



TO: City of Boardman
FROM: Andrew Parish and Meg Gryzbowski, MIG
RE: Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments - EOA
DATE: November 12, 2025

Introduction

This memorandum includes recommendations and proposed revisions to the City of Boardman's Comprehensive Plan (Plan) chapter narrative, objectives, goals, and implementation policies as they pertain to the Economic Development and Needs of the City. The City is currently in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan. However, the current narrative for Chapter 9: Economic Needs contains an outdated narrative and reference to a Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI) conducted in 1997.

Recommendations are intended to align with and reflect the findings from the Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) Report (2025). Chapter 9 of the City's Comprehensive Plan contains the narrative and policies related to economic growth and development. The updated language is anticipated to be included in the Plan as part of a larger Comprehensive Plan update being undertaken by the City with assistance from Cascadia Partners. The draft information presented in this memo may be further revised to ensure consistency with those efforts.

Changes are shown in underline and ~~strikeout~~ below. Notes are provided in shaded text boxes.

Comprehensive Plan Narrative

Introduction

~~The Boardman area is ideal for economic growth because of a vast amount of agricultural potential and attractive siting for industrial development. As it becomes economical to irrigate lands farther south from the Columbia River, agricultural development will expand. With the railroad, freeway and Columbia River to provide for the efficient movement of goods and services, the Port of Morrow industrial park is an excellent site for a new industrial activity. The City of Boardman has the advantage of planning for growth without the burden of solving a multitude of problems associated with present public services. Boardman has no deteriorated sewer or water lines to replace, no sanitary-storm sewer separation to accomplish, the street and storm drainage systems are in good conditions, and there are no blighted residential or commercial areas to renovate. Instead, the City can concentrate its efforts on sound planning for new growth. Within the Planning Area, sufficient land exists for commercial, light industrial, industrial, and a broad range of residential development choices. For the purposes of this Plan, the planning area includes all areas within the Urban Growth Boundary.~~

Note: We recommend replacing existing narrative with references to the current EOA and BLI.

The City of Boardman updated its Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) in 2025, looking at the long-term employment and growth potential for the city over the next 20 years. The EOA builds on five strategic community goals and development objectives adopted by the City as part of a

Strategic Planning process also conducted in 2025. The EOA also evaluates workforce trends, employment potential for targeted industries, provides an employment land needs analysis, and an employment land inventory.

Located along the I-84 corridor, Boardman has strong regional connectivity and is easily accessible to commuters, goods, and visitors traveling to the area. Situated in the eastern part of the Columbia River Gorge, Boardman is also in close proximity to other economic hubs in Morrow, Umatilla, and Wasco Counties, including Hermiston, Umatilla, Pendleton, and the Dalles, as well as Idaho to the east and the Washington Tri-Cities to the northwest. With freight rail and airport connections, Boardman has great connectivity to locations throughout the Pacific Northwest. Access to the Columbia River also opens additional opportunities for water transport and freight services, including through the Port of Morrow's facilities.

Boardman's location provides opportunities for agriculture, food processing and manufacturing, and warehousing and distribution industries. The area features ample power and water resources that are required for emerging industries, like data center campuses. Its proximity and accessibility also lend themselves to recruiting workforce from the surrounding areas. As of 2025, it is estimated that more than four times the amount of people commute to Boardman for work, compared to those that live and work in Boardman. Only 10% of Boardman's population live and work in the city.

However, as a whole, the City of Boardman is home to an estimated 3,500 workers and 140 businesses with "covered" employees.¹ Employment and industry trends in 2025 include:

- The largest employment sectors include manufacturing (42%), utilities, transport and warehousing (14%), administrative services (7%), and hospitality and tourism-related industries (7%). Other industries like finance and insurance, real estate, and other "professional" and technical sectors were ranked amongst the lowest employers in the city.
- Similar to national averages, the majority of firms in the City of Boardman are relatively small, with over 85% of businesses employing less than 20 workers.
- Though the need for skilled labor is seen as a challenge for the growing workforce needs, the majority of data center and IT jobs that are part of the emerging industry do not require college degrees as a condition for employment. According to a study of recent job postings, only 31% of jobs in this sector require a bachelor's degree.
- Although roughly one-third of the adult population in Boardman has earned some level of education beyond high school, that is significantly lower than the broader county representation (44%). While this may be a challenge for Boardman, it may bode well for attracting new households to the area.
- Morrow County's prominent employment base in agriculture, government, and health care or social service has made the region more resilient to the recent COVID-19 (2020) recession, losing fewer jobs compared to the state (-4% versus -7%).
- Renewable energy from the dams, and wind or solar projects all present opportunities to Boardman and Morrow County. Data center development has equally benefited from these resources and has proven to be an emerging industry that should be considered for Boardman's economic growth and development. Between 2014 and 2024, 800 new jobs in

