

AGO Report

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Summer 2002



AGO Launches Chapters

Chuck Adams

Culminating six months of planning, AGO officially launched its first local chapter in Corvallis on May 30 to a standing-room-only crowd of nearly 100 people at the Benton County Public Library. Concerned citizens gathered to discuss growth in their community and hear from Andy Kerr, AGO's president. Nearly 80% of the attendees were not AGO members, but were delighted that a statewide organization exists to address their concerns about growth. Turnout was excellent, especially considering the gorgeous summer evening when most Oregonians prefer to be outside enjoying the weather!

Inspiring Growth Activists

After a brief welcome and introduction to Alternatives to Growth Oregon, one of the local chapter organizers, Bob Devine, introduced Kerr, the keynote speaker for the evening. Kerr spoke to an attentive crowd about the various impacts of growth on local communities and on Oregon as a whole. The evening ended with a prolonged and spirited question and answer session, during which a number of individuals expressed concern about continued growth and inquired about the kinds of things local citizens can do to regain control over the future of their community.

When the costs of growth are dis-

closed, including: taxpayer subsidies; a decline in the level of standard government services (overcrowded schools, shorter library hours and fewer books, fewer police officers and fire fighters per 1000 residents); increased traffic congestion, less open space and farmland; and a compromised quality of life, it becomes clear that growth issues have an impact on EVERYONE.

Corvallis Chapter In Action

At the end of June, the Corvallis chapter held a second community event featuring Jeff Lamb, executive director of Oregon Communities for a Voice in Annexations (OCVA). Chapter priorities include:

- Monitoring relevant city government meetings;
- Organizing letters to the editor;
- Advocating passage of OCVA's two resolutions (see page 5);
- Studying affordable housing and how a steady-state economy would affect it;
- Examining and, if warranted, helping to fight annexations; and
- Arranging a candidates' forum on growth issues.

AGO would like to give special thanks to the Corvallis members who helped organize both the local chapter and this event: Alex Derr, Dave Chiller, Bob Devine, Heidi Van Zee, Ed Epley, Tom Millan,

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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John Perkins, Ernie Richter, Dave Swanson and Boyd Wilcox. Without their efforts, AGO would not have had this opportunity to speak out about plan-

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Volunteer Spotlight:

Bob Devine organizes local growth activists in Corvallis

AGO is proud to honor Bob Devine of our Corvallis chapter.

Bob was one of the driving forces behind the creation of our first local chapter, and he brings a rich and varied set of experiences to his volunteer work with AGO. A freelance writer for the past 20 years, he has written for Audubon, Sierra Club, Atlantic Monthly and others, focusing on conservation, natural history and outdoor travel. He has authored six books commissioned by the National Geographic Society and the National Wildlife Federation. In addition to his writing and volunteer work with AGO, Bob serves as executive director of the Environmental Working Group on Invasive Species.

As AGO builds a grassroots movement to plan and prepare for an end to growth in population and consumption, volunteers like Bob are critical to making it all happen. Thanks Bob, for your valuable work on behalf of AGO!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

AGO is developing a photo library of pictures that illustrate the effects of urban growth. We are particularly interested in before and after pictures, such as areas that were once berry fields that are now strip malls. If you have any pictures or are willing to take some for us, call Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282.

Executive Director's Report

Sarah Sameh

As you may already know, growth subsidies in Oregon are no small matter. After months of research, AGO released an informative and remarkable report, "Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon," demonstrating that state and local governments spend over one billion dollars per year to subsidize growth in the state of Oregon—and this is a conservative estimate. This is not encouraging news, as the Oregon legislature continues to struggle with a budget battle and more cuts. Some growth proponents assure that we can grow our way out of budget deficits and economic downturns. The fact is, however, that we have incurred the current budget deficit after a prolonged period of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. The harder a community tries to grow faster, the greater the costs incurred, and the worse the budget deficit becomes as the community offers increasing tax incentives to businesses and developers. As more businesses and residents move in, more infrastructure is required—most of which is not funded by the new growth—thereby lowering the local government's budget to maintain current service levels for existing residents.

