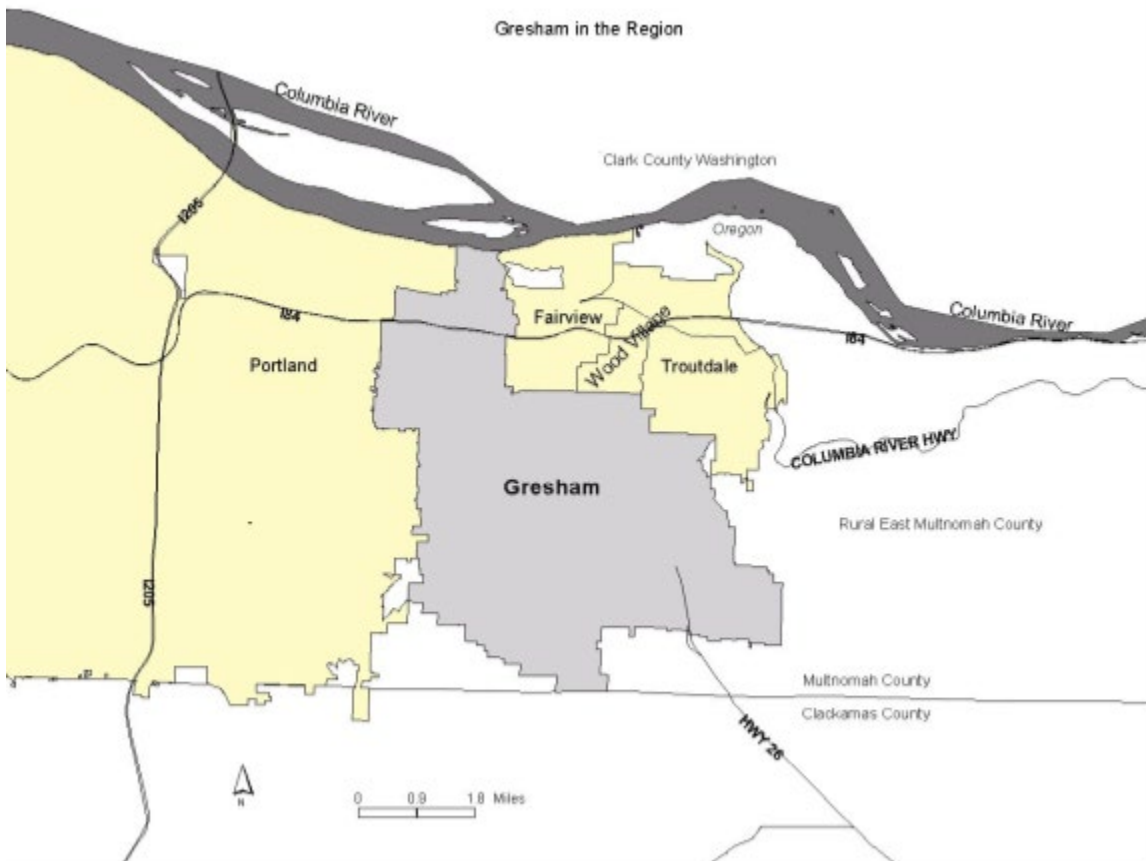


# Appendix 1 Community Overview and Current Land Use Characteristics

## I. LOCATION

The City of Gresham is located in Multnomah County, Oregon just east of the City of Portland. Gresham shares its western border with Portland and its eastern with the City of Troutdale and Multnomah County; it borders the Columbia River on the northern tip and the Clackamas County line on the south. Gresham incorporates approximately 22 Square miles of land and is currently the fourth largest city in Oregon with a population of 90,205 (2000 Census).



## II. LANDSCAPE

### TOPOGRAPHY

Along with bordering the Columbia River, Gresham has several streams running through it including Johnson, Fairview, Burlingame, Beaver and Kelly Creeks. There are also numerous wetlands in Gresham

that are found near the streams primarily in the north, north-central and south sections of the City. Gresham's landscape varies as it climbs from a low elevation of 6ft. near the Columbia River in the north to 1030ft. near the Clackamas County line in the south. Moving from the north to central Gresham, the land slowly rises but remains fairly level throughout. The land becomes very hilly on the south end of Gresham. These hills are part of the "Boring Lavas" a series of lava domes and vents (connected to the Cascade Mountain Range) that include Gresham Butte, a local landmark.

