

AGO Report

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AGO Gears Up to Expand SDCs

Sarah Sameh

At AGO's recent strategic planning retreat the board underscored the importance of changing public policy to allow limits to

coming up in January, AGO is gearing up to introduce legislation that allows local governments to charge for SDCs not currently covered,



Bob Adams

AGO is working to ensure that new development will pay for itself.

growth in Oregon. One way to address this concern is through the expansion of allowable System Development Charges (SDCs).

Giving Local Governments Choice

Municipalities charge SDCs, or development impact fees, to developers to recover some of the costs associated with the new development. Under state law, local governments may charge SDCs for five types of infrastructure: transportation, water, stormwater, sewage and parks and recreation facilities. But many studies show that the SDCs currently being charged in most towns don't even come close to paying for the real cost of new development.

With the 2003 legislative session

such as schools, police and fire, libraries, and community colleges. We will be collaborating with Oregon Communities for a Voice in Annexations (OCVA) as well as building a coalition of interest groups concerned with adequate funding for the areas listed above.

Having the ability to charge developers for the true cost of growth is a powerful tool for local communities that are struggling to fund needed services. When communities realize the enormous financial consequences of growth, they may begin to question whether future growth is desirable.

Recent polling indicates strong support for making growth pay its way. But for us to be successful, we need your participation in putting

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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the pressure on our elected officials! We're in the process of organizing a letter-writing campaign to all elected officials and legislators. To make it convenient

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Humans Overshoot Earth's Regenerative Capacity

Humanity's use of natural resources, or Ecological Footprint, has exceeded the regenerative capacity of the Earth since the 1980s. The finding was outlined in a paper published in June 2002 in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, "Tracking The Ecological Overshoot of The Human Economy," by Redefining Progress Sustainability Program Director Mathis Wackernagel. He and his colleagues reached this conclusion by comparing humanity's demand on the environment to the earth's supply of bioproductive areas over the past 40 years.

The researchers assessed the total area globally available for growing crops, grazing animals, harvesting timber, accommodating infrastructure, marine fishing, and absorbing carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels. They then calculated how much area would be required to sustainably meet human demand for these various activities.

According to this analysis, human demand (or Ecological Footprint) in 1961 was about 70 percent of the Earth's regenerative capacity. By the 1980s demand had risen to match total global supply, and by 1999 demand exceeded supply by at least 20 percent.

It takes the biosphere, therefore, at least a year and three months to renew what humanity uses in a single year.

Executive Director's Report

Sarah Sameh

With the completion of a strategic planning process in early September, AGO is now preparing to implement its major objectives for the coming year. While there are always myriad projects and agendas that warrant AGO's involvement, the organization recognizes the need



AGO board and staff planning priorities for the next three years.

to narrow its scope in order to be more effective. With that in mind, AGO has underscored a handful of goals for the next three years:

- Change public policy to allow limits to growth in Oregon;
- Support local communities in their efforts to limit growth;
- Improve public understanding of the costs and consequences of unlimited growth;
- Build and strengthen AGO in order to implement strategic goals.

The themes of AGO's strategic plan include collaboration, community support, and changes in public policy. Until policy changes are made at the state level, local communities will continue to be obligated to accommodate growth, even growth they say they don't want. We are well aware of the high numbers of Oregonians (94%) who feel Oregon is big enough or too big already.

Collaboration Key to Success

Changing public policy takes time and force, and collaboration is of utmost importance. By partnering

with other organizations AGO will be better suited to educate and mobilize citizens all over Oregon. It is our hope that through forming alliances and building a broad base of support we will be more effective in changing growth-related policies. Examples of policies we hope to enact include

requiring full disclosure of the costs of growth from a new development, including the various impacts a new development has on a community; allowing communities an opportunity to vote on whether or not they want a given development; and providing opportunities for communities to recoup the full cost of growth. Our ultimate goal is to help create government policies that reflect Oregonians' desire to preserve the true flavor and beauty of Oregon.