¹ Covered employment refers to jobs that include federal unemployment insurance.

the data industry were added in Umatilla and Morrow counties, accounting for a 300% job growth in this sector (or 15 % per year).

- Between 2014 and 2024, the construction industry grew by 600 jobs (an estimated 4% per year).

Buildable Lands Inventory—1997

As part of the Periodic Review Work Tasks, the City completed a Buildable Lands Inventory in 1997: North Morrow County TGM Project, Community Visioning Analysis of Buildable Lands and Housing Needs. This study is incorporated in this document by reference. It identified that the City of Boardman has ample land within its Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to meet commercial needs for the next 20 years and beyond, given population projections provided for the Inventory. According to the Inventory, the commercial land supply needed for 2017 is 61.43 acres. Given the total supply of commercial acreage in Boardman of 271 acres, there is ample commercial land zoned to accommodate growth through the year 2017. The amount of industrial acreage in the City is estimated at approximately 240 acres with about 40% of this land currently vacant. These figures reflect that the City of Boardman has ample industrial land to meet the economic development needs of the City through 2017. As per the Buildable Lands Inventory:

- There are 236.8 acres of vacant commercial and 3.26 acres of underdeveloped commercial and 34.21 acres of developed commercial land within the Boardman Urban Growth Boundary.
- Based on the population increases noted above, a total of 61.3 acres of commercial land are needed to accommodate population growth over the next 20 years.

Need for Economic Growth

Economic growth is essential to provide and perpetuate public services for Boardman residents already present. Financing of the major sewerage and water projects is premised on new residential growth, as the result of new industrial and commercial activity. With increased population and the resultant increased tax base, the level of public services can be upgraded at a decreasing per capita cost. Besides residential and industrial growth, the expansion of commercial activity will also take place. The level of private services will increase along with additional employment opportunities.

Control of Growth

With sound planning and policies concerning land use and extension of public utilities, Boardman can control growth and eliminate the intrusion of incompatible land uses into any part of the Planning Area. The Comprehensive Plan provides for logical locations of diverse land uses as well as providing buffers between dissimilar uses.

Regional Deficiency

By encouraging industrial, commercial and residential growth in Eastern Oregon, the State's economy will become more broad-based and diverse. Presently, Eastern Oregon is underutilized, relative to industrial development. The agricultural industry has recently made major commitments in Eastern Oregon and exemplifies the area's role in the State's overall economic [sic].

Replace with new BLI and Economic Growth information

Buildable Lands and Economic Growth

Oregon Statewide Land Use Planning Goal 9 (Economic Development) and related state rules (Oregon Administrative Rule 660-009) require jurisdictions to ensure adequate land and supportive infrastructure to accommodate employment growth over a forecasted 20-year period (including commercial and industrial lands). The City of Boardman's 2025 EOA uses employment growth trends, economic development potential and land use demands, and land availability (or capacity) analysis to determine whether Boardman can meet the projected demands and needs of the community.

The City of Boardman estimates an additional 2,300 jobs by 2045 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Employment Growth Forecast, City of Boardman (2025-2045)