Giving Local Communities the Ability to End Growth

Considering the unmet needs of public schools, health care, social services, road maintenance and other basic services, the total amount of growth subsidies in Oregon is especially significant. There is little or no indication that the general public

wishes to have their tax dollars spent subsidizing growth. Local communities should have the right and the ability to maintain a degree of control over their own destinies.

Included among the tools available in this process should be a local community's ability to charge for the full costs for growth, eliminate or shorten the 20-year land supply law, plan for a maximum sustainable and/or desirable community size, and conduct community impact analyses. A 1999 statewide survey found that only 2% of respondents prefer Oregon's population to be bigger. Other research has shown that making growth pay its way ranks high among Oregonians' priorities. AGO wants to help local communities communicate this message. If we can't say no to growth (yet), new growth should at least pay its way.

Educating Elected Officials About Growth Subsidies Top Priority

AGO is dedicated to educating Oregon's elected officials about the level of growth subsidies in the state and how it conflicts with the wishes of Oregonians. Ironically, government actually worsens its financial position by encouraging new growth. The simple fact is that growth has more costs than benefits beyond a certain level. We are, in essence, paying to have our quality of life diminished.

As funding allows, AGO will continue to distribute the subsidies report and attempt to demonstrate the need for local governments and public officials to survey their local

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AGO Chapters

Continued from page 1

ning for an end to growth and about the right of local communities to limit growth.

Establishing Chapters - An AGO Priority

One of AGO's priorities is to establish additional chapters throughout the state. To aid this effort AGO provides a variety of resources including: research reports, surveys and studies, networking and sharing of experiences with other chapters, logistical support and staff support. Our goal is to empower local activists by providing a comprehensive tool kit that they can use to work for positive change in their community through public education and political involvement.

Establishing such chapters accomplishes a number of objectives. First, and most importantly, it provides an avenue for supporting local AGO members and other growth activists as they focus their efforts on growth issues of concern to their community.

Second, it increases AGO's membership throughout the state. The greater our numbers, the greater our ability to influence local and state politicians and to lobby for such legislative remedies as the elimination of the 20-year land supply law, the ability of local jurisdictions to charge for all categories of System Development Charges (SDCs) at their full costs, and the allowance of communities to determine their ultimate size.

Finally, the formation of chapters creates a high level of synergy between AGO and other organizations and individuals who are working to bring about changes in how we talk about growth, and plan for its eventual end. We believe that by encouraging cooperation and communication between local organizations, or local chapters of larger organizations, we can enhance the effectiveness of each organization and accomplish mutual goals that benefit all local residents.

Currently we are working with members in Bend, Ashland, Eugene and Salem to organize local chapters. Realizing that each chapter is unique, we plan to leave it up to each chapter to determine its own structure, level of activity and action agenda. Some chapters may simply serve as an outlet for like-minded folks to talk about growth issues in an informal setting while others may opt for more structure or more community-directed events and outreach.

AGO is anxious to help any of our members to organize a local chapter in any town. If you have any interest in organizing a local chapter, drop what you're doing and get in touch with our outreach director, Chuck Adams, (503) 222-0282 or chuckadams@AGOOregon.org.

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Subsidies Report Sent to Elected Officials

In March 2002 AGO released "Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon," a report that documented over 1 billion dollars in taxpayer subsidies to growth. Distributing the report and its findings has been a top priority for AGO. Our hope is that when people become aware of the magnitude of the subsidies we provide, which results in the very growth that diminishes the quality of our lives and that of our natural environment, the pressure to end such subsidies will mount.

To that end, AGO has sent the report's most remarkable findings to more than 60 political leaders and media representatives throughout the state. Over the next several months, and as funding allows, we will be sending the report to every city councilor, county commissioner, mayor, city planning director, and city manager, as well as to a number of key community leaders outside the political arena and managing editors of every newspaper and periodical in Oregon. Educating elected officials and the citizenry about the complex information surrounding growth subsidies is a formidable task. AGO is committed to this process and plans to act as an information clearing house and resource center for Oregonians who wish to learn more.

