



POPULATION FORECAST FOR SPRINGFIELD

Background

In order to preserve Springfield's quality of life and ensure orderly urban development, the City is currently reviewing its residential, commercial and industrial land inventories and projecting future land need. Our need for land depends on future population growth. State law requires cities to adopt coordinated population forecasts to adequately plan for future growth. An accurate population forecast will affect how Springfield plans for future infrastructure and other community amenities such as parks and schools.



In the past, the cities of Eugene and Springfield shared a single regional population forecast, which was the basis for the *Metro Plan*. Recent changes in state law (House Bill 3337) require Eugene and Springfield to separate and update their population forecasts. The Springfield City Council has directed Springfield Planning Division staff to prepare amendments to our comprehensive plan to implement the new law.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is a population forecast?**

A population forecast is an estimate of future population growth. It is based on a review of historic population growth and assumptions about future demographic and economic trends. The Oregon Administrative Rules states: "The population forecast is an estimate which, although based on the best available information and methodology, should not be held to an unreasonably high level of precision."

- **Why does Springfield need a population forecast?**

Springfield has contracted with the consulting firm ECONorthwest to prepare a residential, commercial and industrial buildable lands study to determine whether there will be sufficient buildable land available to meet the future demand for housing, jobs, public facilities, streets and roads, schools, parks and open space. Oregon state law requires cities to have a 20-year population forecast as the basis for their comprehensive planning. The City must make estimates of its residential and employment land needs based on the projected population for at least a 20-year period.

The population forecast is used to determine future city and county needs for housing, jobs, transportation, water, sanitary sewer, fire and police stations, and parks. City, County and community service providers such as school districts and hospitals may also rely on these forecasts to plan for future expansions.

- **How much will Springfield grow?**

How much Springfield will grow depends on several factors, many of which are influenced by the policies the City chooses to adopt. Policies related to land supply, density, tax incentives for new businesses etc. are just a few examples. Springfield's growth rate is also influenced by factors outside direct local control, including regional, national, and worldwide economic trends. Population forecasts take these factors into account in addition to historic demographic trends.



- **How do we select a population forecast for Springfield?**

The long-term population forecasts for Oregon and its counties are developed by the state's Office of Economic Analysis (OEA), using a forecast model that takes into account data about existing age and sex characteristics to project birth and death rates, as well as in-and-out migration rates for Oregon and its counties.

Oregon law requires the governing body of each county to assume responsibility for coordinating land use planning activities within the county. Lane County must adopt and maintain a coordinated 20-year population forecast which distributes the projected countywide population to the cities and rural areas. The total population forecast for the cities, urban growth areas, and rural areas of Lane County must be consistent with the OEA

forecast for the county total. At the request of the Cities, the Lane County Board of Commissioners recently took an action to initiate the preparation of the coordinated county-wide population forecast. The local governments are required to adopt the coordinated forecast and include it in their comprehensive plans.

- **What is a population forecast “safe harbor?”**

The Oregon land use planning program requires the City to have a comprehensive plan which demonstrates that all applicable Statewide Planning Goals have been met. The Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) include “safe harbor” provisions that give the local government optional courses of action they may use to satisfy particular requirements of the Statewide Planning Goals. Under certain circumstances, the OARs allow cities to choose a safe harbor approach to forecast population growth. Under this method, the City would prepare a population forecast that assumes that the city’s share of the forecasted county population will be the same as the city’s current share of the county population. The Springfield City Council recently chose a Safe Harbor forecast of 1% average annual growth rate (AAGR).