Industry	Overall Employment					Net Change by Period				Total 25-45
	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	
Adjusted Growth Forecast										
Agriculture, forestry, outdoor	154	162	169	178	186	8	8	8	9	32
Construction	87	106	130	159	195	19	24	29	35	108
Manufacturing	1,475	1,544	1,616	1,691	1,769	69	72	75	79	294
Wholesale Trade	14	16	18	21	24	2	2	3	3	10
Retail Trade	108	119	130	143	157	11	12	13	14	49
Transport., Warehousing, Utilities	498	553	613	680	754	54	60	67	74	255
Information	168	271	435	699	1,123	102	164	264	424	955
Finance & Insurance	17	18	20	22	24	2	2	2	2	8
Real Estate	9	13	18	25	34	4	5	7	9	24
Professional & Technical Services	0	10	20	30	43	10	10	10	13	43
Administration Services	257	275	295	316	339	19	20	21	23	83
Education	170	184	199	214	231	14	15	16	17	61
Health Care/Social Assistance	193	223	258	299	345	30	35	40	47	153
Leisure & Hospitality	261	300	344	396	455	39	45	52	59	195
Other Services	15	17	19	22	24	2	2	2	3	9
Government	52	55	58	61	64	3	3	3	3	12
TOTAL:	3,479	3,865	4,343	4,955	5,769	386	478	612	815	2,290

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Johnson Economics

According to the Buildable Lands Inventory presented in the EOA update, the projected commercial land supply needed for 2045 is 37.2 acres. Given the total supply of 150.1 buildable commercial acres in Boardman, there is commercial land zoned to accommodate forecasted growth. The amount of industrial acreage in the City is an estimated 87.2 acres. Given the supply of 126.2 buildable acres of general industrial land, the City of Boardman has industrial land to meet these generalized, aggregate growth projections.

While the City has adequate commercial and generalized industrial land supply to provide for the forecasted employment growth rates over the next 20-year period when viewed from a generalized perspective, it does not have sufficient land to accommodate specific types of employment uses, specifically data center campus needs. When considering the demand for these types of uses, the analysis of land needs indicates a deficit of 625 acres (Figure 2).

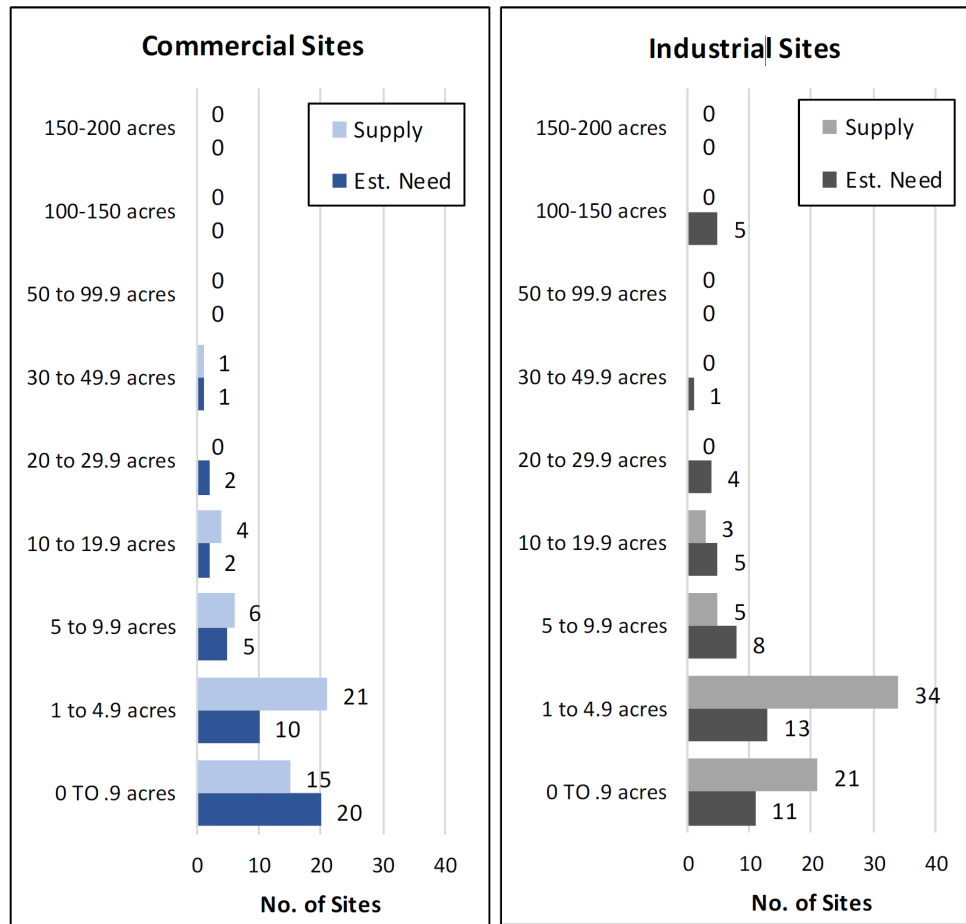
Figure 2. Land Supply and Availability, City of Boardman (2045)

