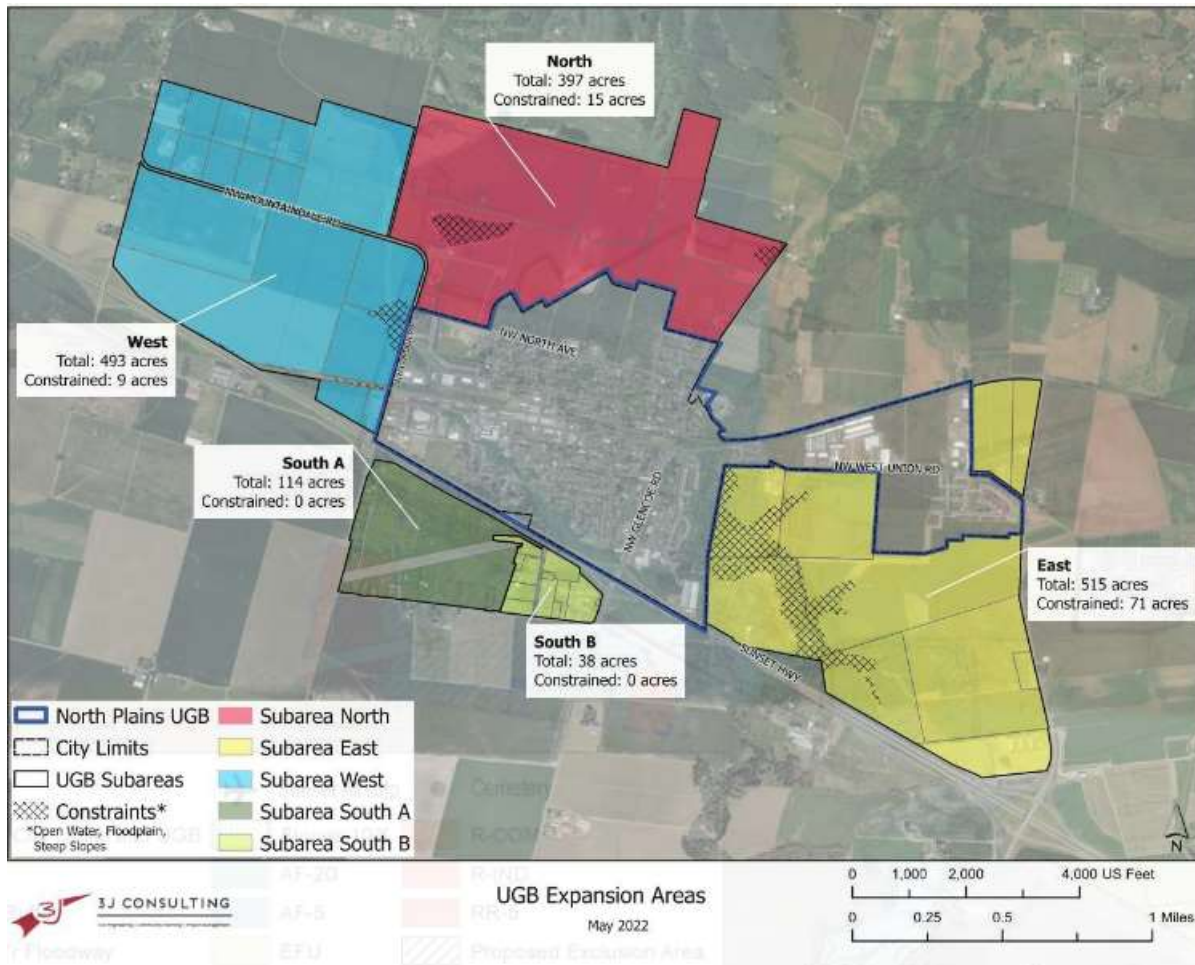
The boundary location analysis process is governed by Goal 14 and ORS 197A.320 and with consideration of the following factors:

1. Efficient accommodation of identified land needs
2. Orderly and economic provision of public facilities and services
3. Comparative environmental, energy, economic and social consequences
4. Compatibility of the proposed urban uses with nearby agricultural and forest activities occurring on farm and forest land outside the UGB

The four factors are weighted equally to create a balanced analysis and are considered concurrently rather than sequentially. The analysis did not provide any definitive conclusion as to where the North Plains UGB should be expanded. Rather, it provided information for City decision-makers to make an informed decision about how the City should grow over the next 20 years.

