

Hood River County Background Report

Amended August 4, 1986
Amended Goal 2 population projections 1997
Electronic version created 2004

BACKGROUND REPORTS

INTRODUCTION:

The Hood River County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the basic instrument used for county land use planning. It is law and is utilized to control and direct the use and development of land use activities on private lands within the county. A comprehensive plan means a generalized coordinated land use map and policy statement of the county. Such a plan is an expression of public policy in the form of a policy document; generalized plan map, zoning map, implementing ordinances and supportive background reports.

Overall Hood River County's comprehensive plan consists of the following elements:

- a. County Goal, Policy, Strategy, and Land Use Designation Document: (In short, County Policy Document.) This is a statement of public policy; as such it is one of the major documents to be used for land-use decisions.
- b. Comprehensive Plan Map: Implement the County Policy Document through general delineations of land-use designations on a plan map. The plan map graphically shows where land use activities (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, etc.) will occur within the planning period (year 2000).
- c. Zoning Map, and Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances: The zoning maps and ordinances implement in detail, the comprehensive plan map. The zoning map is more graphically specific in determining land use activities and the zoning and subdivision ordinances provide standards and criteria that control development of land use activities.
- d. Background Reports: These reports contain inventories, detailed information, analysis, etc., concerning each Statewide Goal. This information provides the basis in development of the Policy Document, the plan and zoning delineations and justification for the zoning and subdivision ordinance text.
- e. Exceptions Document: Presents background data analyzing and justifying why specific areas are either built out and committed to residential, commercial and industrial use or why there is a need to accommodate additional development (residential, commercial or industrial) in specific areas.
- f. Transportation System Plan (TSP): Implements the County's TSP, the City of Hood River's TSP; and the City of Cascade Locks' TSP to comply with state-wide Planning Goal #12, OAR 660-012 and Periodic Review, OAR 660-025. The Plan was adopted as HRC Ordinance #249 on July 21, 2003.

This document contains Background Reports. Copies of the above Comprehensive Plan elements are available at the Hood River County Planning Department, Hood River County Business Administration Building, 601 State Street, Hood River, Oregon, 97031.

PLAN INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT IS THE COUNTY PLAN?

The Hood River County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the basic instrument used for County land use planning. It is law and is utilized to control and direct the use and development of land use activities on private lands within the County. A Comprehensive Plan means a generalized coordinated land use map and policy statement of the County. Such a plan is an expression of public policy in the form of a policy document, generalized plan map, zoning map, implementing ordinances and supportive background reports.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to interrelate all developed and natural systems and activities related to land use. Natural systems and activities include natural resources and air and water quality management programs, etc. Developed systems and activities include sewer and water systems, transportation systems, educational facilities and recreational facilities, etc. The Comprehensive Plan is both “coordinated” and “interrelated”, consequently the land use map and zoning map must be consistent with applicable text in the policy document, zoning and subdivision ordinances, and background reports and vice versa.

Overall Hood River County's Comprehensive Plan consists of the following elements:

- A. County Goal, Policy, Strategy, and Land Use Designation Document: (In short, County Policy Document) This is a statement of public policy; as such it is one of the major documents to be used for land-use decisions.
- B. Comprehensive Plan Map: Implements the County Policy Document through general delineations of land-use designations on a plan map. The plan map graphically shows where land use activities (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, etc.) will occur within the planning period (year 2000).
- C. Zoning Map, and Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances: The zoning maps and ordinances implement in detail, the comprehensive plan map. The zoning map is more graphically specific in determining land use activities and the zoning and subdivision ordinances provide standards and criteria that control development of land use activities.
- D. Background Reports: These reports contain inventories, detailed information, analysis, etc., concerning each Statewide Goal. This information provides the basis in development of the Policy Document, the plan and zoning delineations and justification for the zoning and subdivision ordinance text. Background reports also include (in total or portions) specialty reports such as “Hood River County, An Analysis of Alternative Economic Futures”, Pacific Economica, Inc. (1981); portions of the 1977 Mt. Hood Planning Final Environmental Statement,

1977, Mt. Hood National Forest; Hood River County Westside Area North-South (transportation) Feasibility Study (1982), etc.

- E. Exceptions Document: Presents background data analyzing and justifying why specific areas are either built out and committed to residential, commercial and industrial use or why there is a need to accommodate additional development (residential, commercial or industrial) in specific areas.
- F. Transportation System Plan (TSP): Implements the County's TSP, the City of Hood River's TSP; and the City of Cascade Locks' TSP to comply with state-wide Planning Goal #12, OAR 660-012 and Periodic Review, OAR 660-025. The Plan was adopted as HRC Ordinance #249 on July 21, 2003.

II. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN?

- A. Establish a land-use planning process and policy framework as a basis for all decisions and actions related to the use of land and to assure an adequate factual base for such decisions and actions for lands outside the City Limits of Hood River and Cascade Locks.
- B. Provide for consistent review of development proposals including revision of comprehensive plan and zone changes.
- C. Protect public health, safety and welfare.
- D. Preserve and maintain agricultural lands.
- E. Preserve forest lands for forest uses.
- F. Preserve open space and protect natural, scenic and historical resources.
- G. Maintain and improve the quality of the air, water and land resources of the County.
- H. Protect life and property from natural disasters and hazards.
- I. Satisfy the recreational needs of the citizens.
- J. Improve the economy.
- K. Provide lands for housing.
- L. Plan and develop a timely, orderly, and efficient arrangement of public facilities and services to serve as a framework for rural development.
- M. Encourage a safe, convenient, and economic transportation system.

- N. Conserve energy.
- O. Provide an established set of policies for citizens preparing or revising development proposals, and in testifying before decision-makers, and for decision makers as the criteria for review when making public decisions.
- P. Provide recommendations for the County, State, and Federal agencies, and special districts, on a variety of subjects (listed under Strategies in each section).
- Q. Provide the standards by which the Plan can be implemented via zoning and subdivision ordinances and a Capital Improvements Plan; and
- R. Preserve the rural character of the County.

The Comprehensive Plan is comprehensive because it was developed in recognition of County needs and desires to the year 2000±.

III. PLAN DEVELOPMENT - CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The following brief comments do not do justice to the numerous hours of dedication by the Citizen Advisory Groups and other citizens; Planning Commission members; the Board of County Commissioners; and various agencies who developed Hood River County's Comprehensive Plan. Plan development involved two processes: Phase I, involvement prior to submittal to the LCDC and Phase II, resubmittal to the LCDC.

- A. Phase I: The process used to develop the Plan was one of extensive citizen involvement using the “natural systems” approach and the State Goals and Guidelines to produce an effective local document. Individual citizens, groups, and agencies were also consulted on the Plan. The Plan, developed jointly by the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG), County Planning Commission, and the Planning Staff, reflects basic goals and policies which are designed to insure future livability.

Initially, the Plan drafts were prepared by the CAGs and the Planning Department Staff, based upon numerous sources (data and analyses of data, interviews with agencies and citizens, industry input, etc.). These drafts were reviewed by the County Planning Commission. After a request for agency comment on the revised plan (for example, comments from the Soil Conservation Service, State Forestry Department, and County Public Works Department), the County Planning Commission held public hearings. Based on the public hearing testimony the Planning Commission made revisions to the Plan and proposed Zoning Map that were felt to be appropriate. This resulting Plan and proposed Zoning Map was forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners who after hearings adopted the Plan.

Thereafter it was submitted to the Land Conservation and Development Commission in August, 1980.

- B. Phase II: The LCDC critiqued the County's Plan and remanded it to the County (December, 1981,) thereafter the process involved the following. The Board of County Commissioners designated the Hood River County Planning Commission as the primary body to bring the County Plan into compliance with the directives of the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). The Board also directed that the previous Citizen Advisory Members, agencies, etc., be utilized through referrals to assist the County. The Citizen Advisory mailing list amounted to approximately 155 persons and agencies. Basically when the Commission completed compliance items they either sent or notified the Citizens Advisory Committee and agencies, etc., that copies were available for review and comment prior to scheduled hearings. The County's mailing list eventually amounted to 400+ individuals and agencies.

The approximate number of Xerox pages distributed just throughout the County regarding the Plan amounted to 100,000 pages (considered low).

The Commission averaged three work sessions per month between February, 1982 and late August, 1983. The work sessions were open to the public and the public and Citizen Advisory Committee were notified through the media or by mail-outs.

Upon receiving comments from the public, the Commission would make a tentative decision and forward copies to the LCDC Plan Reviewer for additional review and comment.

The Commission conducted four public hearings regarding compliance items. All members and agencies on the Citizen Advisory list were sent legal notices of the hearings. Legal notices also appeared in the local newspaper and through the radio. The Planning Commission forwarded their recommendations to the Hood River County Board of Commissioners. The Board held required public hearings, made revisions and updates, and directed the Planning Department to submit again, the Plan including all its elements to the LCDC. This was accomplished in early spring, 1984.