It's a daunting task and we know we can't do it alone. Few organizations are willing to talk about limits to certain kinds of growth, but we know there is support out there since polls show almost all Oregonians think the state is big enough or too big already. The key is working together to come up with ideas and legislation that speak to the needs of each community and give citizens a choice about how they wish to see their towns evolve.

In this time of economic strife and budget cuts, it is even more essential that we choose where our tax dollars go and how to build our communi-

Continued next page

Local Research to Provide Statewide Tool

An AGO project in West Linn will provide valuable information for activists throughout the state

AGO has been afforded a wonderful opportunity to work with the city of West Linn to determine the actual costs of growth in a local community. The first task will be working with the city to see how they determine the system development charges (SDCs) they levy on new development in categories currently allowed by state law: transportation systems, parks & recreation facilities, water service facilities, storm drainage systems and sanitary sewer systems. The next step will be to calculate what the SDCs would be for a number of additional categories not currently charged to development due to state laws prohibiting them: school and library facilities, fire protection and police facilities, and general government facilities.

Costs for Stable vs. Growing Population

After analyzing additional sets of data we hope to determine the costs of providing all local city services to existing residents under a "no-growth" assumption. We will then

Every new study and research project that identify the true costs of growth help AGO promote its goals of raising public awareness and motivating citizens to take charge of the future of their communities.

compare these costs to the actual costs charged to existing residents based on current expenditures for existing services and infrastructure, as well as all necessary new services and infrastructure required by growth. Combining the above data points should result in a clear picture of the costs to a city and its residents of maintaining a stable population base as compared with that of encouraging additional growth.

Community Indicators

A second line of study will look at community indicators, which include baseline service levels and other quality of life indicators such as community open spaces, parks and natural areas, traffic congestion, classroom size, and pedestrian and bicycle friendliness, among others.

Every new study and research project that identify the true costs of growth help AGO promote its goals of raising public awareness and motivating citizens to take charge of the future of their communities.

Executive Director's Report *Continued from previous page*

ties in healthy, sustainable ways. Through a collaborative effort among schools and libraries, police and fire departments, social service organizations and environmental groups, we can make our wishes known—and force elected officials to listen and make their votes reflect the desires of the communities they represent.

Your voice matters.

Thank you for your continued support.

Alternatives to Growth Oregon

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Staff

Executive Director

Sarah Sameh, sarahsameh@AGOOregon.org

Outreach Director

Chuck Adams, chuckadams@AGOOregon.org

Administrative Director

Sarah Bidwell, sarahbidwell@AGOOregon.org

Contact Information

Alternatives to Growth Oregon

205 SE Grand Ave., #203

Portland, OR 97214

Voice: (503) 222-0282

Fax: (503) 222-0180

Email: info@AGOOregon.org

Web: www.AGOOregon.org

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AGO Around the State

Eugene

AGO member Patrick Bronson continues to coordinate the efforts of local citizens concerned about growth. As a follow-up to our first meeting, we hope to form an official chapter and outline priorities for the coming years.

Southern Oregon

A well-attended informational meeting in August inspired local citizens to collaborate and begin to think about goals for the region. Regular meetings with specific action items will be set over the next couple of months.

Salem

Early September found Salem members gathering to discuss growth in the Salem area and ways to partner with other like-minded organizations in Marion County. Interest in forming a chapter remains high, and we hope to set priorities and select a coordinator within the next few months.

Bend

Given the rampant growth experienced in Bend over the past decade AGO members are encouraged by the prospect of having a greater presence in the area. More discussions and meetings will be held after the first of the year with the intention of appointing a coordinator to synchronize the efforts.

Other inquiries have come from members in Sandy, West Linn, Clackamas County, La Grande, the Southern Coast, and several other Portland Metro area communities. Please contact us if you have any interest in getting something going in your community.