In order to apply the Goal 14 Location Factors, the City created subareas within the overall Study Area for evaluation purposes. Taking a cue from the last North Plains UGB expansion process in 2005, the 1,543-acre study area is divided into five subareas, North, South A, South B, West and East, as shown in Figure 8. Subareas were determined based on factors such as environmental features, tax lot lines, and transportation corridors. The southern area is divided into two subareas to make it easier to discuss the parcels the City proposes to exclude from the UGB expansion process (South Subarea A) from those the City intends to include in the expansion (South Subarea B).

**Figure 8. North Plains UGB Expansion Study Subareas**



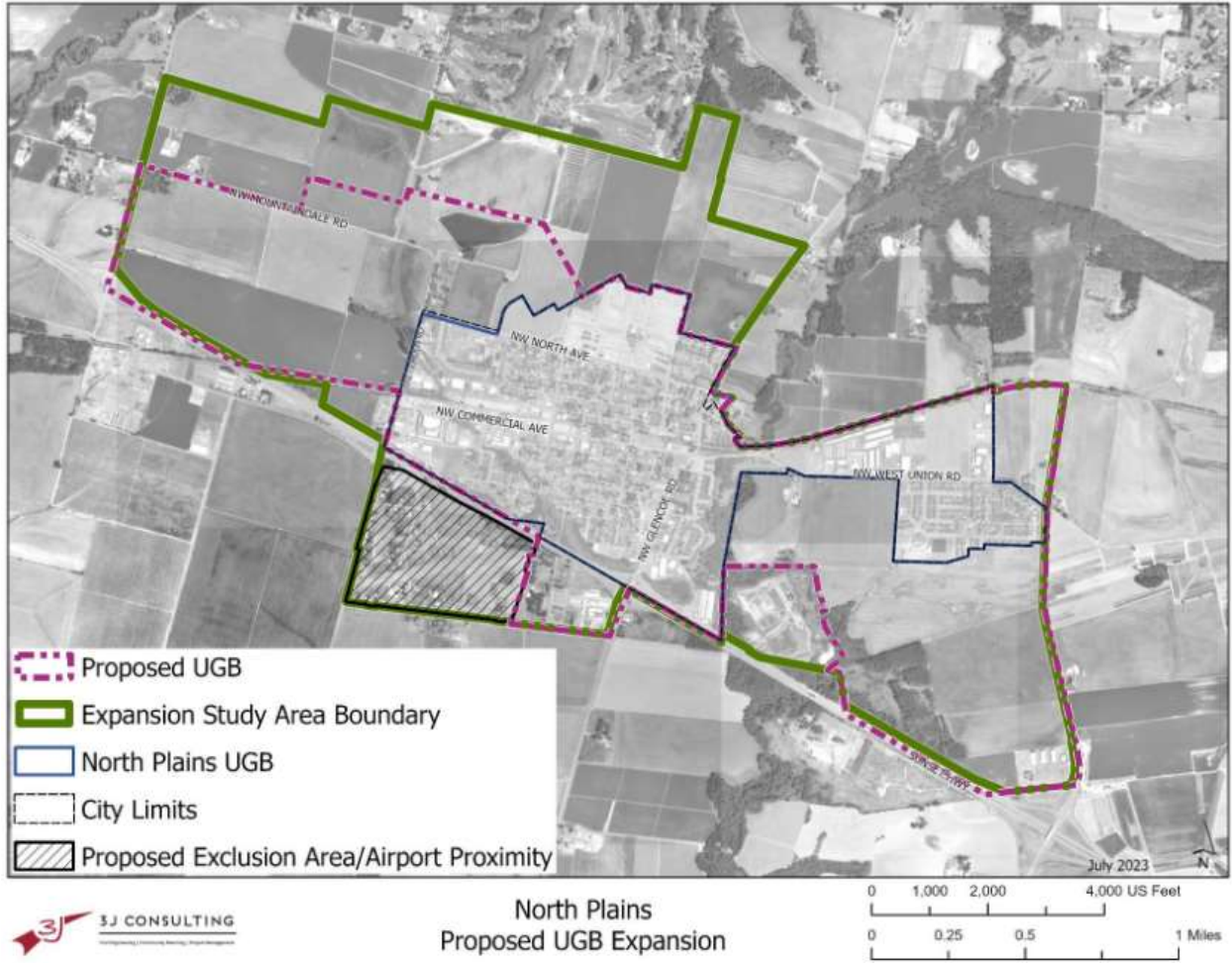
## **Why wasn't more land south of Highway 26 considered for expansion?**

