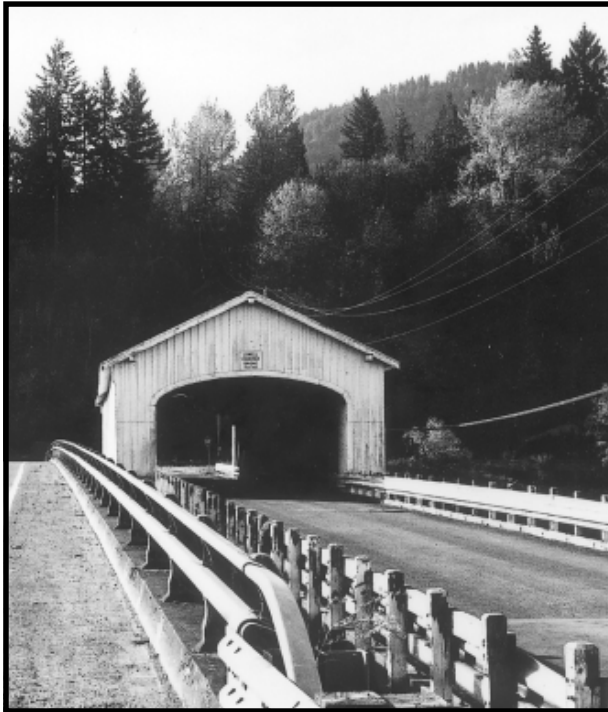


City of Lowell



A Profile of the Lowell Community



REGION 2050

*Sustaining Quality of Life in the
Southern Willamette Valley*

November 2000

City of Lowell
A Profile of the Lowell Community

Prepared by



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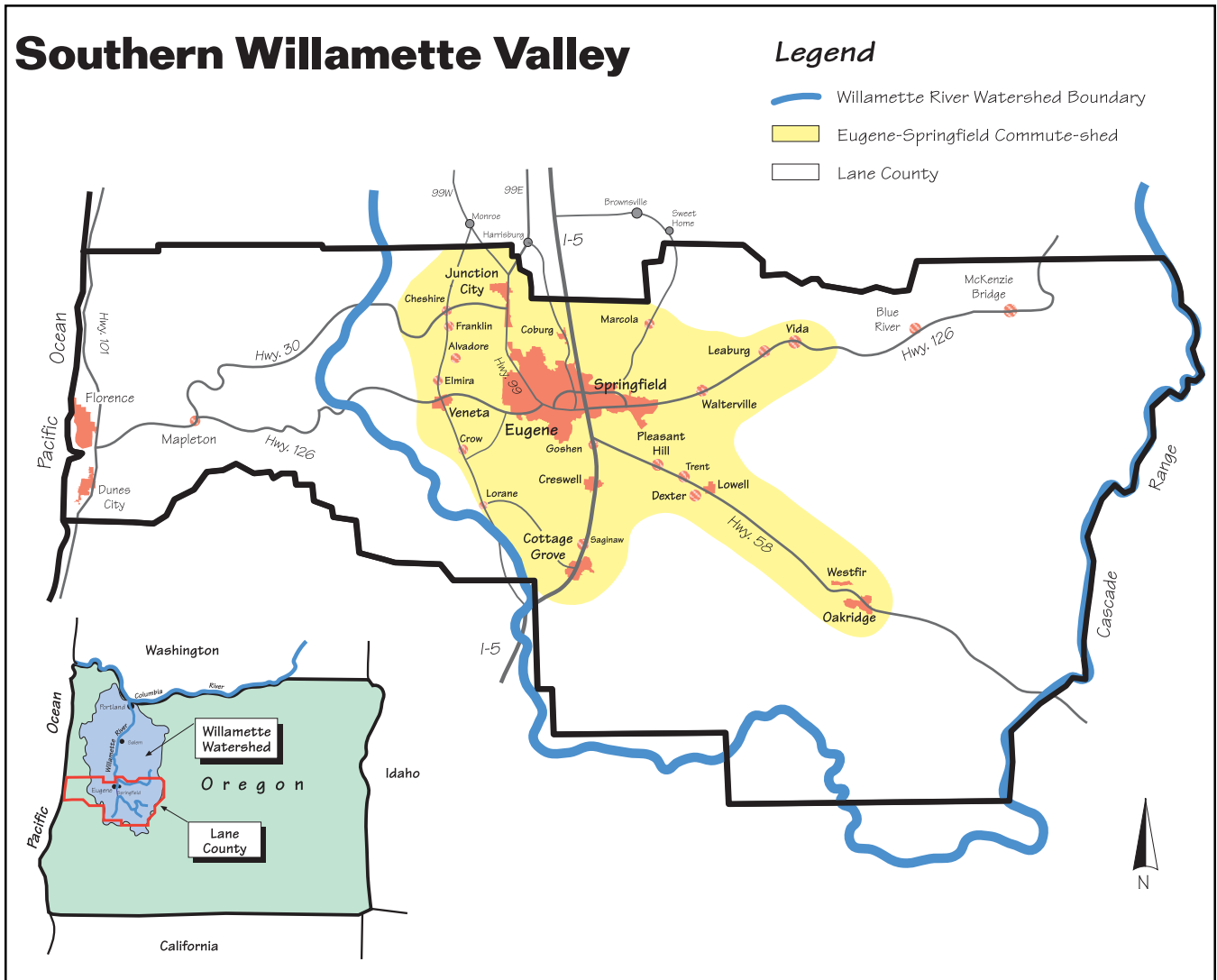