The work performed on taxpayer subsidies to growth and the costs of growth in Oregon has begun to receive national interest. Other cities throughout the country are using Oregon's example as a starting point for their own reports on the costs of growth.

Across the Country, Growth is Challenged

Communities, planners and economists across the country are beginning to question growth and its costs.

Oregon is not the only state where growth issues are gaining high visibility:

Virginia

Last May, in Northern Virginia local residents concerned with the rapid growth in Leesburg and Fairfax City voted two long-time incumbent mayors who supported rapid growth out of office and replaced them with candidates who pledged to curb development.

Florida

Governor Jeb Bush's Growth Management Study Commission is pushing a concept called "full-cost accounting" that is supposed to act as a comprehensive method of comparing what a community spends on new development with the revenue that development actually brings in. And in a recent *Sarasota Herald Tribune* article, AGO's report, "Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon," was used to question the costs of growth and who pays for it.

Hawaii

In another indication of national concern over growth and its costs, the state Land Use Commission for Hawaii is seriously considering implementing regulations that would require the developers of new residential developments on the island of Oahu to construct all school facilities needed to support that new development prior to being able to legally close on the sale of any new homes in the development.

Planners and Economists Question Growth

Just as local communities are becoming increasingly active in determining how much growth their community will accept, professional planners and economists are beginning to question the benefits of continual growth. Recently an article in the *American Planning Association Journal* offered arguments that planners can use in support of the notion that no-growth policies are valid positions for city and regional planners to take. A recent report authored by an economist at Case Western Reserve University, "Growth Without Growth" prepared for the Brookings Institution, concluded that population growth cannot be equated with per capita income growth, and certainly not with improved quality of life. The report found that some U.S. cities, while maintaining a flat population base, or even a slight decrease in population, experienced pronounced increases in per capita income. In addition, some cities such as Portland and Seattle experienced rapid population growth but much less income growth per capita.

Taken together, these events point to a rapidly increasing public awareness of, and concern about, the costs and the impacts of growth. Communities that are no longer content to passively accept the continual growth mantra are beginning to insist on having a voice in determining their future, and if growth continues, are demanding that such growth pay its full costs.

OCVA Introduces Resolutions to Make Growth Pay Its Way

You will be heartened to learn that AGO is not the only group in Oregon that is concerned about growth and community rights to self-determination. Oregon Communities for a Voice in Annexations (OCVA) has also been working to protect citizen rights and promote citizen involvement in land use issues.

Formed in December of 1996, OCVA has been extremely active in the political arena, both at the local and state levels. At the local level the group has worked diligently to force city governments to obtain voter approval prior to any city annexation decisions. These local efforts have led to voter annexation requirements in 30 cities with a combined population of 500,000 people.

Resolution to Repeal the 20-year Land Supply Law

At the state level OCVA is working to get two resolutions enacted into law. The first resolution deals with the 20-year land supply law. If passed this resolution would allow communities to determine by ballot whether or not they wish to expand their Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), rather than be required by state mandate to expand the UGB to supply a continuous 20-year supply of land, as is now required by law.

Cities that have passed this resolution as of May 2002: Donald, Lowell, Salem, Turner, and West Linn.

Resolution to Expand Allowable SDCs

The second resolution would allow communities to collect system development charges (SDCs) for four more cost categories: fire protection, police protection, libraries and schools. This resolution, while omitting a few SDC categories, would dramatically improve the ability of local communities to charge developers for the true costs of growth. If passed we would still need to get approval for communities to collect SDCs for general government facilities, electrical generation and transmission facilities, solid waste facilities, telephone and cable TV facilities and natural gas facilities.

Cities that have passed this resolution as of May 2002: Donald, Lowell, Florence, Philomath, Salem, Sherwood, Turner, and West Linn.

