

Portland: Urban Growth Boundary Keeps Out Growth **98 Percent of Domestic Movers Settle Outside Urban Growth Boundary**

Portland's urban growth boundary may be effectively blocking growth. The urban growth boundary is a line outside of which urban development is not permitted under provisions of Oregon law. The urban growth boundary is fully contained within Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. Multnomah County includes the core of the metropolitan area, including the city of Portland.

US Bureau of the Census domestic migration data for 2000 to 2004 indicates that 98.1 percent of domestic migrants to the Portland metropolitan area have moved to counties that are wholly outside the urban growth boundary (Figure 1). The data is reported at the county level. Domestic migrants are people who move to a county from another county in the United States. Only 672 people moved to the three counties that contain the urban growth boundary from other counties in the nation. This compares to 34,153 people who moved to the Portland area counties that wholly outside the urban growth boundary from US counties (Table).¹

Further, the largest percentage gains in domestic migrants occurred in the counties that are outside the state of Oregon (Figure 2). The state of Washington counties *are not* subject to the Oregon land use planning laws. Thus, the greatest growth is not only outside the urban growth boundary, but it is also outside the state in which the laws apply.

The core of the metropolitan area continues to receive praise for its claimed revitalization. Yet, the core county, Multnomah, lost 22,119 residents to other counties between 2000 and 2004. This is more people than live in 218 of Oregon's 238 cities.

The domestic migration gains in Clackamas and Washington counties slightly offset the Multnomah County loss. However, it is not at all clear that there was even the small net gain indicated in the county data. Parts of all three counties, including some cities, are outside the urban growth boundary. Migration data is not available below the county level, so it is not known whether there was a small gain within the urban growth boundary or a small loss.

What is clear is that people are choosing to move to the parts of the Portland area that are outside the command and control planning policies of the regional land use agency, Metro.

All counties in the area, including Multnomah, have continued to grow. The domestic migration losses in Multnomah County have been more than offset by international immigration and the excess of births over deaths (natural increase).

¹ Before the recent redefinition of metropolitan boundaries, the Portland Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) included the Salem MSA (Marion and Polk Counties). The Salem MSA, no longer a part of a Consolidated Statistical Area, experienced a small gain in domestic migrants between 2000 and 2004 (1.3 percent).

However, the core is growing comparatively slowly, even when international immigration and the natural increase are considered. The core city, Portland, accounted for 7.7 percent of the population growth of cities within the urban growth boundary from 2000 to 2004. The inner ring, including cities bordering on Portland, accounted for 42.2 percent of the growth. The outer suburban cities within the urban growth boundary accounted for 50.1 percent of the growth (Figure 3). Thus, despite the stated intention of Portland’s so-called “smart growth” policies to encourage growth in the core rather than in the periphery, the area continues to decentralize, both inside the urban growth boundary and outside.

At the same time, the scarcity of land for development that has been created by the “smart growth” policies has been cited as a principal reason that the Portland area experienced the greatest loss in housing affordability of any US metropolitan area between 1990 and 2000. Voters in the area indicated a strong aversion to neighborhood higher densities when they overwhelmingly approved a 2002 voter referendum that placed limits on Metro’s ability to force neighborhood densification.² Metro has since expanded the urban growth boundary to include an area larger than had been planned for 2040.

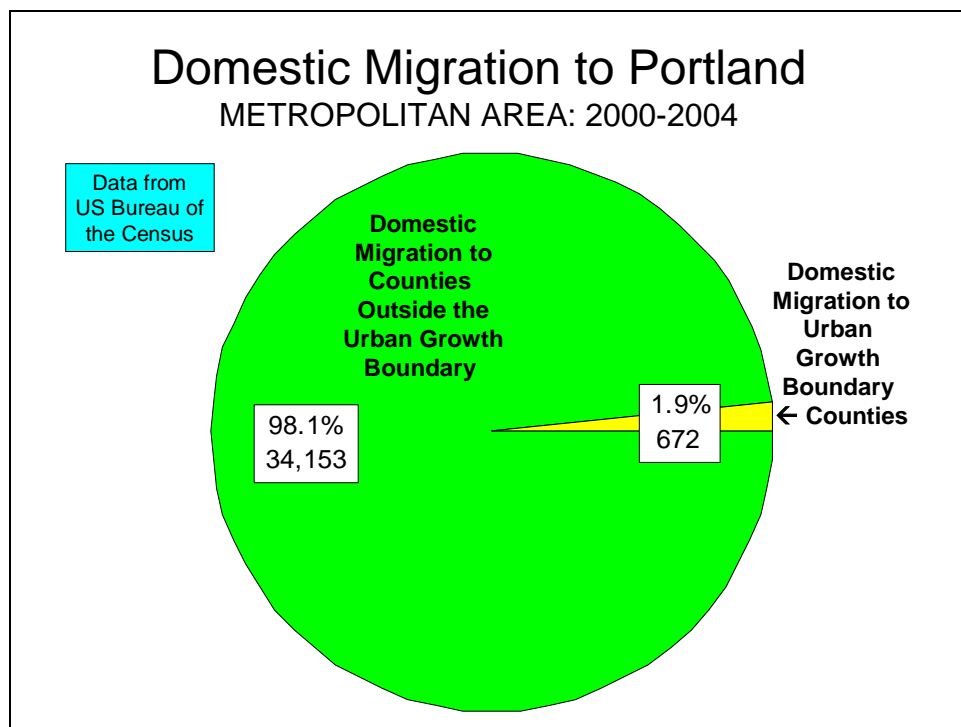


Figure 1

² This measure was proposed by Metro, in response to a stronger measure that had qualified for the ballot through the initiative process.