## **SOILS**

At the northern tip of Gresham the land is low, flat and the soil is enriched by the Columbia River flood plain. Soil in the western section, primarily in the Rockwood neighborhood, is described as having an abundance of large to small sized rocks found on and underground. Geologists theorize that these rocks are remnants of the extreme flooding events on the Columbia that occurred at the end of the last ice age. The rest of the flat valley areas in Gresham are made up of rich loam soils that are noted for their agricultural benefits, especially in regard to berry production.

## **III. HISTORY**

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### **NATIVE AMERICANS**

It is believed that there have been people in the Pacific Northwest for about 10,000 years. The first documented inhabitants of the Gresham area were local bands of Kalapuya Native Americans. The Kalapuya lived throughout Oregon's Willamette Valley and subsisted primarily on fish, game animals, camas root, fern and local berries. The native people would move about following food sources as they changed seasonally and thrived until the introduction of European explorers and their diseases in the early 1800s. It is estimated that the local Kalapuya's lost 75% of their population to smallpox, the measles, influenza and venereal diseases by 1832.

### **WHITE SETTLERS**

With most of the native population decimated by the time White settlers headed west to Oregon, there was little to no resistance from natives and land was easy to obtain. Virtually all of Gresham's land claims were made after the 1850 Donation Land Claim Act. The offer of free land caused many people to make the arduous overland journey to the Oregon territory during the mid to late-1800s. The Act designated parcel sizes to be 320 acres (640 for a married couple) and required they be rectangular in shape, which influenced the development and population growth pattern the City would ultimately take. The greatest influx of early settlers to Gresham occurred between 1852 and 1853.

When the first settlers arrived in the area of Gresham they found most of it covered in a thick forest primarily composed of Douglas fir and cedar trees. Some of the trees were noted to be from 6-10ft. in diameter. In between sections of forest were flat grasslands with intermittent trees, mostly oak. The grassland areas were the first sections of land to be claimed and settled, as they were the easiest to

build and farm on. Once the grassland areas became scarce, forestlands were claimed, cleared and settled. Later, people came primarily for the trees and the profits to be made in timber and subsequently people settled on the cleared land.

## **RAILROADS**

In 1902, a 36-mile stretch of railroad track was laid from Portland to the Clackamas River; it was called the Spring Water Division line. In 1911 a second rail line was put in that ran from Portland to a dam at the confluence of the Bull Run and Sandy Rivers. This line included Ruby Junction, which had a spur that ran to Troutdale. Gresham's proximity to these railroads greatly affected its early economy. The lumber industry intensified at this time as the movement of lumber became much easier due to the trains. The introduction of the railroads also made access to shopping and entertainment in Portland far easier for Gresham area residents. Portlanders also took advantage of the new transportation opportunities provided by the trains. Many purchased summer and weekend homes along the rail lines in Gresham and east Multnomah County. Johnson Creek became a favorite spot of wealthy Portlanders for summer getaways.

## **THE CITY OF GRESHAM**

The center of the original Gresham village developed at the intersection of the Damascus/Fairview Road and Powell Valley Road near Johnson Creek. Around 1892 Gresham Village consisted of the federal post office named Gresham, a blacksmith shop, two general stores, a feed mill, church, hotel and schoolhouse. On February 11th 1905, with a population of roughly 250, Gresham Village was incorporated and became the Town of Gresham; in 1921, the name was changed to the City of Gresham.

