

# AGO Report

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Number 3  
Fall 2001



## Selling Our Message - Opinion Research and Communication Strategy

Candice Guth

**A**GO members “get it.” They know that we need to stabilize Oregon's population to protect the quality of our lives and the health of our natural environment. But what are people willing to do to bring about the end of population growth?

### Concern vs. Action

Recent polls confirm that Oregonians are very concerned about population growth. But when it comes to *how* to fix the problem associated with continued growth, there is no consensus. It's like the polls on traffic that say people want other people to commute on mass transit, while they continue to enjoy the luxury of driving their own car on unclogged highways. People don't like to be told what to do, they don't want to pay higher taxes, and they often want other people to solve problems — not them. AGO's challenge is to convert people's concern about growth into action that will make a difference.

AGO has drafted language for a ballot measure that calls for the stabilization of Oregon's population within a generation. Nothing draconian is envisioned, — it could mean ending tax subsidies to special interests, educating people about the connection between family size and loss of species, farms and forests, changes in the tax structure to reward small

families or smart consumers, and providing tax dollars to see to it that everyone who wants family planning has it. Which of these strategies would YOU support, and which are unacceptable to you? What should be added or removed?

### Selling Our Message

Everything AGO is doing is new. No other organization in the nation is working from a grassroots, statewide level to reverse pro-growth subsidies and policies that cause growth. So far, we have been working from instinct. But over the next few months, AGO will be working with a public opinion research firm to do polling and focus groups that will help us to hone our message for the greatest success. A recent report by Fenton Communications, “Now Hear This,” stated: “People working in the non-profit world sometimes have trouble adopting a marketing mindset, but in the end, the goal is for people to ‘buy’ our ideas — ideas for a better world.” Highlights of the report include:

- Target audiences and find out what to say to make them change their behavior.
- Remember that it is easier to motivate someone around something they already believe than to convince them of something new.

## Alternatives to Growth Oregon

*AGO strives to leave succeeding generations of Oregonians a more economically prosperous, environmentally healthy, and socially just State by encouraging progress toward a sustainable society, and discouraging growth focused on increased population and consumption.*

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- Making an emotional connection that touches a pre-existing belief turns passive support into action. Hearts first, then minds.
- Make the case for why action is needed now.

*Con't on page 3*

## May 2001 Metro Poll Findings

Those who see the quality of life in the metropolitan area getting worse in the next 20 years by length of residency.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| 20 plus years     | 61% |
| 11-20 years       | 57% |
| 5-10 years        | 45% |
| less than 5 years | 38% |

Those who see the quality of life in the metropolitan area getting worse in the next 20 years by self described area.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Rural to suburban | 62% |
| Suburban          | 57% |
| Rural             | 56% |
| Urban             | 49% |

Those who agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that Metro and their local government ought to try to slow growth down

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| 20 plus years     | 60% |
| 11-20 years       | 63% |
| 5-10 years        | 55% |
| less than 5 years | 35% |

### Population Growth Concerns

- Traffic congestion
- Urban growth using up forest and farmland
- Increased crime
- Crowded schools
- Increased air and water pollution
- Cost of housing
- Impacts on fish and wildlife habitat

"Fees paid by developers" was the preferred method of paying for the costs associated with future growth.

Less than 20% favor any tax to pay for growth.

# Executive Director's Report

## Another Poll, Another Public Involvement Process for Metro

Candice Guth

If government polling and public involvement repeatedly concluded that crime was the key issue citizens were concerned about, would people grow frustrated with a government whose primary response was not fighting crime, but planning for how many jails should be built and where they should go?

### Metro Residents ID Population as Top Concern - Again!

Consider then Metro Regional Government's latest poll that concludes (once again) that population growth is the key quality of life issue for area residents! (May 2001 Metro Public Opinion Study by Davis and Hibbitts, Inc.)

The results of this latest poll are consistent with results of prior Metro polls. From the conclusions: "There was little change in responses from 1996 among those who felt the quality of life in the area would get worse over the next 20 years, from 51% in 1996 to 54% in 2001." Only 16% see it getting better — down from 20% in 1996.