Land uses in the UGB area south of Highway 26 include the Sunset Airstrip and associated low density residential development, several homes not associated with the airstrip, and some industrial activities. The area surrounding the airstrip is developed in such a way that it cannot reasonably accommodate additional residential development and the costs to extend infrastructure to and around the airstrip would be prohibitive. Furthermore, decision-makers agreed with a determination from the 2001 UGB amendment that the City prefers to keep residential development north of Highway 26 to promote better connectivity. The area adjacent to Glencoe Road is ideal for commercial uses tailored to commuters who use the interchange.

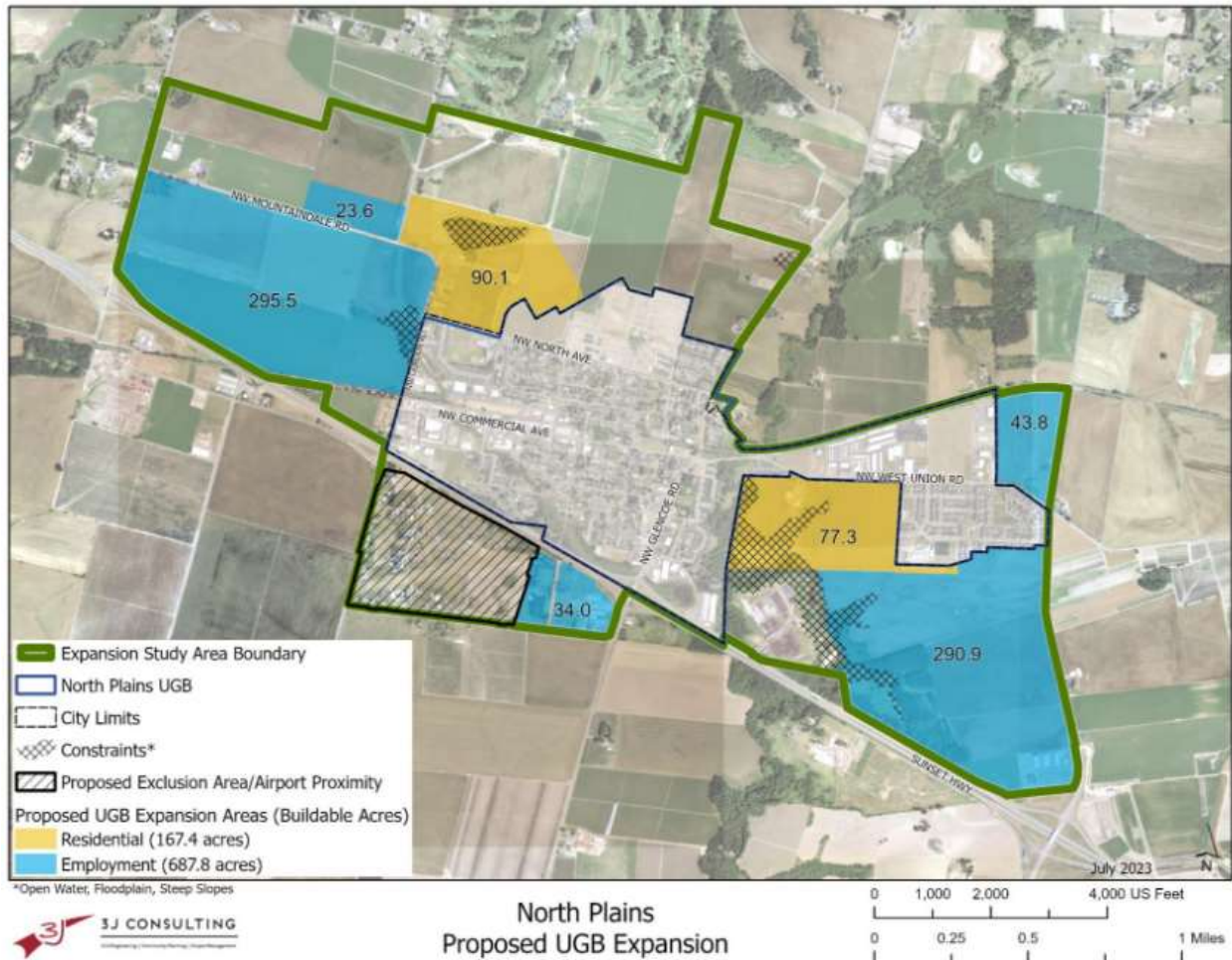
## **What were the results of the previous Boundary Location Analysis?**