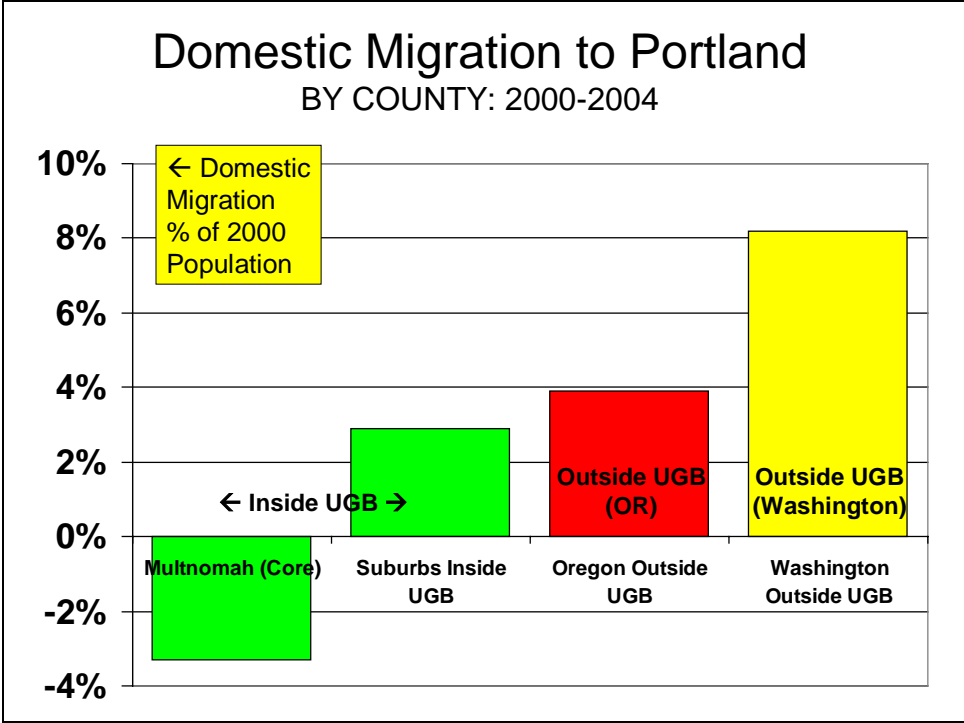


Figure 2

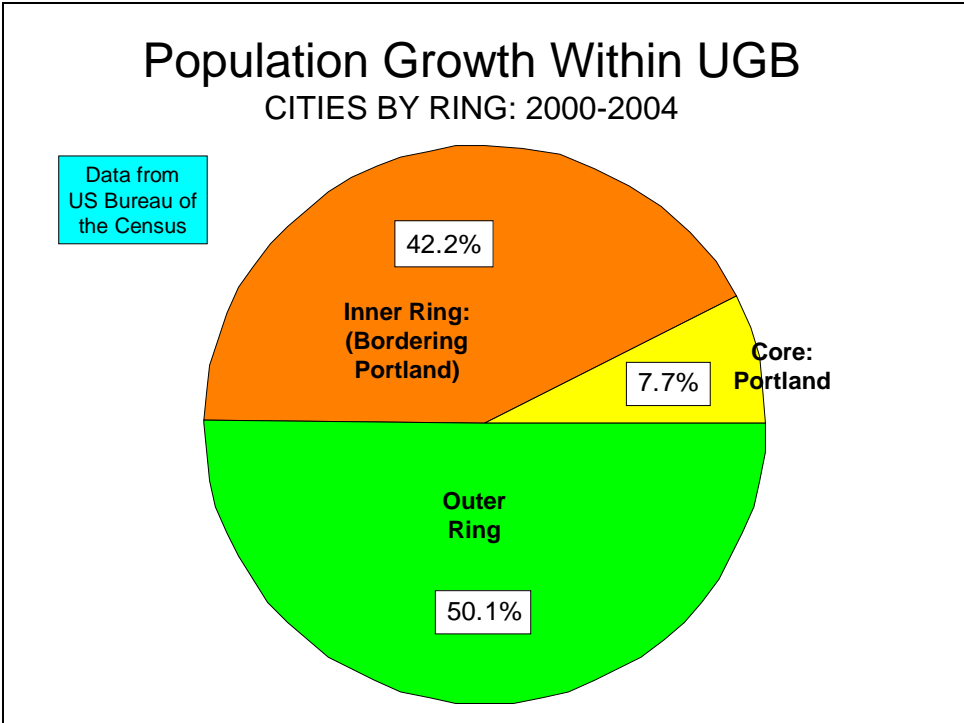


Figure 3

**Table
PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA: DOMESTIC MIGRATION: 2000-2004**

Sector	Domestic Migration	Domestic Migration as a % of 2000 Population
CORE		
.Multnomah County*	(22,119)	-3.3%
INNER SUBURBS: OREGON		
.Clackamas County*	14,577	4.3%
.Washington County*	8,214	1.8%
Total	22,791	2.9%
OUTER SUBURBS: OREGON		
.Columbia County	2,844	6.5%
.Yamhill County	2,179	2.6%
Total	5,023	3.9%
WASHINGTON SUBURBS		
.Clark County	28,622	8.3%
.Skamania County	508	5.1%
Total	29,130	8.2%
METROPOLITAN AREA	34,825	1.8%
URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)		
Counties Within*	672	0.0%
Counties Outside	34,153	7.1%
Total	34,825	1.8%
Share Inside UGB Counties	1.9%	
Calculated from US Census Bureau estimates		