### Poll Results Should Direct Metro's Policies

Key findings in this poll should point the way for Metro. "In 2001, 56% agreed strongly or somewhat that Metro and their local government should try to slow growth down compared to 54% in 1997." Those who disagreed strongly or somewhat went down in 2001 to 29% compared to 32% in 1997. 73% felt that developers and new residents should pay for all the costs or for a greater share of costs associated with

future growth. Only 21% of respondents felt developers, existing residents and new residents should equally share paying for the costs of growth.

A 1994 report for Metro by ECO Northwest, "Evaluation of No-Growth and Slow-Growth Policies for the Portland Region" stated, "There are many ways that government policy could slow down growth that are not impeded by legal barriers. Reactively, government policy could stop encouraging growth with its economic development activities, investment in infrastructure and public facilities..." "...government could limit the supply and use of buildable land (expanding on its existing zoning and planning regulations), charge more for public facilities, and impose increased environmental and design standards on existing and new development." Their recommendations state that "Policies to slow growth should not be dismissed as unattainable and therefore, irrelevant."

Metro should be commended for assessing area residents' opinions on growth. But the time has come for Metro to take the results of their studies and polling seriously by enacting policies that are supported by residents. Metro is facing a ballot measure next May about density that will threaten the success of their efforts to maintain a livable Oregon — whether the region grows or not. To date, Metro has done nothing to slow growth and has done little to see to it that developers pay for the costs of growth. Metro has taken support for the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) as support for continued growth

Con't next page

# Research Update

## Trailblazing Statewide Assessment of Growth

Dictionaries say that a subsidy is a conveyance of something of monetary value by a government to the private sector, the intended outcome of which is deemed to be in the *public interest* or is *advantageous to the public*. But subsidies today are often not in the public interest and often result in taxpayers paying to reduce their quality of life. Eben Fodor's statewide assessment of growth will finally shed some light on just how much Oregonians are paying to subsidize growth!

Eben's first three months of research have included a comprehensive nationwide literature search for information on state or local subsidies that encourage and stimulate growth in land development. Eben has found

nothing similar to this study anywhere in the nation, so this is truly a trailblazing project!

Eben is working with economist Erik Knoder. They are collecting data on planning costs, development application processing costs and fees and development services. Through the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department they are obtaining information about business incentive programs, relevant publications and budget information. The most interesting references will be a part of the report narrative and an annotated bibliography will contain other relevant references.

We all look forward to the final report due on January 20, 2002!

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### Communication Strategy

*Con't from page 1*

- Create messages that help you meet your goal.
  - Rely on experts when needed.
- AGO is NOT going to change our goals to fit the polling. And our Board was NOT on Ecstasy when they made the decision to go ahead with expensive Opinion Research focus groups and polling. (As two AGO members have asked.) Our goal is to find out where people are on this issue and what we need to

do to move them towards embracing population stabilization. The Board of Directors recognizes that having an effective message and "hook" is critical to AGO accomplishing its mission. Clearly, AGO needs expert advice to define our audience, build an effective message, and find out if Oregon voters would provide us with a successful initiative campaign. Please consider a special donation for this important project!

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### Executive Director's Report

*Con't from page 2*

rather than as a real boundary that says no more growth after here! Please join AGO in our efforts to convince Metro that now is the time for meaningful action against the continued growth that threatens the quality of life in our region, by attending a "table talk" (see page 7 for details) or calling, writing, or emailing your Metro councilor.

## Alternatives to Growth Oregon

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## AGO Out and About

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June 5: Presentation to Hillsboro  
Kiwanis

June 14: Presentation to Bridlemile  
Neighborhood Association

June 25: Presentation to City Repair  
Project

July 6: In My Opinion - *Portland  
Tribune*

July 16: Meeting with Maryland Sierra  
Club member Ed Stennett about AGO  
ideas for Maryland

July 26: Meeting with Publisher Bruce  
Tarbet and Editor Dean Rhodes of the  
*Gresham Outlook*

August 4: Table at Ralph Nader Rally

August 13: Meeting with Reporter Jim  
Redden of the *Portland Tribune*

## THANK YOU!

Over the last several months, AGO has  
received generous support from:

- The Weeden Foundation: \$50,000  
annually, for two years
- Lazar Foundation: \$15,000
- Fulcrum Gift Fund: \$5,000
- Patagonia: \$5,000
- Foundation for Deep Ecology:  
\$5,000
- Anonymous: \$10,000

# THINK ABOUT IT!

## Neither Regulation nor Markets Can Prevent the L

*Andy Kerr*

With continued population growth, Oregonians face a more crowded future. Growth management and/or creating markets might mitigate — but cannot prevent—the californication of Oregon.