From Here to There

News about growth from around the country

Chuck Adams, Outreach Director

More and more cities are recognizing that it is difficult to stem the tide of growth and its related costs when acting alone. But when acting in concert, cities, towns and even counties can work together to develop regional strategies that control, limit and begin to lay the foundation for an eventual end to growth.

Washington State

For 35 years Mike Layton earned his living as an Olympia-based reporter and columnist covering the legislature and politics. Often during that time Layton wrote articles in support of highways, railroads and a monorail, and was an avowed supporter of projects that encouraged growth. No more!

Growth does bring more of some things: smog, pollution, crime, prisons, congestion, overcrowding in our schools, and taxes. Growth also brings less of some things: open space and natural areas, productive agricultural land, clean air and clean water, peace, quiet, and civility.

Excessive growth in Washington has led Layton to sing a different tune. In a recent *Seattle Times* article, "Growing, Growing, Gone: Relentless Sprawl Trashes the Evergreen State," Layton states, "You can't stop growth, the growth industry stubbornly proclaims.' Paired with that silly shibboleth is its twin: If we build it they will come. They're right on that one. If we don't slow

and eventually stop growth, roads will choke, subdivisions will fill every fertile valley and cover every forested hill until there is no place left."

Layton continues, "Victims of the growth industry unwittingly subsidize the destruction of their own neighborhoods and pay for the privilege in property taxes driven ever higher by the costs of roads, water and sewer systems, police and fire services, libraries, city halls and schools to

accommodate newcomers. Local officials, policy makers, and taxpayers have known all this, deep in their brains, for decades. It's time they accept those truths."

On the question of smart growth Layton quips, "Smart growth still works, if you are a developer. But if you're a taxpayer, a homeowner, a small business person, a worker, blue or white collar, more people means more taxes for all, old timers and newcomers alike. At some point you're going to be crowded by growth and paying for the discomfort."

Iowa

A recent Iowa Supreme Court decision against financing new parks has left cities in a quandary over how they will finance such parks and recreation areas in the future. The court struck down a fee that West Des Moines charged to resi-

"If we don't slow and eventually stop growth, roads will choke, subdivisions will fill every fertile valley and cover every forested hill until there is no place left."

*Mike Layton, Retired Reporter,
Olympia, WA*

dential developers, which paid for the development of neighborhood parks throughout the city. The Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines argued that the fee amounted to an illegal tax, and the court agreed. Some would argue that the subsidies we all pay to new development constitute an illegal tax.

Iowa law does not give cities the authority to charge impact fees to developers, and without such legislation, Iowa cities are having a heck of a time trying to get developers to ante up. According to Gary Mattson, associate professor of community and regional planning at Iowa State University, the property tax revenue generated from new residents does not cover the costs cities must pay to support new residents over time. Mattson points out that an analysis of growth in metro areas similar to the Des Moines area shows that new residential housing developments may seem to show some short term benefits to cities through increased land values and increased tax base. But over the long term, after accounting for the costs of all services provided and infrastructure required, growth does not pay for its impacts.

In response to the growing problem cities are experiencing in funding parks, the Iowa League of Cities

plans to lobby the Iowa Legislature next year to allow cities to charge park impact fees.

Maryland

Representatives for eight towns in Carroll County are insisting that county government institute much more restrictive controls on residential development than those currently in place. The county master plan directs growth to the towns, but as is so often the case, county leaders are accepting growth but failing to provide the necessary services that new growth requires, such as schools, roads, and utilities.

Council president Frank Johnson, a resident of the town of Mount Airy, summed things up pretty well. "We are not islands. We are one community affected by what the county does. We are part of the solution and we are saying no residential growth without the facilities to support it."

Changes Begin at Local Level

Statewide changes happen first at the local level. If we all start talking to our neighbors about the costs of growth and

start writing letters to our elected leaders and local newspapers about the costs and impacts to our communities from unending growth, we might begin to slow the mindless growth machine down and eventually stop it.