- C. Plan Consolidation: The previous Hood River County Comprehensive Land Use Plan (submitted to the LCDC August, 1980) consisted of the following four separate plans: (1) Mt. Hood; (2) Central Valley; (3) City/Westside; and (4) Columbia Gorge.

The Board's directives were to consolidate the four plans into one County Plan and this has been completed. Although the Plan has been consolidated, references

are naturally made to certain geographical locations throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The public generally identifies by geographical location. For example, the Columbia Gorge area and Central Valley are referenced in numerous policies, strategies, etc., in the Policy Document and within the Background Reports.

Map #1 will assist the public in identifying planning areas by name. The boundaries shown are not legal boundaries, however some have been placed or coincide with existing plan designations or zoning boundaries. Also, the Hood River County Comprehensive Plan has again been consolidated into one land use plan.

IV. CRITERIA USED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

A. Basic Criteria: The overall guiding principle in developing policies and allocating land for future growth is to meet identified community needs and goals (detailed in the subject sections of the Plan). Land is viewed as a resource, not a commodity.

B. Other Criteria:

1. Physiographic determination is based on the “Natural Systems” approach to planning, that is, the designation of land-use types and intensities based on the physical suitability of the land. This system evolves around the premise that man and nature can and should live in harmony with one another. To accomplish this, the Plan recognizes both the needs of man and nature.

Community-wide problems can be created by permitting intense development in areas susceptible to flooding, soil erosion, high-water tables, and unstable slopes, because the balance of nature can easily be upset. A geologic stability study has been prepared by the State Department of Geology and Mineral Industries for the area, floodplain mapping is to become more detailed, and a soils suitability inventory has been completed.

Land hazards (flooding) and limitations (slope, high-water table, etc.) have been identified. The limitations based on soils are general in nature and specific sites within an area may reveal different soil characteristics. In these cases, the soil conservationist from the SCS or the County Sanitarian should be consulted. As a general tool soil hazards, limitations, and suitability ratings serve to guide the type and intensity of development in an area.

2. Efficient Community Design: Building an efficient community is analogous to building an efficient home. “Efficiency” means a

community is designed for energy savings, low maintenance costs, and ease of expansion. An efficient community is characterized by: (a) protection of the most efficient agriculture and forest resource lands (i.e., those lands that require the least inputs per unit output), (b) providing for the expansion of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses in locations already serviced for such uses, (c) allocation of land uses in such a pattern that maximum conservation of non-renewable sources of energy is achieved (e.g., providing for housing near shopping areas and employment opportunities).

3. Land Use Designation Criteria: Each Land Use Designation (residential, commercial, forestry, agricultural, etc.) has, in general, been applied to lands having characteristics to support land use activities. For example, lands designated rural residential include; lands where extensive parcelization has taken place; lands where existing rural residential use has occurred, etc. Lands designated agriculture include; areas where Class I through IV soils exist; lands where residential uses do not exist, etc. These and other land use designations and the areas where they apply are described in detail under Goal 2 - Plan Designations.

V. HOW TO USE THE PLAN

Copies of the Policy Document, Comprehensive Plan Map, Zoning Map, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, and Background Reports are available for purchase or review at the Hood River County Planning Department.

In order to determine the effects of the Plan and its various elements on proposals for development, the following steps can be taken (this process is not exclusive):

- A. Determine the legal descriptions of the property in question; this will assist in expediting the overall process. The legal can be determined by identifying the Township, Range, Section and Tax Lot Number(s) of the property in question. This information can be obtained from the property tax statement or by seeking assistance from the County Records and Assessment Department.
- B. Obtain and review a copy of the Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map. Utilizing the legal description determine the land use designation that applies to the property from the Comprehensive Plan Map. Also determine the definition of the Comprehensive Plan Designation from the Comprehensive Plan Map.
- C. Again, using the legal description determine from the Zoning Map the zoning that is applied to the property. Determine from the Zoning Ordinance what criteria and standards must be met.
- D. Read the County Policy Document to determine what policies strategies, etc., are applicable to the property.

- E. If the proposed use complies with the Plan Map, Zoning Map and Ordinances, inquire at the Hood River County Planning Department what other requirements must be met. The Planning Staff will assist you and if necessary direct you to the proper agency or office.
- F. If the Plan or zoning prohibits the proposed use, request what alternative courses of action are available. If one is applicable, make application. In providing more accommodating service, please provide the Planning Staff with the legal description and then establish an appointment. This allows Staff additional time to investigate in depth various alternatives and provides you with a “better” product to assist you in making your decision.
- G. If you want to obtain a fairly thorough knowledge of the Planning Unit's physical, social and economic characteristics, spend an afternoon browsing through the Background Reports.