Two disparate political philosophies have taken on the task of maintaining environmental quality and quality of life in the face of population increase. Both regulationists (or planners) and free marketeers (or libertarians) fail.

Whether it is trying to find a spot to park at Multnomah Falls or in a hot spring, Oregon is filling up. Even if urban growth boundaries were sacrosanct, and Oregonians did not mind living ever closer together, neither planners nor libertarians have adequate solutions to the loss of elbowroom.

### Solitude Getting Harder to Find

Traditionally regulationists, the Forest Service grew frustrated trying to limit recreation use in the Mount Hood Wilderness to protect the statutorily required solitude. Use of the Wilderness has risen along with Oregon's population. The lines of people in the snow seeking to summit the state's highest peak are matched by the proliferation of hikers on the Timberline Trail. The bureaucratic response was to eliminate any limits and rely on voluntary education of users by users on how to minimize impact. Unless one can practice no-trace camping without elbows, such is destined to failure. It is one thing to leave a

clean campsite; it is quite another to visit an area and be invisible to others.

Wild rivers are more popular because more people are discovering them. More people are discovering wild rivers because there are more people. Planners hold lotteries or take reservations for river trips and libertarians advocate congestion pricing (like long-distance telephone rates used to be) to spread out the use. Unlike roads, society cannot simply increase the supply of wild rivers to meet demand. Rationing and/or overuse are the only options available with increasing population.

### Mitigation Does Not Prevent Loss

Urban design and wilderness management can mitigate — but cannot prevent the loss of elbowroom. From the crowding of state parks (from 1971 to 2000, Oregon's population increased 50%, while state park acreage increased 0.0019%) to the crowding of highways, this loss of elbowroom is causing people to react in a classic market sense: buying it. A bigger house on a bigger lot with fewer residents is partly a quest for elbowroom.

Planners recognize a limit to every resource and activity, save for population increase. Libertarians recognize no resource limit and seek no limit on individual actions. Both are cornucopians: people who don't believe in natural limits and believe in the endless abilities of humans to either exploit new resources or manage what we have better.

# Loss of Elbowroom

## Establish Right Not To Have to Travel

We have a constitutional right to travel in this country. We also need to establish — as a basic human right — the equally important right not to have to travel. Because planners (who have more power than libertarians) are unwilling to plan the end of population increase, a person who enjoys living in a certain size community will likely have to move if they want to maintain their chosen quality of life.

Whether it is a Portlander living on Northwest Trendy Third who doesn't want their neighborhood to become as dense as Manhattan, or an Oak Grovian who doesn't want their burg to become more like Portland, or a Medfordian not wanting another Eugene, or a Fossilian not wanting

another Condon, the present scheme of forcing every community to grow in population results in no person having the quality of life they want.

A person, by either staying put or moving to a place, has chosen a community with the overall size and density they prefer. With population growth, the longer one lives in an expanding community, the more it becomes what they don't want and the more likely they are to have to move.

## Build New Towns From Scratch?

Planner gadfly Richard Carson has proposed a novel solution to the densification versus sprawling dilemma: build new towns from scratch. Make them different sizes so new residents can pick the size of community they want. In this way, every

American gets the size of community they want to live in. Except for those Americans who aren't of the human species. As for food, we can get all from other nations, and I suppose eventually from other planets.

## Recognizing Limits

Just as there are limits on how many people can safely and comfortably live in your house or on your planet, there should be effective limits on how many can live on your block, in your watershed, your bioregion, your state, your nation and your continent. So far, neither regulationists nor libertarians have come up with methods to achieve such.

