

1.000 Community Overview

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1.100 LOCATION

The City of Gresham, located east of Portland, in Multnomah County, is the second largest city within the Portland metropolitan area, and the fourth largest city in Oregon. Gresham stretches from the Columbia River to the southern edge of Multnomah County, where a range of forested hills form its southern boundary. A series of major transportation links, including several arterial streets, Highway 26, Interstate 84, and the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail line, connect Gresham with Portland as well as nearby recreation areas such as Mount Hood and the Columbia River Gorge. Because of its transportation network, booming population, and location along the eastern edge of the Regional Urban Growth Boundary, Gresham serves as the focal point of east Multnomah County.

Figure 1-1 Gresham and Vicinity
May -89 Source: Gresham Planning & Research Program

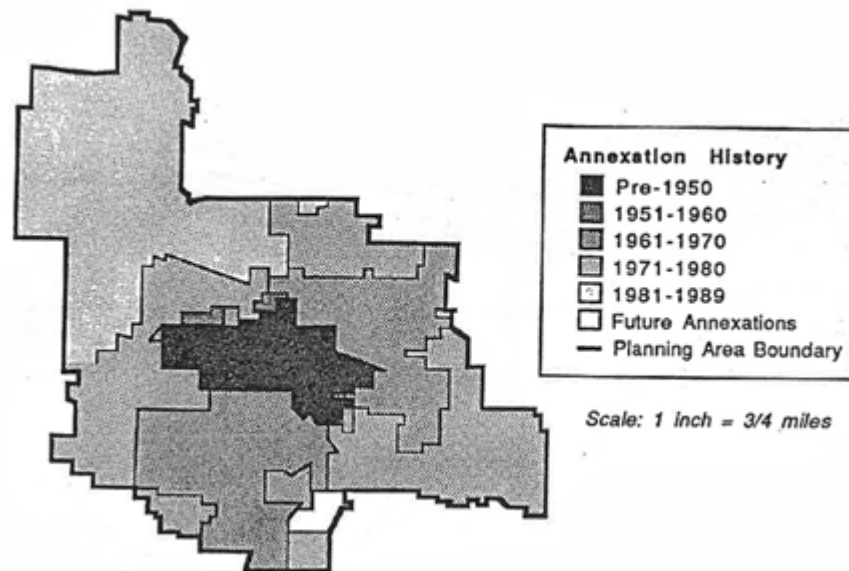


1.200 SPACIAL AREA

The spatial growth of the city has accompanied its population growth. During the 1950s, few annexations occurred, and the two square mile area of the city remained virtually unchanged; however, annexations during the 1960s expanded the city south to include Walters Hill and the Butler Creek area, and northeast, to the Mount Hood Community College site. By 1970, the city had expanded to cover nearly eight square miles. During the 1970s, annexations continued, adding areas to the southeast, along the Mount Hood Highway, and to the west, from Grant Butte to the aggregate quarries at Vance Pit. By 1980, the McGill property, north of Stark Street, had also been annexed, and the city covered almost 15 square miles.

Figure 1-2 Spatial Growth Through Annexation

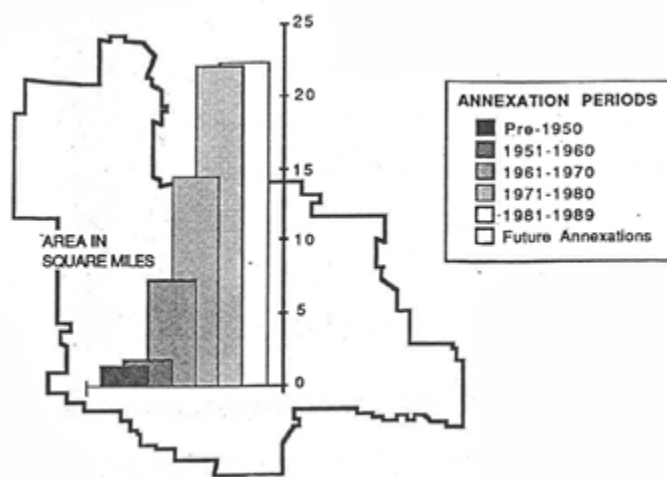
May - 89 Source: Gresham Planning & Research Program



Since the establishment of the Regional Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in 1979, annexations have occurred in the northwest portion of the city, extending west to 174th, and 162nd avenues, and north to the Columbia River. These annexations were in response to a Department of Environmental Quality order that all urban areas between Portland and Gresham be serviced with sanitary sewers. The new boundaries to the north and west reflect an inter-governmental agreement for urban services with Multnomah County and the City of Portland. Annexations since 1980 have increased the city's land area to nearly 22 square miles. Future growth to the south and east will require an amendment to the UGB.