The conclusion of the analysis was that the East Subarea is best suited for expansion. This subarea has the best existing and planned utility infrastructure to support development at low cost to provide utility service to the subareas. The North Subarea is the next best for development with existing water and storm infrastructure support, however, sanitary upsizing would be required. South Subarea B was considered suitable for employment uses due to its separation from the existing city by Highway 26. The West Subarea was considered least suitable for development due to a lack of existing infrastructure. The UGB amendment adopted by City Council in September 2023 is shown in Figure 9. Figure 10 shows preliminary land use designations.

Figure 9. North Plains UGB Amendment, September 2023



**Figure 10. North Plains UGB Amendment with Preliminary Land Use Designations**



## What is the North Plains UGB Expansion Re-look process and why is it necessary?

In September 2023, the City of North Plains adopted a UGB amendment. The next step was to bring the UGB amendment to Washington County and the State of Oregon for approval. Around the same time, a group of citizens in opposition to the UGB amendment gathered enough signatures to place the decision on the May 2024 ballot for a vote of North Plains residents.

In March 2024, House Bill 4026A was signed into Oregon law. It specified that UGB expansion decisions by a City Council are administrative actions, not legislative decisions, and are therefore not subject to a voter referendum under Oregon's Constitution. Despite the new law, a vote took place in May 2024. 72 percent of votes cast by North Plains voters were against the expansion. While a majority of votes cast in the May 2024 Primary election opposed the UGB expansion, those votes represented the views of only 40% of all registered voters in the City of

North Plains. More registered city voters abstained from voting (1,107 abstentions out of 2,564 registered voters) than the 1,036 that voted against the UGB expansion. This creates a major ambiguity of public intent about a UGB planning decision that affects the entire community.

Given the vote as well as the silence from a wide swath of the community, North Plains City Council recognized that more work is needed to arrive at a UGB expansion recommendation that has the support of community members and ensures a sustainable financial future for the city. To this end, the City initiated the “North Plains UGB Re-Look” process to reexamine the September 2023 UGB amendment recommendation and put forward a new UGB amendment for City Council approval. The Re-Look will include reviewing the land need and UGB expansion analyses, sharing preliminary thoughts on the location of residential and employment land uses, and recommending a new/modified UGB amendment size and location.