VI. PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE

The Plan is a continuing cooperative process for evaluating land-use decisions. Since the Plan is not a static entity, changes over time are required to reflect new circumstances. With that in mind, the County will review and update the Plan at least once every five years for the purpose of looking at unforeseen growth, technological changes, and public attitudes on land-use issues.

VII. HOW TO REVISE THE PLAN

The following policies apply to all administrative actions for legislative and quasi-judicial plan revisions.

A. Types of Revisions:

1. Legislative. Legislative revisions are revisions where policy is being made. They include land use changes that have widespread and significant impact beyond the immediate area such as quantitative changes producing large volumes of traffic, a qualitative change in the character of the land itself such as large scale conversion of an area from residential to industrial use, or a special change that affects large areas of many different ownerships.
2. Quasi-Judicial: Are changes where policy is being applied. They include those revisions which do not have significant impact beyond the immediate area of the change, are narrow in scope and focus on specific situations. For each plan change, a revision will be heard by the Planning Commission on a first come first serve basis.

B. Those Eligible to Initiate a Plan Revision:

1. Hood River County Board of Commissioners.
2. Hood River County Planning Commission by majority vote.
3. Property owner or authorized representative.

C. Forms of Revisions:

1. Amendment of one or more policies of the Plan (Legislative).
2. Amendment to the text of the Plan (Legislative).
3. Amendment of a portion of the comprehensive Plan Map (Legislative or Quasi-Judicial).

D. Hearings Process: The County shall conduct a public hearing on all proposed plan revisions. To be acceptable, proposed revisions must show at a minimum the following:

1. Conformance with State Land-Use Planning Goals.
2. Compliance with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan (including all elements).
3. Granting the proposal will not detrimentally affect the long-term environmental, economic, social, and energy needs of the locality, region, or state.

E. Exceptions: If any Plan revision necessitates taking an exception to the State Goals, the applicable procedures called for in State Goal number two shall be followed.

VIII. COUNTY OVERVIEW

Hood River County, located in the north central part of Oregon, has a land area of 529 square miles. Its dimensions are a length of 32 miles from north to south, and a width varying from 23 miles, in the north, to 10.5 miles in the extreme south. It is the second smallest county in Oregon in terms of geographic area, contains approximately 138± square miles of private lands; and approximately 15,835 people live in the County (1980 Census). Estimated population projections to the year 2000 between 18,300 and 21,500 total people.

Hood River County is a relatively compact physiographic unit. Most of the county is within the drainage basin of the Hood River. The Hood River system rises on the slopes

of Mt. Hood and flows north to join the Columbia River at the City of Hood River, a river distance of 39 miles and a fall of 7,500 feet from source to mouth. The Hood River Valley, occupying the bottom of the Hood River drainage basin, is 20 miles long and four to eight miles wide. Local relief separates the valley into two distinct units known as the Lower and Upper Valleys.

The Lower Valley, the larger unit, extends about six miles southward from the Columbia River to Middle Mountain, a traverse ridge about 2,000 feet in elevation. A low ridge enclosed a small bench of a few thousand acres on the north flank of Middle Mountain known locally as Middle Valley. The Upper Valley, located south of Middle Mountain, is approximately seven miles long and four miles wide and rises southward in elevation from 1,500 to 3,000 feet.