Figure 1-2 Spatial Growth by Decade

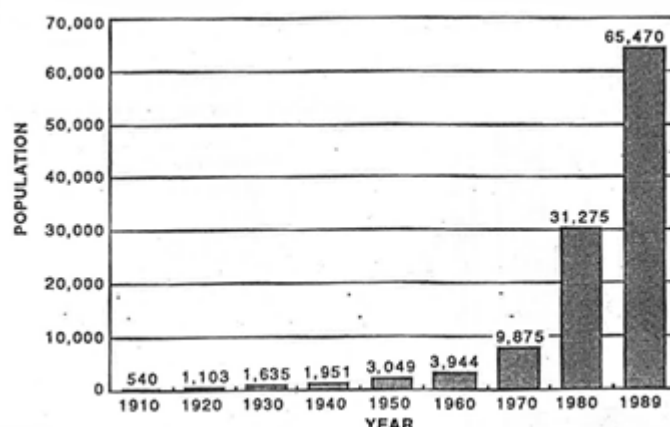
May - 89 Source: Gresham Planning & Research Program



1.300 POPULATION GROWTH

Population growth during the last three decades in Gresham has been dramatic. The present population of nearly 60,000 is 20 times that of 1960. During the 1970s, Gresham was the fastest growing city in the state, and that growth rate has been accompanied by commercial expansion, particularly in the retail and service sectors, and the development of a community infrastructure to meet the demands of the burgeoning population.

Figure 1-4 Population Growth
May - 90 Source: Gresham Planning & Research Program



Though the economic recession of the early 1980s slowed new housing construction, population growth continued because of the ambitious annexation program that added eight square miles of urban east Multnomah County to the city. Today, population growth continues with new attached housing developments occurring throughout the city, and new detached housing construction focused in the southwest and southeast areas.

1.400 HISTORY

Gresham was named after Walter Quintin Gresham, the Postmaster General of the United States during President Arthur's term in 1884. Walter Gresham was a Civil War Division Commander, federal judge, Postmaster General, Secretary of the Treasury, and Secretary of State.

Gresham's early history is notable for its similarity to that of other small towns. Typical of other small towns, Gresham possessed a community spirit and cohesiveness. As recently as 1960, Gresham's population numbered 3,944, a size that easily fostered community identity and togetherness. The city functioned as a retail service center for much of rural east Multnomah County. Farm implements and supplies, auto manufacturing, logging industry services, banking, and general commercial services served a surrounding regional rural population. Gresham still continues to service outlying areas, but its resident population constitutes the primary source of community identity and resources. Gresham has grown into a service-oriented city, catering to a largely residential community. There are few

opportunities for industrial and office employment compared to other areas of the Portland region. Recent announcement of plans to build a large electronics firm, employing 500 persons, will diversify the economic base and offer a wider range of employment opportunities. Plans to locate a one million square foot shopping center in the city's core area will stabilize the downtown area and will provide the opportunity to establish a city center to which residents can more easily identify as a community focal point.

1.500 NATURAL FEATURES

An abundance of relatively flat to gentle rolling terrain is the dominant local land form. The flat areas, formed by geologically recent unconsolidated deposits, pose few limits upon urban development. Relief from the level landscape is provided by forested hillsides. The hillsides, the city's most conspicuous natural feature, is a valued community asset. The hillsides create wildlife habitat, provide scenic vantage points and are the major source of natural aesthetic amenities. Small creeks flow through Gresham, emptying eventually to either the Columbia, Sandy, or Willamette Rivers. Water quality of the streams is generally good, although continued urbanization may degrade existing water quality. Aggregate resources underlie portions of the city and three mining operations are located within Gresham. The rolling fields, forested hillsides, and small creeks were natural features which attracted people to Gresham. The same features which made Gresham a desirable place to live are being threatened by rapid urbanization.

1.600 GENERAL LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS

Approximately 90% of the developed land in Gresham is zoned for residential uses. Single family detached homes comprise the bulk of housing. Presently, only 18% of the city's population resides in multi-family housing. Industrial uses occupy a very small portion of the total land area. Commercial uses are located in the relatively small downtown area and along the major arterial streets catering to traffic moving through the city to Mount Hood and Portland. Commercial strip development is the image of Gresham that is conveyed to people travelling through the city. Non-residents of the city are usually surprised to discover the existence of a downtown area which, despite its small size, remains healthy.

The recent rapid population growth is manifest in the proliferation of residential subdivisions. Although the Grant Butte forested hillside area and environs in the northwest contain some vacant land, the majority of undeveloped land lies in the south central and southeast portions of Gresham.

1.700 PLANNING CONTEXT

Gresham is a council-manager form of government with a mayor, six at-large city council members and an appointed city manager. The elected representatives constitute the policy making body of the city. City administration is conducted by the city manager. Two planning commissions have been appointed

to serve Gresham. Current planning, or land development, is the responsibility of the permanent planning commission, while long-range, or comprehensive planning, is the current responsibility of the second planning commission. Gresham currently operates under a comprehensive plan which was adopted in 1969. The plan was embodied in a plan map, and a few defined policies and objectives. The current comprehensive planning effort represents the first re-evaluation since the 1969 plan.

