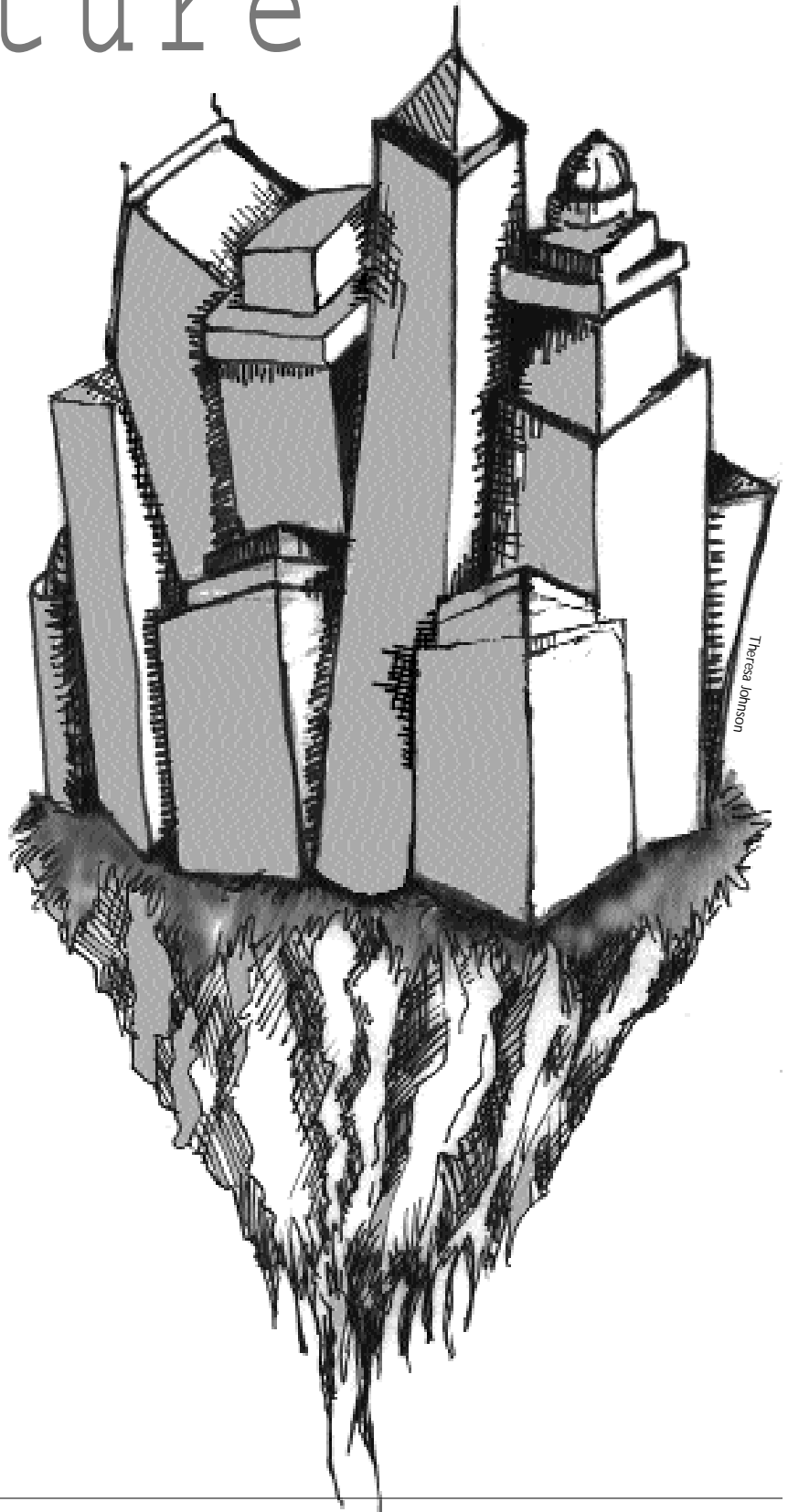


# Transition to the Future

## A PROSPECTIVE

by Sumner Sharpe, AICP  
Guest Forum Editor

The future of Oregon's landmark approach to planning depends on how it affects and helps improve the quality of life in communities; meets its promise of managing growth; protects farm, forest, natural and other resources, and responds to criticisms of the system. These are big challenges, and the Oregon system cannot achieve all of the above without cooperation from all of us, whether in the private or public sectors. In spite of its warts, it has served and does serve as a bellwether approach, which has been the basis for legislative actions in other states.