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This profile was prepared in cooperation with the City of Lowell for the Region 2050 process. The goal of Region 2050 is to improve and sustain the quality of life in the Southern Willamette Valley over the next 50 years.



This summary of Lowell’s past, present, and future direction is intended to inform the dialogue about the city’s place in the region over the next 50 years.

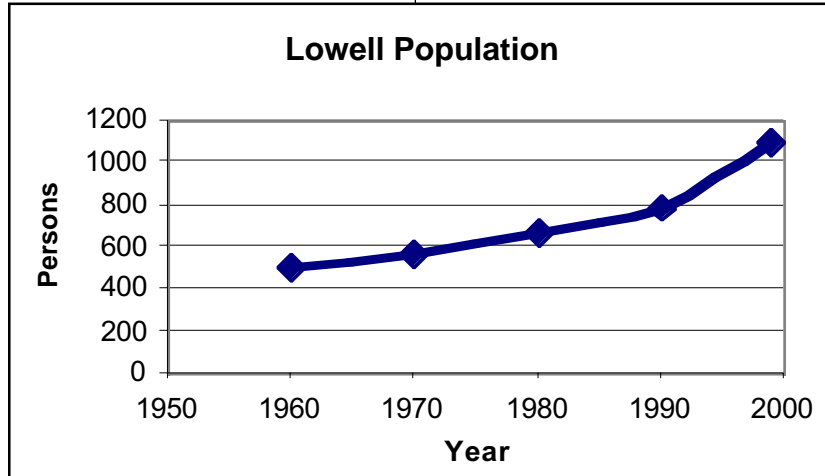
Data sources:

Population data are from the U.S. Census and, for years between decades, from Portland State University’s Center for Population Research and Census. Land use, housing, and planned land use data are from the Regional Geographic Information System. Employment data are from the Oregon Employment Division’s Covered Employment file. Data on the average assessed value of single-family homes are from the Lane County Department of Assessment and Taxation, as reported by the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department.

Region 2050 is funded, in part, by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.

I. Where We've Been

Lowell, also known as the *Town of a Thousand Sunsets*, is a fairly new small city located approximately 20 miles southeast of Eugene. The city and its surrounding area are rich in natural and recreational resources, making it a highly livable community.



Originally settled in 1852, Lowell was initially named Cannon, after an early settler of that name. The town site of Lowell was once known by the landmark of Butte Disappointment, which locals now call Lowell Butte. The town was originally located on 2,450 acres of land owned by Amos D. Hyland, who held many thousands of acres of timberland in the area. In 1882, Hyland named the town Lowell after his hometown in Massachusetts. The name change to Lowell

was in response to many mis-sent letters going to Canyon, Oregon instead of Cannon. The City of Lowell was not incorporated until 1952.

