

Importance:

The Urban Growth Boundary/Area (UGB/A) is an important Metro Vision tenet that the DRCOG Board adopted to help shape growth and development within the region. While setting the UGB/A can be difficult, and sometimes contentious, the DRCOG Board of Directors works collaboratively to define where growth will occur. The purpose of the UGB/A is to:

- ▶ anticipate and direct growth;
- ▶ efficiently phase in development to maximize infrastructure investment (especially transportation), saving money and resources for taxpayers;
- ▶ stimulate infill and redevelopment activity; and
- ▶ increase overall regional density by at least 10 percent.

Background/Key Issues:

The UGB/A has been an important policy in DRCOG's long-range plans since Metro Vision 2020 was adopted in 1997. That plan resulted from almost five years of intense discussions among DRCOG member governments and various regional stakeholders, who together considered a variety of UGB/A scenarios.

Before Metro Vision, DRCOG used a composite of local comprehensive plans to anticipate future growth. After learning that the composite assumed urban development totaling almost 1,050 square miles, the Board initiated the Metro Vision planning effort and eventually adopted a UGB/A of 730 square miles. Since 1997, the UGB/A has increased as the horizon year extended to 2035 and the DRCOG region expanded to include southwest Weld County. Definitional changes made to more accurately depict the region's urbanized area increased the UGB/A by 150 square miles. The region's UGB/A currently stands at 980 square miles.

Did You Know?

The current UGB/A will exceed the Metro Vision goal of a 10% increase in density by 2035.

It is important to note that Metro Vision does not address or control development on specific parcels of land; that is the responsibility of local jurisdictions. Still, the UGB/A can be controversial because some member jurisdictions view the role of the UGB/A differently than others. The proposal to expand the UGB/A as part of the Metro Vision 2035 update in 2007 proved to be a sticking point for many member governments and revealed a variety of

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issues that required further discussion. These issues included ownership, consumption, entitlement, city versus county planning needs and infill versus development on the fringe.

As a result, the Board established a working group of Board members to consider UGB/A issues. Led by an outside facilitator, the group met nine times from January 2008 to April 2009 and presented recommendations to the DRCOG Board in May. In August 2009 the Board amended the Metro Vision Plan to include the working group's policy recommendations. The revised policy identifies several key themes that provide important context for UGB/A implementation. For example, the focus for DRCOG should be regional, not local; each community in the DRCOG region is different and seeks to implement the principles of Metro Vision in ways appropriate to their community; and there is a desire for both rigor and simplicity in the process for considering proposed expansions of the UGB/A.

The policy stipulates that this UGB/A allocation process will occur every four years, coinciding with the update cycle of the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan. Allocation requests will be reviewed by a "peer-review" team of Board members, member government planners and DRCOG staff. The team will confirm that requests meet certain threshold criteria focused on high-level issues relevant to Metro Vision principles and the region's growth as a whole. The burden for making the case for new UGB/A falls on the requesting community.

Requests that meet the threshold criteria will then be put through DRCOG's transportation, land use and air quality models. The outcomes of the modeling will be provided to the Board so that the Board understands the impact of the aggregate UGB/A requests on certain regional metrics before taking action on the requests.

Status (as of December 2009):

During the fall, DRCOG solicited UGB/A allocation requests as part of the Metro Vision 2035 update scheduled for adoption in January 2011. No requests were received.

More information about the UGB/A allocation process is provided in the Metro Vision 2035 Growth and Development Supplement Chapter 3: Extent of Urban Development, available online:

http://www.drcog.org/documents/MVGDS_03_UGBA_Adopted081909.pdf

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