

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Urban Growth Boundary? Under Oregon law, all cities must create and maintain a Urban Growth Boundary (“UGB”), identifying where city growth may occur within the next 20 years. In order for a city to annex land into the city limits, that land must first be included within the UGB. Land inside the UGB supports urban services such as roads, water and sewer systems, parks, schools and fire and police protection. UGBs are a tool to protect rural farm and forest land by limiting sprawl.

What is an Urban Growth Boundary Swap? A UGB swap exchanges some land inside the UGB for land outside the UGB. The amount of land needs to be roughly equivalent in the amount of “buildable land.”

Why is the City Considering a swap? The City is considering the swap to allow additional residential development in proximity to the Rainier School District property, on relatively flat land. The swap would remove 290 acres from the Urban Growth Boundary, in areas outside of the City limits with steep slopes that are more difficult to develop. The purpose of the swap is to help facilitate efficient residential growth by providing developable land that is less expensive to serve with public facilities.

Will the City acquire or develop any of the property in the swap? No, all property would remain in private hands; any future development or annexations would be initiated by property owners. Areas added in a UGB swap would retain Columbia County zoning until annexed.

If my property is included in the UGB or removed from the UGB, will anything change about what I’m allowed to do on my property? Areas added would retain Columbia County zoning; anything that is currently allowed by County Zoning would continue to be allowed. Any annexations to the City would be voluntarily initiated by property owners. Areas removed from the UGB currently have County Zoning and would continue to have County Zoning; anything that is currently allowed by County Zoning would continue to be allowed.

Will the City initiate annexation on any of the properties? No, annexation to the City would be voluntarily initiated by property owners and would require an annexation application.

What is the UGB swap process? If the City decides to move forward with the swap, a swap application would be considered by the Rainier Planning Commission and Rainier City Council in a legislative process with public hearings and public notice. If the City approves the swap, then the Columbia County Board of Commissioners would consider the swap with additional public hearings. The public can attend and participate in all of these hearings. Any proposed swap would need to be approved and adopted by both Rainier and Columbia County.

Please contact City Administrator Scott Jorgensen at 503-556-7301 or Sjorgensen@cityofrainier.com with any questions or comments.