Lowell's land development patterns have not changed much in the last 50 years, although the population of the city has grown, especially since 1990. The 1999 population of 1,095 is more than double the 1960 population of 503.

Over the years, the city has sought to maintain its viability as an attractive residential community with a limited local employment base.

Lowell was a timber town until the late 1980s. The early industries in the area were hop raising, stock raising, and logging, and the present town site of Lowell was once a huge hop yard.

The first sizable increase in population occurred in conjunction with the building of the Lookout Point Reservoir by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in 1948. The Dam ushered in a new era for the people who had settled on the Middle Fork of the Willamette River near Lowell. Much of the town of Lowell was relocated when the dam was built. Many of the houses had to be moved out of the river bottom east of town and new houses were built north of town for the new employees hired to build the dam.

"The first sizable increase in population occurred in conjunction with the building of the Lookout Point Reservoir by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1948."





Courtesy of Lane County Historical Museum

In recent years, Lowell's employment has revolved primarily around the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Corps, as well as the Lowell School District. Recent consolidation of the USFS District offices substantially reduced the workforce in the Lowell office.

Construction of the dam at Lookout Point, 1952

II. Where We Are Today

Today, some timber-related industries, as well as public lands management and some agriculture, still operate in Lowell. The city's close proximity to Eugene-Springfield make it easy for workers to commute to the metro area and nearby communities.



Residential area viewed from site of Lowell Industrial Park

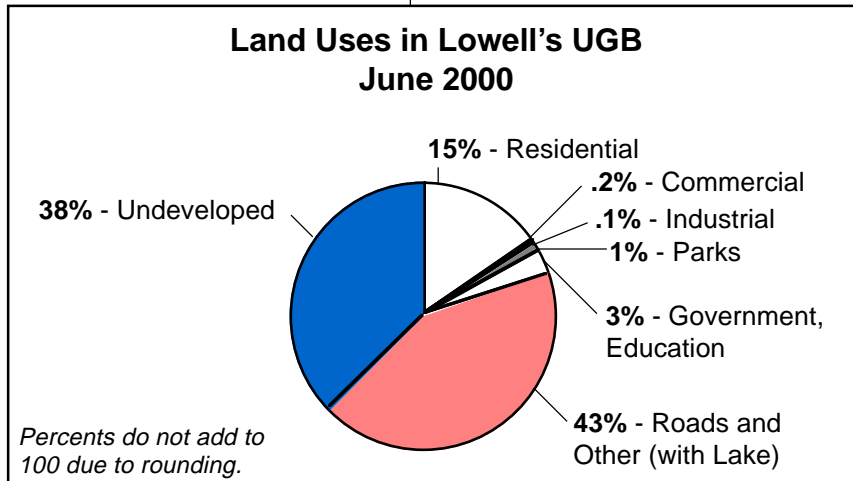
The Blackberry Jam Festival, which occurs every July in Lowell, is a celebration of food and music. Other events include a Native American pow wow, a fishing derby, and the annual Columbia Speedboat Association Races.

Population

In 1999, Lowell's population was 1,095. Of the cities in the region, only Coburg and Westfir have smaller populations.

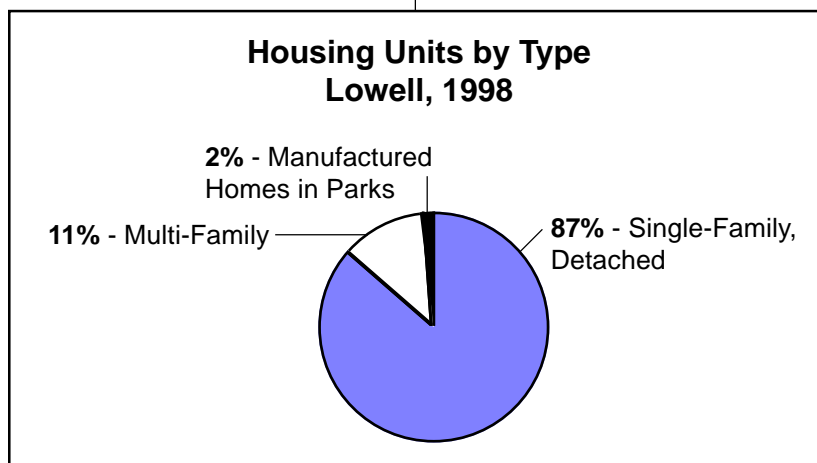
Land Use

Residential uses occupy the largest share of developed land within the urban growth boundary (UGB), 15 percent of the total land. All of the land in the UGB is inside the city limits. Over 75 acres of Dexter Lake within the city limits are undeveloped. These are included in the *roads and other* category in the pie chart to the left.



