

November 25, 2009

Mayor and Common Council
City of Springfield
225 5th Street, Springfield, OR 97477

The City of Springfield has always been an important part of my life. It is my adopted hometown and I care for its prosperous future. It is in this spirit that I write this letter.

On December 7, 2009, you will make the first of several decisions that will determine the future shape of our proud community. Adoption of the Residential Lands Analysis will facilitate the separation of Urban Growth Boundaries by Springfield and Eugene as required by House Bill 3337. Over the following months, you will be asked to accept other studies and reports as well as initiate a specific refinement plan – all to result in an amended UGB for Springfield in the spring of 2010.

Even though you are on the final journey towards increased jurisdictional autonomy, please remember that it took many years to reach this point. The Metro Plan has been a useful document in some respects over the years but it has also thwarted Springfield's community development efforts on significant projects over the past 20 years. There is no need to recite examples in this letter – just suffice it to say that the State Legislature would not have endorsed HG 3337 unless there had been some well known “political” struggles.

Until recently, I had believed that once political barriers were removed thru conformance to HB 3337, Springfield could go about creating its preferred future- that many of the hopes and dreams as outlined in past “Springfield Tomorrow” documents could finally be pursued. However, I am now beginning to wonder whether Springfield truly will embrace the current opportunity to build its preferred future – one which provides ample economic and housing choices for all whom desire to call Springfield home. Over this past year, there seems to be a growing fear of litigation if Springfield dares to accomplish what was hoped for by many citizens when HB 3337 was passed.

There is little question that Springfield's final recommendations on any type of UGB expansion will not end up in litigation between Springfield and Lane County and/or other organized slow growth advocates. There is a process outlined in law for significant community development differences to be argued and resolved at the State level and that debate is currently occurring all over Oregon. The goal, then, should not be to try to avoid litigation by neutering community development objectives in your upcoming decisions but rather advocate for Springfield's best quality growth future and then fight hard for its success in the courts.

Mind you, I am not suggesting Springfield "overreach" its reasonable growth objectives. In the current legal environment, it would be foolhardy and expensive to do this. Rather, I am suggesting that we recognize Springfield has already incorporated fair and conservative assumptions into the various growth studies and reports and further compromise is unnecessary.

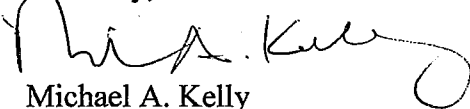
Here are two examples:

- (1.) In the ECONorthwest Preliminary Results of Residential Land Needs Analysis dated 4/3/09, they highlight the fundamental importance of an unbiased and valid population projection for determining Springfield's 20 year housing needs. Yet, because of a strong bias on the part of Lane County, Springfield was unable to adopt a valid population projection for 2030 which was prepared in 2007. Rather, Springfield was forced to conduct a population projection coined "safe harbor forecast" which produced a 2030 population figure well over 3000 people less than the low range forecast prepared in 2007.
- (2.) In this same report, ECONorthwest states they are using an average residential density of 7.2 dwelling units throughout the upcoming 20 year planning period. They are using this figure even though they report that Springfield's density between 1999 and 2009 was 6.5 dwelling units per net acre. This represents a 10% increase in density for all future residential development.

While I personally would prefer to see less conservative figures used, these assumptions will still result in some modest amount of new residential lands being added to Springfield's inventory over the next 20 years. However, if over the next few months, Springfield officials also adopt further "efficiency measures" and/or decide to place future schools, parks and open space uses on marginal lands instead of allowing such uses also on buildable lands, it is possible that Springfield will end up with little, if any, new single family residential acreage in its Urban Growth Boundary over the next 20 years. Surely, this is not what Springfield intended when it began its autonomy journey years ago.

During the upcoming months as you make these important decisions, please help keep Springfield's momentum alive by providing ample economic and housing opportunities for our existing and future citizens. Do not arbitrarily limit choice simply to appease those threatening litigation.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Kelly