"We are not islands. We are one community affected by what the county does. We are part of the solution and we are saying no residential growth without the facilities to support it."

Frank Johnson, City Council President, Mt. Airy, MD

Living Within Limits

The 2002-2003 school year is off to a great start! We've presented over 15 programs just in the last two months and look forward to many more throughout the year.

Future Volunteer Trainings

We are working with our local chapters to set up volunteer trainings around the state. If you are interested in attending a training in your area, contact AGO's outreach director, Chuck Adams, (503) 222-0282.

Resource Library

We now have a teacher resource library of videos, curricula, and activity guides focusing on population and consumption education. All materials are available for loan to educators in Oregon. We recently participated in a teacher inservice day at the Oregon Zoo where we shared our information with close to 200 teachers and future teachers! Information on the library is given to teachers when we present the Living Within Limits program to their class (many of the materials make great follow-up activities), and it will be posted on AGO's new website to be launched soon!

Living Within Limits is a high school education program on population and consumption growth. In cooperation with the Columbia Group of the Sierra Club, we present interactive programs to Portland area high school students. We are currently expanding the program around the state.

Portland Member Survey Results

AGO recently sent out a brief survey to its Portland area members. The purpose of the survey was twofold: to gauge support for the re-institution of a large, centralized member meeting; and to determine the interest in establishing small, local AGO chapters within the greater Portland Metro area.

We found that our members are indeed very interested in organizing locally, even within the Portland Metro area, and that there is strong support for holding a regularly scheduled gathering, the most popular interval being a quarterly meeting. Members also heavily favor a preset agenda and subject matter.

We are working out details for initiating meetings in the Portland Metro area and will be sure to let you know as those details coalesce. If you live in the Metro area and are interested in organizing a local chapter, please contact AGO's outreach director, Chuck Adams, at (503) 222-0282, or chuckadams@AGOoregon.org.

Growth Activist Toolkit

Useful tools for limiting growth

Sarah Bidwell

While recognizing that every local community has its own unique set of circumstances and needs, we have attempted to bring together a set of resources for local growth activists to use in taking charge of growth in their communities. AGO's Growth Activist Toolkit contains concrete tools—model ordinances and resolutions, sample testimony and letters, growth research, polling data, and success stories—that you can use locally. We hope that you adapt these tools to your community, and share what you've learned with others. Contents include:

Taking Charge of Growth: An Action Plan for Oregon Communities—Practical solutions and policies you can put to work in your community.

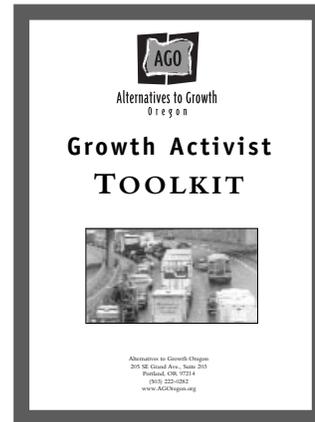
Model Ordinances—Two ordinances dealing with making growth pay its way and disclosing the costs of growth – environmental, social, and financial.

Model Resolutions—Two resolutions to repeal the 20-year land supply law and to expand the list of allowable system development charges (SDCs).

Sample Testimony—Examples of testimony given in support of ordinances, resolutions and other growth-control measures.

Sample Letters—Examples of letters in

support of ordinances, resolutions and other growth-control measures.



Research—Cost of growth research by Eben Fodor and others.

Success Stories—Articles from around the state and country that describe successful community efforts to limit growth.

Polling Data—A collection and summary of relevant polling data that support our cause.

Resources—Articles, books, websites, and organizations to go to for more information.

Living Within Limits—Information on AGO's high school education program on population and consumption.