Housing

In 1998, there were 380 housing units in Lowell, 87 percent of which were single-family residences. A relatively small percentage of Lowell's housing is provided by multi-family units and manufactured homes in parks. Lowell's housing has consisted primarily of single-family homes on 7,000-square-foot lots, except that lots more than 500 feet from a sewer line can develop with a septic tank if the lot is five acres or larger. The 1996 average assessed value of all single-family homes in Lowell was \$65,600.



Economy

In 1998, there were 148 jobs in the city. Employment in Lowell is provided by the USFS, two manufacturers, the high school, and several small retailers. The largest local area manufacturers are Eagle Rock Logging and Tumac Industries, a custom metal fabricator, each with around 20 employees. Employment oriented around forestry and forest products has declined in recent years. Small, independently owned businesses have grown in the area and in the small communities surrounding Lowell, and there is room for expansion in the retail sector. Specialty agriculture has also been identified as having growth potential for the local economy.



Middle Fork Ranger District office.

Transportation

The vast majority of workers who live in Lowell commute to Eugene-Springfield to work. Lowell's transportation system consists primarily of streets and highways.

The two major routes to the metro area are one heading northwest to Springfield through Jasper via two major streets, and one to Interstate 5 (I-5) by way of Highway 58, passing Dexter and Pleasant Hill. Highway 58, a major freight route, continues past Lowell, southeast through Oakridge, and later intersects with Highway 97.

Congestion in Lowell is not an issue, although improvements are currently underway along Highway 58 between Lowell and I-5 to improve safety and reduce congestion. Speed limits in town have been a concern in recent years, specifically related to traffic moving at unsafe speeds through town.

Lowell has public transportation provided by Lane Transit District (LTD). Several buses travel to Springfield via Jasper and to Eugene along Highway 58. Lowell is the farthest point of service for LTD bus service along Highway 58.

Public Facilities and Services

The City of Lowell owns and operates its water supply system. In recent years, this supply has proved to be inadequate, which led to a moratorium on new connections. The moratorium recently expired. Lowell has received grants and loans to fund remodeling of the water treatment plant that will rely on surface water from Dexter Lake. The remodeled water treatment plant should be on line by summer 2001.



Dexter Lake

There is one wastewater treatment facility within Lowell city limits, which is owned by the City of Lowell. Infiltration has been a problem during seasonal wet weather, and the City has explored the possibility of developing a regional collection

system. The plant is near capacity and connections are being rationed. A partial storm drainage system exists, which drains into the lake.

The Lowell School District serves 400 students in the city and surrounding area with one elementary school and middle school, combined in the same building, and one high school.

Lowell relies on the State for police services, and fire and emergency medical services are provided by volunteers from the Lowell Rural Fire Protection District. Electricity is provided by Lane Electric Cooperative, Inc. and Emerald People's Utility District. Qwest is the local phone service provider. Lowell is a member of Lane/Klamath Regional Fiber Consortium, and fiber optic cable was installed in fall 1999.

Natural Resources, Open Space, and the Environment

The City of Lowell borders the north shore of Dexter Lake and is surrounded by hills on all other sides. There are some indigenous plant communities on the few relatively undisturbed sites surrounding Lowell, including oak and Douglas fir, incense





City Park in Lowell

“Lowell enjoys a beautiful natural setting and ready access to exceptional recreational opportunities.”

III. Where We’re Headed

cedar, and western red cedar forests. Riparian and aquatic vegetation is found on the banks of Dexter Lake. No other locality near Eugene-Springfield offers comparable diversity of vegetation. The undeveloped land in the town is covered with native grasses.