*Flexitarian Andy Kerr is the founder of AGO.*



## BOOK REVIEW

### The Vanishing Automobile and Other Urban Myths: How Smart Growth Will Harm American Cities

Randal O'Toole. 2001. Bandon, OR: The Thoreau Institute. 544 pages. *Reviewed by Andy Kerr*

In speeches, I often use the line: “Smart growth is like riding first class in an airplane that is going to crash. It is unarguably a better ride up front, but the end result is the same.” Randal O'Toole persuasively argues that smart growth is closer to riding in the cargo hold.

Although he could have done it in far less than 544 pages (portions

are repetitive and redundant; everyone needs an editor) O'Toole skewers, quite effectively, smart growth. Oregon's planning elite, in or out of government, will hate this book. Using data and analysis, O'Toole generally makes the case that so-called smart growth is hugely expensive, and it does not work.

I have criticized smart growth as merely slowing the rate of the decline of both environmental quali-

ty and quality of life. O'Toole argues that it actually quickens these declines.

The alternative to government regulation and planning, in O'Toole's extreme libertarian (perhaps the qualifier is unnecessary) view, is the market. As an alternative to planning regulations, O'Toole argues that individual choice and private profit are the greatest sum of the public good. O'Toole's critique of why Oregon's land use planning is a failure is far more compelling than how his laissez-faire solution would be successful in addressing environmental and quality of life issues associated with growth. (See “Think About It” on page 4.)

## PARTICIPATE!

Present Programs to High Schoolers and Make a Difference in Their Future, and Yours!

Opportunities to participate include:

■ **Attend a Training in October**

Learn the program we'll be presenting, become familiar with environmental education teaching methods, and meet other volunteers. Call Sarah for date and time, or see [www.AGOregon.org](http://www.AGOregon.org).

■ **Present Programs**

We will have a 50-minute program prepared for you to present that includes a slide show, video, activity, and wrap-up discussion. All background information, script, and materials will be provided.

Call Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282 if you are interested!

## Calculate Your Energy Use and Pollution

The Center for Neighborhood Technology is offering average and extravagant Americans a gentle reality check through a free Internet service called [AirHead.org](http://www.airhead.org), which allows people to calculate their energy consumption and contribution to pollution. Go to [www.airhead.org](http://www.airhead.org) and plug information about electricity bills, driving habits, and other energy uses into the calculator and in less than a minute it will spit out how much pollution you create in one month. Even better, it will recommend ways in which you can reduce your energy use and pollution!

The average American contributes 1,859 pounds of air pollution to the atmosphere each year. How do you compare?

## Population Education for High Schoolers

AGO and the Columbia Group of the Sierra Club Team Up to Present Programs on Population and Consumption to Local High School Students

Alternatives to Growth Oregon is expanding its Outreach and Advocacy Program to bring population and consumption education to high school students. Today's youth face a bleak future if we fail to control population and consumption growth now. Our program will seek to inspire students to make choices in their lives and communities that will make a difference for their future.

AGO will be working with the Columbia Group of the Sierra Club — which has been presenting programs to Portland area high school students over the last two years — to present 50 and 80 minute programs that include a short video, slide show, and interactive activities

and discussion.

Volunteers from AGO and the Sierra Club have met several times to strategize and plan. The program will include pre-trip activities, team-teaching by trained volunteers, evaluation by teachers and volunteers, and follow-up assessment activities. We are working with Facing the Future, a non-profit organization in Washington State, to train volunteers in environmental education teaching methods and in the program itself.

As part of the program we will be developing a resource library of population and consumption teaching materials for teachers.

If you would like to get involved, please see the sidebar for opportunities to participate!

## BOOK REVIEW: The Growth Illusion

Richard Douthwaite. 1999. New Society Publishers. 383 pg, \$20.95, paperback.

Reviewed by Jean Anderson Pezzi

Following the first edition, issued in 1992, this revised edition updates and carefully details Douthwaite's recent meticulous research that concludes that economic growth does NOT make our lives better, and explains why this is true. He shows us the many specific negative results of governmental strategies "to raise national income" namely, the typical increase in poverty and unemployment. The author, a Brit now living in Ireland, cites similar results in the U.S., Britain, Germany and Australia.