These cities represent over 189,000 people. That's 5.5% of the population of Oregon! The OCVA resolutions are an important step towards making growth pay its way. Of equal importance, debate on the resolutions will broaden citizen understanding of the limits to growth.

Take Action!

Add your city to the list by contacting OCVA at www.ocva.org or (541) 929-5166. Sample resolutions are available on their website.

Welcome AGO Intern, Christina Skellenger!

AGO is pleased to introduce Christina Skellenger, who will be working at AGO for the summer. Christina is a senior at Oregon State University and is working toward a degree in Environmental Science with a specialization in Natural Resources and Environmental Law and Policy. Christina's college career has inspired her to learn more about population growth, though her interest stems back to her high school days at Oregon City High School. She has learned a wealth of information at OSU about population growth and is excited to continue to learn more at AGO.

Christina will be developing a photo library, helping with outreach efforts, and researching success stories in Oregon, the US, and around the world.

Living Within Limits: Gearing Up for the Fall

Our high school education program is taking a summer break, but we're preparing for the upcoming school year. Our goals include:

- Holding 3 volunteer trainings around the state;
- Presenting Living Within Limits to additional high schools;
- Reaching out to middle schools; and
- Making the resource library available to teachers.

As reported in the last *AGO Report*, we will be expanding the program to communities around the state. As chapters form, getting involved in education outreach is one way for you to act locally! Contact Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282 if you're interested!

LIGHTEN UP!

Measures to Reduce Your Ecological Footprint

1/10 acre

- Increase the amount of organically grown food that you eat by 50%
- Dry 12 loads of laundry per month on the clothesline rather than in an electric or gas dryer
- Shower 3 minutes less per day

1/5 acre

- Increase the amount of locally grown food that you eat by 50%
- Keep the thermostat set 5 degrees lower during the heating season

1/3 acre

- Increase the amount of unprocessed and unpackaged food you eat by 50%
- Fly 5 hours less per year
- Drive 20 hours less per week

1/2 acre

- Substitute one meat dinner a week with a vegetarian alternative

1 acre for 1 year

- Postpone having a child for one month

Never mind paper or plastic bags. How did you get to the store?

- DONELLA MEADOWS, AUTHOR AND SCIENTIST

Sonoma County, CA Calculates Its Ecological Footprint

Ann Hancock, AGO member

With support from the Environmental Protection Agency, Redefining Progress, an Oakland-based think tank, calculated Sonoma County's Ecological Footprint, a measurement of people's demand on nature, and determined that it is 22 acres per person. This means that it takes 22 acres of land and sea throughout the world to support each resident of Sonoma County. If everyone in the world consumed like the average person in Sonoma County, we would need about four more Earths.

This is the first time the EPA has helped a community determine its "ecological footprint," or measure of the land and sea needed to provide people's food, travel, housing, and other consumables. "The EPA supports this kind of innovative research because it really raises our overall awareness about our impact on a finite world," said Brent Maier, congressional liaison and program officer with the agency's San Francisco office.

As a community, Sonoma County can benefit from the Ecological Footprint by applying it to planning and policy decisions regarding critical issues such as zoning, development, transportation, environmental regulations, and open space preservation. Using the Footprint and other sustainability tools, we can define sustainability goals in specific terms, measure our progress, create strategies for accelerating progress, and educate and inspire community action toward building a sustainable future.

The Ecological Footprint is used worldwide for a variety of tasks, including

- The City of Petaluma and Carollo Engineers used the Ecological Footprint as one of their main criteria in selecting a sewage treatment option for Petaluma's new facility.
- The National Assembly for Wales, a newly formed government, chose the Ecological Footprint as its headline indicator for measuring progress.
- Several Swiss Banks use the Ecological Footprint as part of their analysis of countries' credit worthiness.

Protecting Earth's ecosystems depends on individuals reducing their personal consumption. But it is even more critical that we enact system-wide changes so that living in an Earth-friendly way is common and easy instead of noble and tedious. The good news is that to promote long-term health and viability, communities are starting to recognize and respond to local and global ecological limits. The Ecological Footprint is a powerful guide for individuals, businesses, and governments as we steer toward a sustainable future.

