

Harnessing the Urban Amoeba

The Many Forms of Urban
Containment Boundaries



Overview

- What is a UCB?
- Why contain density?
- How to create a UCB
- Examples of UCB's
- Problems with UCB's (debunked)



UCB's are lines drawn on planning maps around developed areas showing where urban land ends and rural land begins. UCB's define the limit of urban servicing and urban-type development.



Why Contain Density?

- Local governments prefer to use existing infrastructure before making additional investments.
- UCB's assist in meeting planning goals such as nodal development and creating vibrant neighbourhoods around commercial centres.
- UCB's help to preserve agricultural, rural and resource lands.

Why Contain Density continued

- UCB's support transportation, air pollution, and other quality of life goals.
- Sprawl's impacts are not limited to infrastructure, but include social and environmental costs.

Creating a UCB Means a Combination of:

- Regional Growth Strategies
- Official Community Plans
- Zoning
- Servicing Limits and Timing
- Agriculture Preservation Policies
- ALR/Park/other designations
- Permit Caps

Key Components of a UCB

- A line around urban/village centres
- Supportive urban AND rural policies, such as zoning, servicing, and transportation
- Timelines and protocol for reviewing or amending the UCB

Example: District of Saanich



Saanich continued

- Sewer servicing limit since 1964
- Minimum 5 acre rural
- Sewer extended only twice outside UCB
- Eight year moratorium in 1993
- Now – Saanich built out
- Extensions only with assent of electors via referendum
- Regional Growth Strategy



Example: Regional District of Nanaimo



RD Nanaimo continued

- Since 1981 – increase of 64% (3% growth rate)
- 1997 Regional Growth Strategy
- Implementation Agreement
- Five year review
- Density not being used



Example: Metro Portland (Oregon)



Metro Portland continued

- Statewide growth management goals enacted in 1970's
- UGB adopted 1980 & must include 20 year supply of land
- Concentrated growth within City of Portland
- UGB expanded only 2% while population in Portland increased by 50%; Metro by 17%



Problems with UCB's



Problems with UCB's

- UCB's limit the supply of land so as demand for land increases housing prices are inflated
- UCB's inhibit development because developers prefer suburban sites and bigger homes
- UCB's create traffic congestion
- UCB's encourage leapfrog development, which creates even greater transportation and land use problems

Inflated Housing Prices?

- Housing prices determined by many factors
- Market demand, not land constraints, is the primary determinant of housing prices
- Both traditional land use regulations (zoning) and growth management policies can raise the price of housing
- If housing prices may increase in any land use environment, then the decision is between good and bad regulation to improve housing choices

Inhibiting Development?

- Homes and lots are as large as ever within UCB's

Creating Congestion?

- In the U.S., congestion has increased as rapidly in comparable metropolitan areas without UCB's as in Portland
- Population density and traffic congestion do not correlate – less densely populated areas such as Dallas, Atlanta, and Denver have more congestion

Leapfrog Development?

- Growth leapfrogs in developing areas with or without a UCB
- Defining factor is price of land, which is mostly affected by rate of growth not limitations on growth
- Growth requires a regional approach

Summary

- UCB's can help local governments to prioritize growth and infrastructure needs, and support long range planning
- UCB's support the continued vitality of commercial cores and rural economies
- UCB's will maintain the health of green infrastructure and support quality of life goals