The City is convening a Re-Look Advisory Committee (RAC) to guide the process. The process will include public outreach – four RAC meetings and three Public Meetings. The purpose of the meetings will be to educate and inform residents, develop alternatives for modifying the proposed UGB, and recommend a preferred boundary location for Planning Commission and City Council consideration. The Re-Look process is expected to take approximately 4-6 months starting in October 2024.

## **How can I participate?**

All four RAC meetings are open to the public including time for public comment. Community members are encouraged to participate in the three scheduled Public Meetings. There will also be opportunities for people to participate online. The project schedule and upcoming opportunities to participate can be found on the [project website](#).

## **What happens once the Re-Look process is complete?**

The Re-Look process will conclude with a recommendation report prepared by the consultant and submitted to Planning Commission and City Council for their consideration in adopting a proposed UGB amendment. Following the Re-Look process, a public hearing of the Planning Commission will be held to recommend a UGB amendment to City Council. City Council will hold a public hearing to adopt a UGB amendment ordinance. The UGB amendment then requires approval/acknowledgment from Washington County and the State of Oregon before it goes into effect.

## **What is the North Plains UGB Expansion Concept Plan?**

The City of North Plains was awarded a grant from the Oregon Transportation Growth Management (TGM) Program to prepare a concept plan for the expansion area. The purpose of the project is to develop a land use and transportation concept for the land newly brought into the UGB but prior to annexation. The project will identify residential and employment land areas and uses, a transportation network, utilities, parks and trails, other public facilities, and

funding mechanisms for public infrastructure improvements. The concept plan project will heavily rely on new UGB expansion recommendation reached by the RAC.

Once included in a UGB expansion, the city must amend its comprehensive plan and other supporting plans with the results of UGB Expansion Concept Plan and any additional amended goals and policies. This includes an inventory of natural resources, locating various land uses, roads, and utilities, a public infrastructure finance strategy, and development codes to implement the plan. Comprehensive plan and development code updates are typically enacted as part of a “concept plan” process. A concept plan identifies the location of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, park), transportation facilities, public facilities (water, sanitary sewer), and mechanisms for funding needed improvements.

### **Is the City required to plan uses in the expansion area before the UGB is adopted?**

No. In Oregon, a city like North Plains with its own UGB does not have to plan the uses of the land being proposed for UGB expansion before the new UGB is settled. Only the new UGB line must be decided. After a new UGB is adopted, the City must comprehensively plan the expansion areas. This planning effort is the UGB Expansion Concept Plan already discussed and funded by the ODOT and DLCD TGM program.

### **When is the UGB expansion land ready for annexation and development?**

When the planning work is complete, the expansion area becomes eligible for annexation. Property owners in the UGB expansion area are not required to annex into the city. Property owners must apply to be annexed and meet planning requirements set forth by the adopted comprehensive plan amendments and infrastructure planning for the expansion area.

### **What are the different approaches to city expansion? Does development need to happen in large sections, or can it be done in smaller phases or districts?**

Properties brought into the North Plains UGB are not required to annex into the city. Annexation is property-owner initiated.

### **What can the city and its residents expect in terms of increased taxes and funding for large infrastructure projects?**

Comprehensive planning of the UGB expansion includes an infrastructure finance plan that will emphasize revenue sources for infrastructure generated by the new development activity itself. System Development Charges, special districts such as Local Improvement Districts, and other

tools are available to cities to plan infrastructure funding in a manner that keeps existing residents from being responsible for funding infrastructure for new growth. The infrastructure finance plan would utilize other UGB expansion funding plans elsewhere that have successfully achieved this outcome. Partnership with the State of Oregon on capital project infrastructure funding would also be a key component to City planning.