Since the inception of the program in 1973, attempts to discard it in its entirety via state-wide ballot box initiatives have failed. However, there have been modifications based on legislative actions, initiatives on specific topics, rules adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission, decisions resulting from appeals, or local legislative or voter actions. In spite of these changes, which have either improved or muddied the system, depending on one's viewpoint, the approach remains basically intact.

The essence of the Oregon system is the search for balance in addressing the values expressed in the state goals when developing and implementing plans at the local level. Whether you are in La Grande, Sisters, Klamath Falls, Salem or Portland the adopted state goals apply equally the differences lie in the local debates and decisions about what constitutes balance in each place.

This forum on land use assumes that the basic system will remain in place in the future, but that changes will occur. In looking at the Oregon approach to land use planning, this forum does not dwell on the past nor does it try to predict the specific changes that might occur. In addition, this forum does not tackle some issues as directly as some readers may feel is important. This includes whether we should do more to limit the amount and pace of growth, whether we are encouraging rather than accommodating growth, how to address equity issues such as housing affordability, who should pay for infrastructure, why the property tax system should change, etc. These issues are being discussed in far more detail by others in other venues and will be treated in future issues of this magazine.

What this forum tries to do is to raise

and address some general themes that underlie and will affect the Oregon approach, as we look ahead to the next 25 years. In addition to the issues identified above, some readers may feel that there are other general themes that warrant further discussion. Because Oregon's Future is interested in generating discussion about its forum topics, these articles should be seen as the beginning of a dialogue about the future of land use planning in Oregon, not a final statement. If you do not think we have adequately addressed your concerns, then you are invited to respond.

Planning under the Oregon approach has been and will continue to be in tran-

are creating. The interface between public and private decisions about land use and transportation appear, at least for now, to be the focus of state and local efforts.

We have been and are transitioning from an approach that relied to a large extent on regulatory and legal means for plan implementation to one that is looking at other approaches such as investments in infrastructure and strengthened coordination between state agencies.

We have been and are transitioning from an approach which assumed shared values to one in which shared values are less of a certainty.

This forum addresses a variety of

Here are some of the themes that this forum tries to raise or address and will generate additional discussion and which could be the sub-

- ① How can we address, and even utilize, the tension between market conditions and cycles and longer-term visions and plans?
- ② Who is doing the planning? What are the prevailing values and goals? Has planning become too oriented toward rules and legal measures?
- ③ What are the consequences of fast, slow or no growth? Who pays for growth and what responsibility do we have to future generations as well as ourselves?
- ④ If planning is about providing choices, do we have a responsibility to assure a range of choices and how do we do that?
- ⑤ Is the Oregon system too rigid to allow for regional and local conditions? Or has it become so flexible that some of the shared values and goals are being lost?
- ⑥ What are the everyday characteristics that determine the quality of life? Has the system become so abstract that the explicit rules and methods no longer connect to these implicit and shared values?



Sumner Sharpe

ideas, but when all is said and done, the success of the Oregon approach will depend on how well we take implementation and quality of life considerations into account as we develop plans. It will depend on how successful we are in reinvigorating our planning efforts, engaging citizens, reaffirming our sense of community and responsibility for

the future, and spending less energy on regulations and plan-making as the primary foci.

For those involved in planning in Oregon, and this includes all of us wearing our different hats as citizens, elected and appointed officials, property owners and renters, professionals successful practice requires attention to process, vision, plans and implementation.

What do you think? Is there still a shared vision and does the system reflect those values with which we began 25 years ago? Have those values changed? Are changes needed in the Oregon approach, and if so what should be done? Or is it the way we as communities

sition and how well we deal with these transitions will determine its success or failure. For example, we are beyond making plans as the principal purpose of planning, and we are dealing with implementing plans the consequences of our planning decisions. We are faced with growth pressures that may or may not have been so readily apparent when plans were made, but we believed that the Oregon approach would provide us with the tools to manage growth.

We have been and are transitioning from an approach that focused initially on agricultural and forest land protection, coupled with controlling the limits of urbanization, to one where we are focusing on the kinds of communities we