A core concept of *The Growth Illusion* is that "advanced" cultures consume more than they create. "In other words, these economies are

running backwards and making their citizens worse off." Douthwaite examines fundamental questions of economics and society but has given us a readable and informal interpretation. More, he points the way to how the capitalist system can be redirected by basing economies locally rather than globally.

While *The Growth Illusion* lacks the instant appeal and potent brevity that characterize Eben Fodor's brilliant book *Better, Not Bigger*, this book is solid, well documented and an excellent resource for inquiring professionals, students and the searching general reader. The footnotes are full and enlightening; the bibliography is extraordinary in its completeness of resources.

## Member Meetings

Sarah Bidwell

**A**GO's member meetings continue this fall on the third **Tuesday** of the month. Please join us for lively discussions and strategizing on taking action in your community.

All meetings are held at AGO's office, 205 SE Grand Ave., Suite 203 at 7:00 p.m. Free parking is available on the streets just east of Grand Ave.

### September 18: Breaking the Taboo - Talking about Immigration

Join us for an open and respectful discussion on US immigration policy. We will start the meeting with an excellent 25-minute video, "By the Numbers," (please arrive on time). Our purpose is to find ways to discuss US immigration as a part of US population growth that does not alienate people who believe that any discussion of immigration as an environmental issue means ignoring concerns about racism, justice, fairness, equality and opportunity (it does not!).

If you are already concerned about out-of-control population growth in the United States, then you know that the most controversial and difficult issue about US population growth is US immigration policy.

Please come with an open mind and ideas about how to open other minds about this most difficult issue.

### October 16: AGO Open House 4-8 pm

Please join us for an evening of socializing with fellow AGO members, Board, and staff. The open house will be at AGO's office, 205 SE Grand Ave., Suite 203 in Portland from 4-8 pm.

### October 24: Metro Table Talk

See sidebar for details.

### November 20: Metro Table Talk

See sidebar for details.

## Metro Table Talks

Metro's *Let's Talk* project is designed to bring people together to discuss and consider growth-related issues. One of the first steps in the project was an opinion survey (see page 2). Now, in-depth *Let's Talk* conversations, called coffee talks, are taking the regional discussion further. Next year the Metro Council will be making decisions about expanding the urban growth boundary, fish and wildlife protection and greenspaces. To make these decisions, the council needs the opinions of the people who call this place home.

Metro has invited AGO to host a table talk for our members - we will host two. The first will be on October 24 and the second on November 20. Both will be held at AGO's office at 7:00 p.m. Come with your ideas for how Metro should "grow from here" (or not!).

## MEMBERSHIP / CONTRIBUTION FORM

**Yes, I want to Keep Oregon Oregon and**

**N1A901CM**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become a member of AGO | <input type="checkbox"/> Renew my membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Make an additional contribution |
| ___ \$35 Regular                                | ___ \$75 Supporter                           | ___ \$250 Sustainer                                      |
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## Action Alert Contacts

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**President Bush**  
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Comment Line: 202-456-1111  
president@whitehouse.gov

**Senator Wyden**  
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**Senator Smith**  
U.S. Senate  
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**Representatives Mailing Address:**  
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Washington D.C. 20515

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**Alternatives to Growth**  
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*Our lives begin to end the day we  
become silent about things that matter.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

# ACTION ALERT!

## US Population Policy Needed!

The Census bureau projects that 120 million more people will live in the US in just 50 years but that figure could be as high as 271 million more people. Policy changes being considered now could make that higher figure a reality, so it is important that President Bush, as well as your Senators and Congressman hear from you now.

Washington is abuzz with talk about President Bush's plan for "amnesty" "legalization" or "regularization" for millions of people who have entered the US illegally. While citizens everywhere are concerned that people who have entered the US illegally be treated fairly and with dignity, it is also absolutely essential that all impacts of an amnesty be thoroughly examined.

In 1986, President Reagan gave amnesty to 3 million people. It was to be a one-time humanitarian act. Since then, anywhere from 3 to 13 million more people have illegally entered the US.

The US continues to ignore the impact of a ballooning population on our natural environment, traffic, sprawl, wages, affordable housing, health care, and school crowding. The message another "amnesty" will send is that none of those concerns are important and that the US can continue to absorb millions more people without end. Please write your elected officials. Future generations will thank you.

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