# **IV. DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

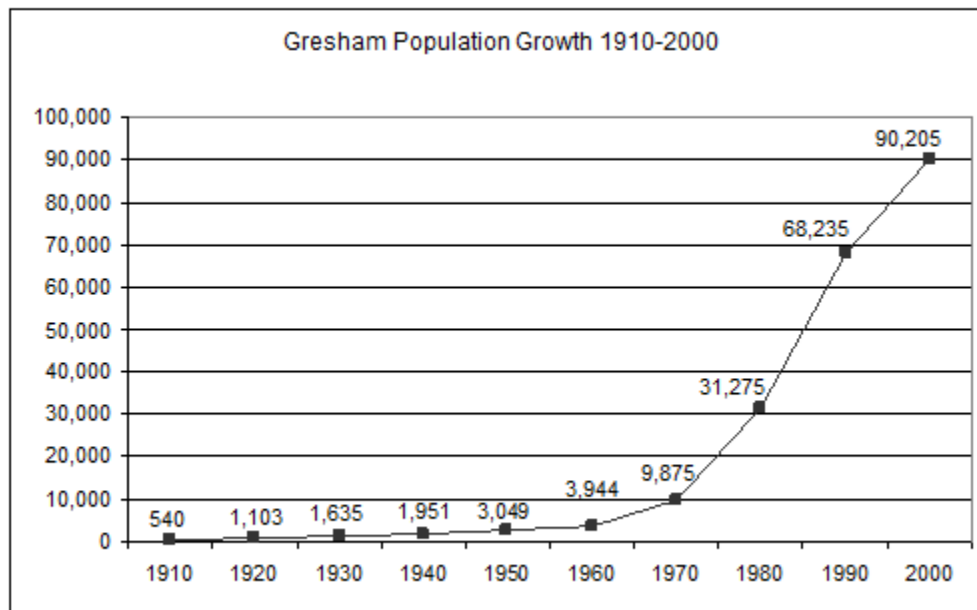
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## **1900-PRESENT**

Population growth in Gresham was relatively slow until the 1960s. The City of Gresham began as a farming center; the city and surrounding area maintained a focus on agriculture until the 1960s. Raspberries were the main crop grown in the Gresham area and were the primary economic driver from 1919 to 1965. Commercial berry growing and processing began in 1914 and was eventually expanded to processing a variety of berries and other fruits and vegetables.

Traditional heavy industrial development did not occur substantially during the early years of development in Gresham. Historically, Gresham was never a major employment destination, except for berry picking and packaging. This trend has changed over the past twenty years, however, with the introduction of several high-tech and manufacturing firms to Gresham. Rapid population growth did not occur in Gresham until the 1960s. After 1960 Gresham's population at least doubled at each

subsequent decennial Census until 2000. During the 1970s Gresham was the fastest growing city in Oregon (pg. 4 graph of population growth).