The passage of S.B. 100 and subsequent establishment of statewide planning goals by the Land Conservation and Development Commission have defined the planning framework for local government in Oregon. The salient features of Oregon planning law concern the statewide planning goals, coordination with other levels and units of government and the need for consistency between the comprehensive plan and implementing laws and regulations. Insofar as the statewide planning goals are concerned, task forces of Gresham citizens have addressed each goal and developed policies to meet the local requirements based on inventories developed by the city planning staff. Coordination with other levels of government has occurred throughout the planning period. The Metropolitan Service District is the regional body charged with assuring the coordination of local plans and has authority to review plans for adequacy. The Land Conservation and Development Commission is the body which will ultimately review the Gresham plan.

Rules and regulations are required by law, in order to implement the plan. Consistency between the comprehensive plan and city rules and regulations is required by law. The proposed Community Development Plan includes a Community Development Code which is designed to implement the plan as well as improve existing city procedures in regulating land development. The development of the plan has been guided by proposed policies submitted by local citizen task forces which focused upon all relevant State Planning Goals.

1.800 REGIONAL FRAMEWORK PLAN

On December 14, 1995, Metro adopted the Regional Urban Growth Goals and Objectives (RUGGOs) including the Metro 2040 Growth Concept Map. The text of the RUGGOs and the 2040 Growth Concept are a conceptual description of the preferred urban form of the region, including Gresham, in 2040. The RUGGOs and the 2040 Growth Concept Map identify areas and settlement patterns of development including:

- **Regional Centers.** Regional centers are a mix of compact employment and housing development served by high-contrast transit. Two-to-four story buildings are typical and density allowed will go from 24 people per acre to 60 people per acre. Persons per acre combines the number of residents per net acre and employees per net acre. The central Gresham area has been designated by Metro as a Regional Center.
- **Town Centers.** Town centers are areas of mixed residential and commercial use that provide localized services to residents. They have a strong sense of community identity and are well

served by transit. Central Rockwood has been designated by Metro as a Town Center in addition to the Pleasant Valley Town Center.¹

- **Corridors.** Corridors are major streets that are used intensively and serve as key transportation routes for people and goods. They have high quality pedestrian environments, good connections to adjacent neighborhoods and good transit service. Persons per acre would go from 19 to 25. A number of corridors are designated along arterial streets in Gresham.
- **Main Streets.** Main Streets have a traditional commercial identity, provide neighborhood shopping areas along a main street or at an intersection and have a strong sense of neighborhood community. Persons per acre allowed would go from 36 to 39. Several street segments in central Gresham and in Rockwood have been designated as Main Streets.
- **Inner Neighborhoods.** Inner neighborhoods are primarily residential and are close to employment and shopping centers. Most existing neighborhoods will remain largely the same. New neighborhoods would be different with a new emphasis on smaller single-family lots and innovative housing types, such as row houses, that use relatively little land. Existing neighborhoods could see some redevelopment so that vacant land or underutilized land or buildings could be put to a better use. Inner neighborhoods trade smaller lot sizes for better access to jobs and shopping. Overall, the density of inner neighborhoods, in terms of persons per acre, would go from 11 to 14.

Most of the low density residential areas of Gresham are Inner Neighborhoods. The person per acre figure is a combination of new and existing development so that new development would need to occur at a higher density. Assuming an average household size of 2.3 persons, new single family development will need to occur at about 8.2 dwelling units per net acre or an average lot size of 5,300 square feet in Inner Neighborhoods (Source: Metro).

The RUGGOs and the 2040 Concept Map provide a general outline of a Regional Framework Plan. Metro is required to adopt a Regional Framework Plan by December 30, 1997, and the City will be required to ensure that the Gresham Development Plan is consistent with the Regional Framework Plan within two years of its adoption. Metro has drafted an Urban Growth Management Functional Plan which is scheduled for adoption in October, 1996. This Plan provides a mechanism for key provisions of the Regional Framework Plan. Once adopted by Metro, the City will have 24 months to make necessary changes to its comprehensive plan and plan map.

On October 3, 1995, the City Council passed resolution No. 1970 supporting early implementation of the Region 2040 Plan. The Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) and the Metro Executive recommended a draft Urban Growth Management Functional Plan. On August 6, 1996, the City Council passed resolution No. 2045 supporting local implementation of the Urban Growth Management (UGM)

¹ The 2024 Pleasant Valley Plan Update modified the boundaries of the Town Center to better align with property lines and planned future street extensions. Refer to Appendix 42 for the map of the updated boundaries.

Functional Plan. The UGM Functional Plan will require local plan accommodation of fair share capacity housing. Minimum residential density standards will be applied so that the target density is achieved and shall be set at no less than 80% of the maximum residential density.

(Added by Ordinance 1407 passed 11/19/96; effective 12/19/96)

(Amended by Ordinance 1855 passed 03/18/25; effective 04/17/25)