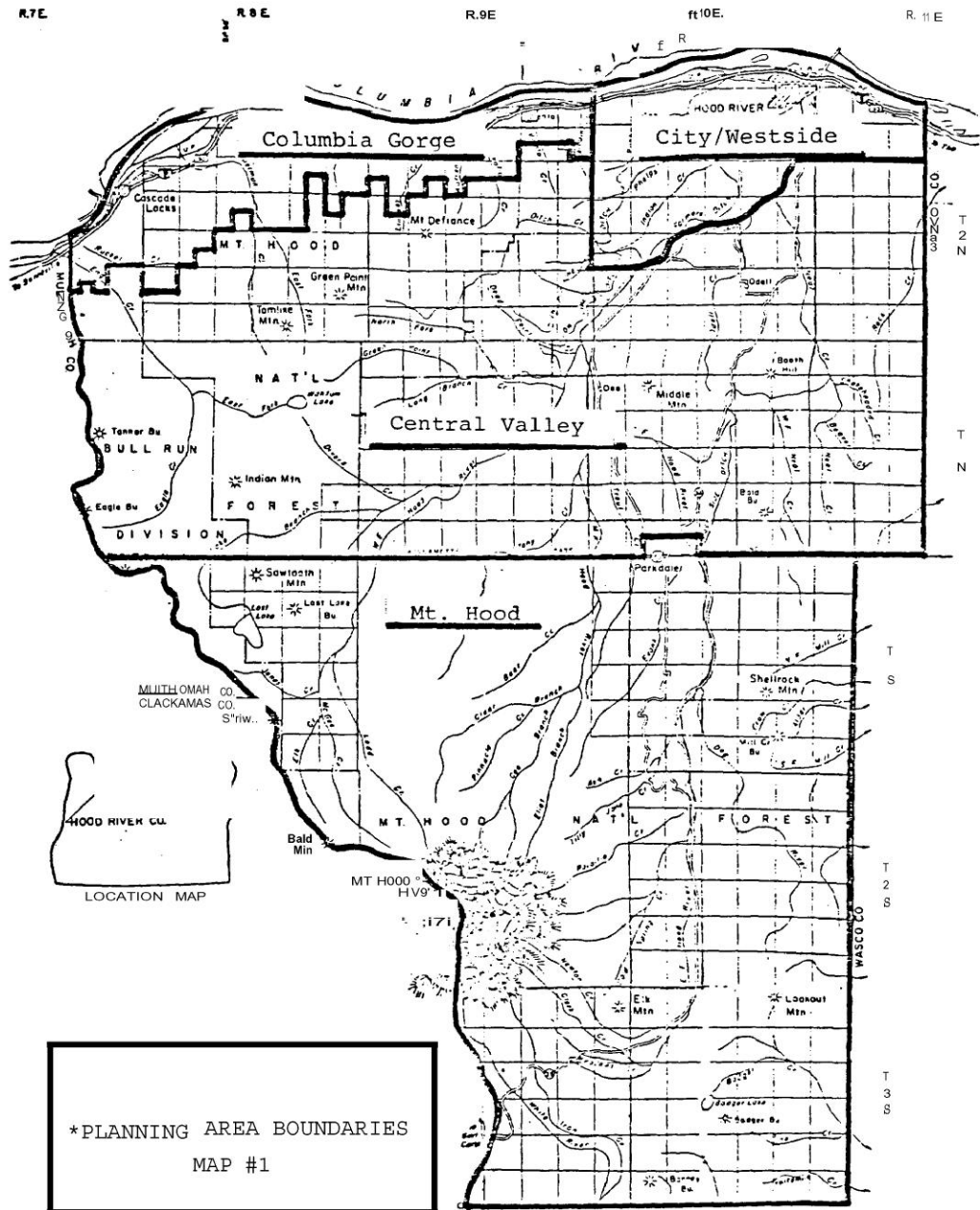
The surface of the entire Valley was modified by glacial action. A till sheet of varying thickness was laid down over the floor and subsequently reworked by glacial melt waters and forerunners of the present rivers. The soil pattern is directly related to the nature of the local till and the action of water. Variations range from silt loam laid down in the quiet waters of a lake in the bottom lands of the Lower valley, to loams derived from weathering of glacial outwash materials and gravelly sandy loams derived from stream deposits. In portions of the Upper Valley, soils deriving from recent volcanic ash deposits cover many outwash terraces.

The Hood River Valley lies in a transition zone between the marine-influenced climate west of the Cascade Mountains and the dry-continental climate of the intermountain region. Local topography and elevation play significant roles in explaining the marked differences in average temperature and precipitation between the Lower and Upper Valleys. The City of Hood River is located within the Columbia River Gorge at an elevation of 500 feet above sea level. The Columbia Gorge is a near sea-level water gap through which marine, often relatively warm air normally flows from the west. The City of Hood River has an average temperature of 36 degrees Fahrenheit for the months December through February, and an average temperature of 64 degrees Fahrenheit for June through August. It has an average growing season of 183 days, and an average precipitation of 30 inches per year. Most of the precipitation falling occurs in the five cool season months of November through March. Snow occasionally falls in the winter, but rarely remains on the ground for more than a few days.

The economy of Hood River County is primarily based on agriculture, forestry, and recreation.

Orchard crops constitute the major share of the agricultural sector. Because of the winter precipitation climatic pattern, irrigation is necessary for the optimum maturation of tree fruits. Fortunately, ample water is available from the melting of the snow fields and glaciers of the surrounding mountains.

MAP #1



*The boundaries are not legal, however they will assist the public in identifying planning areas.

MAP # 1

Large scale map, entitled "Planning Area Boundaries" is available at the Hood River County Planning Department.