Lowell enjoys a beautiful natural setting and ready access to exceptional recreational opportunities. The city occupies a unique position in terms of the region’s recreational resources. In close proximity

to three reservoirs, the Middle Fork of the Willamette River, and other nearby streams, Lowell affords many opportunities for water-oriented activities such as boating, fishing, swimming, and kayaking. There are two City parks in Lowell, City Hall Park and Greenway Park, as well as substantial open spaces areas and parks surrounding the nearby reservoirs.

As is characteristic of river valleys in Lane County, annual flooding and ponding occur in the Lowell area. The dams constructed at Lookout Point and Dexter and Fall Creek have greatly reduced the hazard of river flooding.

The *Lowell Comprehensive Plan* states the City’s objective for future land use and urbanization:

“The UGB of Lowell shall be coterminous with its city limits.”

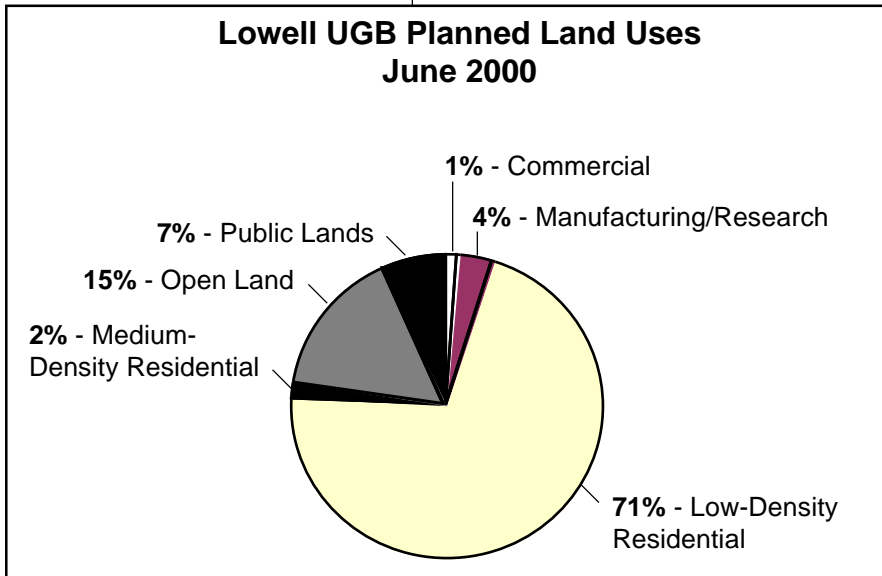
“The UGB, established in cooperation with Lane County, is based upon consideration of the following factors which are official findings of the City of Lowell:

Factor 7: Limiting Lowell’s growth to within its city limits will avoid any negative effects upon the predominantly undeveloped and natural adjacent environment and would represent a relatively compact, energy efficient urban growth form.”

The UGB and city limits contain a total of 762 acres, of which about 286 acres, 38 percent, are undeveloped.



The largest share of the land, 73 percent, is planned for residential use and a small portion, 4 percent, is planned for industrial use. Although there is no demand for industrial land indicated in the *Lowell Comprehensive Plan*, the community decided to designate a supply of manufacturing/research land in the event that the need arises. Lowell has an industrial park to which City services have been extended, and there is room for up to four more businesses to locate there. Limited commercial land is planned, primarily to accommodate small, sole proprietor businesses common in the area.



The *Lowell Comprehensive Plan's* economic-related policies state:

“Encourage development to serve the needs of the resident population for goods and services.”

“Encourage only service industries which create no obnoxious impact on abutting properties and desire an open and attractive setting.”

Lowell recognizes the importance of positioning itself to take advantage of changing times. A clear opportunity for Lowell lies in developing its assets as a recreation center for the region. Additional improvements such as expanding the water supply are taking place in order for this development to occur. Lowell seeks to capitalize on its recreational assets, small town character, and supply of industrial land to draw in firms that seek to establish in attractive locations.

Lowell's vision for the next 50 years is to maintain the city's livability and attractiveness as a small town and to build its economy.