For more information on the report, contact Sustainable Sonoma County at (707) 829-7333 or www.sustainablesonoma.org. To learn more about the ecological footprint, contact Redefining Progress, www.rprogress.org.

AGO is working to have a similar Ecological Footprint study conducted for Oregon. Stay tuned!

AGO Reaches Out to Neighborhood Activists

Chuck Adams

In an effort to reach out to new constituencies, AGO is beginning to contact many of the neighborhood associations (NAs) in the greater Portland area, many of which are concerned about growth. Indeed, it is common for such NAs to form with the specific intent of contesting a development project in their community.

Given AGO's mission to engage the public in a discussion of the impacts of growth and equip local communities with greater control over their own future growth, we believe that a close working relationship with neighborhood associations holds significant promise. As a grassroots organizing force, these NAs, with their built in communication and outreach networks, are rich in potential.

While there will be differences among the goals of many NAs, many are held in common, such as:

empowering local communities to make growth pay its full costs (by permitting municipalities to charge 100% of the cost of ALL SDC categories, including those currently not allowed); creating neighborhood and community growth threshold standards; requiring community impact analysis for all proposed development projects; curbing or eliminating speculative developments; and creating a community progress indicator and benchmark program.

It is crucial for AGO to share its message with a larger audience. We know that people are concerned with seemingly unending growth and that an overwhelming majority does not want such growth. Our job is to let them know that they DO have a choice, growth is NOT inevitable and bigger is NOT better.

PLANNED GIFTS

Considering a planned gift? AGO has opportunities for supporters to contribute appreciated assets such as gifts of stock and real estate, or to support AGO through bequests in wills. These charitable giving mechanisms offer significant tax savings to the donor while providing serious support for the preservation of Oregon. If you are interested in making a planned gift and would like more information, please contact AGO's executive director, Sarah Sameh, at sarahsameh@agoregon.org or 541.488.1702 x108.

Memorial and In-Honor Gifts
A gift in honor or memory of someone is an opportunity to acknowledge a friend or loved one who cared deeply about Oregon's natural splendor and pristine beauty. We have an easy form to fill out for these types of gifts and will handle all acknowledgements. Contact AGO's administrative director, Sarah Bidwell.

MEMBERSHIP / CONTRIBUTION FORM

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

N1A0702CM

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <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 |
| ___ \$50 Family | ___ \$100 Patron | ___ \$500 Benefactor |
| | | ___ \$1000 President's Circle |
| | | ___ \$5000 Life |
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Expiration Date ____ / ____ Signature (if using credit card) _____

Executive Director's Report

Continued from page 2

residents on the important matter of growth subsidies. We are also interested in doing more extensive research on how and where specific local communities are spending taxpayer dollars, which in turn will help us provide local communities with model ordinances and other resources to assist them in their mission to slow, and eventually stop, unwanted growth.

Until we influence policy-makers to support Oregonians' wishes, your tax dollars will continue to pay for growth.



Alternatives to Growth
Oregon

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*The greatest wealth is to
live content with little.*

- PLATO

AGO Member Meetings: What Are Your Needs?

AGO is considering reinstating member meetings in the Portland Metro area. If we decide to hold such meetings, we want them to be productive and useful for you and our cause. To that end, we'd like to get your thoughts through a survey via email. For those without email, contact Chuck Adams, AGO outreach director, at (503) 222-0282 to request a survey or give your thoughts over the phone. Or, answer the questions below, and mail them in!

- What would you like to get out of AGO member meetings?
- Would you consider attending a member meeting?
- How often should meetings be held?
- What type of meeting would you prefer?
- What is your preference for meeting format?
- Would you like to see a local AGO chapter for your community?
(Oregon City, Tigard, Portland, Gresham, etc.)

We look forward to your feedback and hope to implement changes where necessary in order to better meet your needs.

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