This toolkit is a dynamic set of resources that will change and grow as new tools, strategies, research and success stories emerge. Suggestions on how to make the toolkit better are welcomed, as are new tools and actual experiences.

Toolkits will be distributed to every chapter. AGO intends to put the toolkit on its website, www.AGOoregon.org, and we encourage you to check it frequently for updates.

Corvallis Chapter Update

Bob Devine

Volunteers in Corvallis have begun to shape the chapter by participating in discussions about the chapter's goals and priorities for the coming year. Here ambitions outstrip resources, so the small, dedicated group of local citizens recently recognized its limited abilities and made plans to be most effective by focusing its efforts. Over the next few months the Corvallis chapter will concentrate the bulk of its attention on promoting a discussion in Corvallis on a resolution put forth by Oregon Communities for a Voice in Annexations (OCVA) concerning System Development Charges (SDCs).

Focusing on SDC Resolution

The resolution is non-binding and is intended to build support to address the SDC issue in the state's 2003 legislative session. The resolution seeks legislation that would change an existing law that precludes cities from instituting SDCs for police, fire, schools, and library

costs caused by new development. The current law creates a clear and unfair taxpayer subsidy to developers.

In addition to the inherent value of the resolution, championing it provides the Corvallis chapter with two vital benefits. It gives citizens something concrete to rally around, and if the city adopts the resolution, it demonstrates a significant accomplishment on the part of grassroots organizing. Such milestones are especially important during the embryonic stages of a grassroots group, when the ratio of talk to results tends to be grossly uneven.

The chapter will continue attending key civic meetings, writing letters to the editor, and forming ties to other local grassroots groups, but for the time being the only major, concerted effort will be to promulgate the OCVA resolution.

For more information about OCVA and the SDC resolution, go to the OCVA website at www.ocva.org.

Sustainability Now!

Workshop series focuses on moving Oregon towards a sustainable future

On November 6, 2002 AGO presented the workshop, "Popping the Population Question: The Issue No One Will Tackle" at the Sustainability Now Workshop Series hosted by Ecotrust, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting a conservation economy.

We led the workshop with our friends from the Population Committee of the Sierra Club. The workshop focused on the environmental effects of population growth, the importance of including population stabilization into the sustainability movement, and success stories from around the world. Activities encouraged lively discussions among participants.

Many thanks to Ecotrust for inviting us to present!

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Yes, I want to make Oregon better, not bigger and

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Expanding SDCs

Continued from page 1

for you, we're working on developing a tool on our website that will allow you to easily submit letters and emails to your elected officials. Already we've sent over 350 copies of the executive summary of the *Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon*, which documented over 1 billion dollars in subsidies to growth, to all current and prospective legislators.

Is It Time for You to Renew?

Check out your renewal date that is printed above your name on the mailing label. Use the form on page 7 to continue your support!



Alternatives to Growth
Oregon

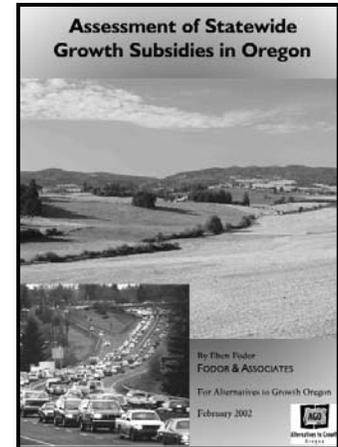
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Politicians Hear About Subsidies to Growth

In our continuing efforts to inform more decision makers and planners about the magnitude of growth subsidies in Oregon, AGO sent 350 copies of the executive summary of *Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon* to local, county and state politicians as well as government planners and other decision makers throughout the state. The executive summary has now been sent to nearly 400 policy makers since its completion early this year.

We will be following up with each recipient and requesting that they take action to

reduce and eliminate the subsidies outlined in the report. Legislators will be asked to support AGO's legislation (see page 1) and local officials urged to charge the full cost of growth allowed by state law.



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