

Growth talk dives deep into impacts, options

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The City of Keizer will fall short of the needed space to accommodate its projected growth during the next 30 years. There are ways to mitigate the problem, but it will likely require a lengthy, and costly, divorce from the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) it shares with Salem or revising development codes in a way that could reshape the city dramatically.

Those were two of the big takeaways from a Keizer Growth Workshop hosted by Keizer's Planning Department and hired consultants on Wednesday, June 6.

Operating under the assumption that Keizer will continue to grow faster than comparable cities in Oregon, the city would need to incorporate another 313 acres into its urban growth boundary with more than 1,600 housing units.

Keizer's UGB is shared with the City of Salem and it cannot grow beyond previously-established boundaries without Salem's approval and that of state officials. Only four cities have shared UGBs in Oregon's history and disputes over the other one — Eugene and Springfield — were settled legislatively almost a decade ago. It means that there isn't much precedence for what a divorce of the UGB would entail and, even if that happened, attempts at expanding UGB boundaries in other cities have taken upward of 10 years with mixed results.

As open spaces shrivel in Keizer, it will mean looking more closely at either expanding the UGB or overhauling

development codes to accommodate more people. Both options will have costs in terms of dollars and livability, and city officials are looking to establish what those will be before leaping in one direction or the other.

"If our ability to grow in building single family (housing) is difficult, what are options?" said Glen Bolen, a senior planner with OTAK, Inc. "As the lots get smaller and fewer, we have to look at the missing middle — duplexes and multifamily developments in smaller spaces."

By contrast, if Keizer planned to accommodate some of that growth by expanding the UGB, the first place it would have to look is areas north of the Clear Lake neighborhood where zoning modification would encounter fewer hurdles. Expanding in that area would likely be more attractive to new and current residents, but less so for job-creating business and industry, which would most likely want better access to Interstate 5. Keizer currently has less than one job in city limits per household.

Regardless of the route city officials and residents choose, there will be costs, some quantifiable and others that are more subjective.

"We can talk about how much it costs to build a water treatment plant, but it's harder

to talk about the costs of increased traffic or car crashes," Bolen said.

Current and new residents, as well as developers, are also going to shoulder the burden of associated costs. Expansion of the UGB might entail adding a second high school or redirecting students currently headed toward McNary High School to North Salem or McKay.

Housing in areas added to the city, in the event of a UGB expansion, might also be priced well beyond the range of the current city residents. Because expanding city infrastructure into new spaces would be largely the responsibility of developers, the costs would be bundled into the prices of property in those areas.

In other places that succeeded in expanding UGBs, system development charges (SDCs) increased about 25 percent, said Bolen. Those increased costs are also figured into the prices of homes in the new areas.

The results of all those forces working in concert puts Keizer in a quandary that's also being felt in other places trying to determine the next steps in their growth.

"Large cities can't offer the small town feel many residents desire, and smaller cities can't cultivate the economic engine to maintain their population," Bolen said.

The city could also decide not to grow in any significant manner, Bolen added.

"Not growing in Keizer would still be legal. The more important question is are we providing what the community wants?" he said.

The answer to that question will only be determined through resident participation in the process.

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— Glen Bolen
Senior planner with
OTAK, Inc.



Coming soon to Keizer parks: DRONE ZONES

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After lengthy debate, the Keizer Parks Advisory board determined that parks users will be able to use drones in Keizer parks, but only in designated areas.

The conversation about drones was part of a larger discussion about updating Keizer's park rules. Other new additions include a ban on smoking and vaping in parks as well as revised fines for violation of park rules. The revised rules will need to be discussed and formally adopted by the city council before taking effect.

Drone talk got off the ground at the board's May meeting and continued at the meeting Tuesday, June 12. Board members attempted to walk the line between an outright ban of the devices and allowing them to be used in ways that are unintrusive to other parks users. Anyone who has flown drones in Keizer parks up to this point has been in violation of city ordinance, which was part of the problem.

"If someone brought a drone out during a concert, that would be illegal. Most don't realize it's illegal," said Board Member Matt Lawyer.

Board members attempted to project some of the possible outcomes of any new policy, but it often led back to the same place.

"I think enforcing this is above and beyond what is already enforced is above and beyond what the city can do — unless we say no drones in the park, period," said Donna Bradley, board member. "The city should back off, let it happen and see if it becomes a nuisance."

One of the issues the board attempted to navigate was recent complaints to city staff about drone operators dive-bombing dogs at the Keizer Rapids dog park as well as some other park users. While those instances have been limited, Board Member Dylan Juran sided with Bradley

with different reasoning. "Should we ban (drones) just because it is new and scary? I think that with responsible recommendations of rule-following, people should be allowed to do it," Juran said.

Under the revised rules, drone pilots will need to abide by all applicable Federal Aviation Administration laws and advisories, and only fly in spaces established by city officials. There were no official recommendations from the board as far as what should constitute a "drone zone" in a park, but the open space inside the walking path on the west side of Keizer Rapids Park was repeatedly mentioned as one possibility.



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