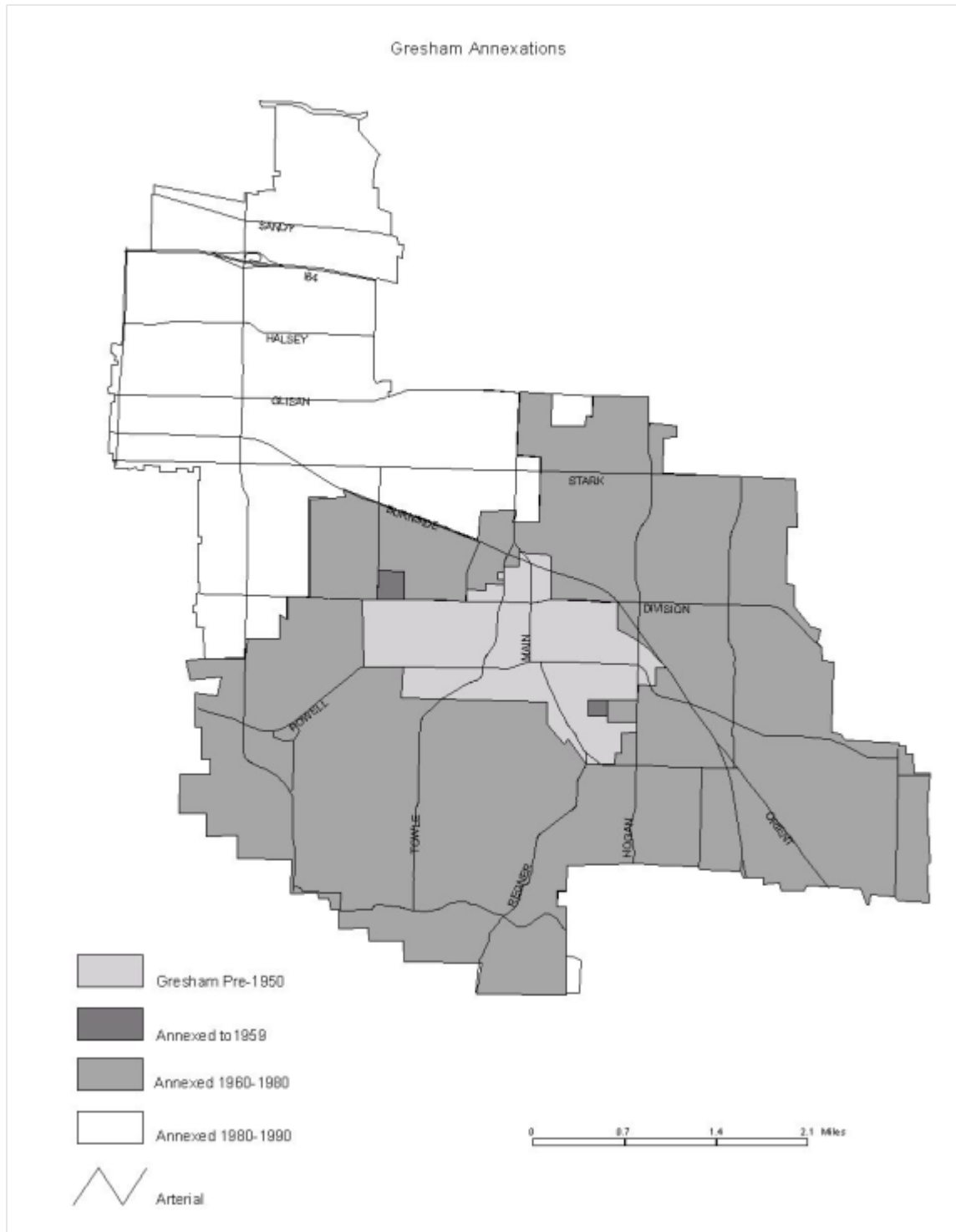


Most of Gresham's landscape is flat and has been easily converted from agriculture use to residential development. Much of Gresham's population growth results not only from rapid residential development, but also from land annexations into the city limits. Until the 1960's few land annexations occurred and the City of Gresham maintained a 2 sq. mile area. Numerous annexations occurred during the 1960s and by 1970 Gresham was 8 sq. miles. Further annexations during the 1970s expanded Gresham to 15 sq. miles by 1980. In the year 1990 Gresham's land area had grown to 22 sq. miles. There have been no substantial land annexations since 1990. The greatest amount of land was annexed into Gresham during the twenty-year period between 1960 and 1980. The 1980s experienced the most population growth in a single decade (35,230 people). The 1980s annexations included all of current west Gresham and a substantial land area in the north-central section (see Annexation Map, pg. 4).

Transportation opportunities have also influenced the development of Gresham. By the 1960s Interstate 84 was completed, which made Gresham more accessible not only to Portland and areas to the east, but also to Interstate 205 that allowed easier access to north/south destinations. During the 1980s the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light-rail was expanded into Gresham. Substantial residential and commercial development occurred along the MAX line that included Civic Neighborhood a major commercial center.

Gresham's current land use pattern is dominated by residential use. Over half (56%) of Gresham's developed land is currently found in a residential land use category, either single or multi-family use. Industrial land use accounts for only 11% of the developed land and services (includes retail) accounts for 9%. This illustrates that Gresham's history of limited employment opportunities has continued into

the present and it has evolved into a “bedroom” community for Portland. The greatest occurrence of land use change in Gresham comes from the conversion of agriculture land into residential.



## V. GOVERNMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Gresham is a council-manager form of local government with a mayor, six elected city council members and an appointed city manager. The mayor and elected council members are the policy making body of the City. The city manager and staff administer the policy. A planning commission that consists of volunteer members conducts public hearings and makes quasi-judicial land use decisions and legislative recommendations to the City Council.

Oregon's State Bill 100 (1973) and the subsequent establishment of planning goals have defined the planning framework in the State of Oregon. Gresham, as all other communities in Oregon, must have a comprehensive plan that guides the community's growth and development for a twenty-year period. Gresham's first comprehensive plan under the statewide planning program was adopted in 1980, and has been amended numerous times since then. The plan's last major update, prior to this current update in 2003, was in 1988. State law requires that Gresham's comprehensive plan must address each of the applicable statewide land use goals. These goals include:

- Citizen Involvement
- Land Use Planning
- Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Natural Resources
- Air, Water and Land Resources Quality
- Areas Subject to Natural Disasters and Hazards
- Recreational Needs
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Public Facilities and Services
- Transportation
- Energy Conservation
- Urbanization

The updated Comprehensive Plan is also influenced by requirements of the Metro 2040 Regional Framework Plan, which applies to all of the 24 cities and 3 counties within Metro's jurisdiction. Rules and regulations are also required under Oregon planning laws to implement the comprehensive plan and require consistency between the plan and the city's rule and regulations.