EMPLOYMENT ZONING DESIGNATION	20 YR. DEMAND (Gross Acres)	BUILDABLE LAND (Gross Acres) ¹	SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT) (Gross Acres)
Commercial (Office, Institutional, Retail)	37.2	150.1	112.9
Industrial (Gen. Ind., Warehouse, Flex)	87.2	126.2	39.0
Data Center Campus	625.0	0	(625.0)
TOTAL:	749.4	276.3	(473.1)

¹ While the buildable land inventory found a surplus of industrial land in gross terms, none of the remaining sites meet the specific unique requirements of hyperscale data center campuses. Most importantly, remaining buildable sites lack the size to house a new campus. Following the development of the three known sites identified above, no additional appropriate large-lot sites will remain.

Source: Johnson Economics, City of Boardman, MIG

According to the land use analysis, available lots consist primarily of smaller parcels, creating a mismatch between the supply of land and the estimated need for larger sites (Figure 3). In order to meet demands of emerging data center industries, more medium- (20+ acre) and large-lot (100+ acre) sites are needed (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Forecasted Land Supply Compared to Land Needs

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Boardman, Johnson Economics LLC

Figure 4. Requirements for New Site Supply and Estimated Acreage of Sites

Site Size	Commercial		Industrial		Total	
	# of Needed Sites	Total acres (=/-)	# of Needed Sites	Total acres (=/-)	# of Needed Sites	Total acres (=/-)
< 5 acres	0	0	0	0	0	0
5 acres (+/-)	0	0	3	15	3	15
10 acres (+/-)	0	0	2	20	2	20
20 acres (+/-)	2	40	4	80	6	120
30 acres (+/-)	0	0	1	30	1	30
50 acres (+/-)	0	0	0	0	0	0
100 acres (+/-)	0	0	0	0	0	0
125 acres (+/-)	0	0	5	625	5	625
150-200 acres (+/-)	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:	2	40	15	770	17	810
	Sites	Acres (+/-)	Sites	Acres (+/-)	Sites	Acres (+/-)

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Boardman, Johnson Economics LLC

Goal IX: Economic Policies

- 1.—Advance the position of Boardman as a regional center for industry, power generation, commerce, recreation, and culture.
- 2.—Encourage tourist commercial activity near Interstate 84.
- 3.—Allow for the creation of industrial park development with adequate off-street parking, landscaping, and site screening.
- 4.—Promote cooperation among the city, the Port of Morrow, and other interested parties to facilitate the most effective uses of public facilities serving the planning area.
- 5.—As resources permit, review the City's supply industrial land to monitor supply and demand.

Replace current policies with new goal and policy language below.

Economic Goals and Policies

The following goals, policies, and implementation actions are based on the forecasted economic development and employment needs of the community.

Goal 1. Support and build upon the foundation of existing industry sectors in the City of Boardman.

Policy 1.A: The City shall manage the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to ensure sufficient employment land for continued economic growth and workforce creation, as identified in the Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA).

Policy 1.B: The City shall work with the Port of Morrow and other regional partners to support industrial and commercial growth.

Policy 1.C: The City shall cluster hyperscale data centers to minimize infrastructure and land needs.

Policy 1.D: The City shall protect sites brought into the UGB for specific employment uses (such as data centers) for those intended uses through policy, annexation agreements, the development code, and/or other means as appropriate.

Goal 2. Incentivize new business development and attract new industries prominent in the region.

Policy 2.A: The City shall evaluate and update as necessary the North Boardman Urban Renewal economic development incentives to attract interest in key development areas.

Policy 2.B: The City shall utilize the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) along Olson Rd and near the Port of Morrow Interchange to attract developers.

Policy 2.C: The City shall leverage other existing public finance and economic development tools as deemed necessary and effective to achieve economic and employment goals.

Goal 3. Strengthen Boardman's position as a regional hub for industry and commerce.

Policy 3.A: The City shall promote public-private partnerships with key partners, including the Boardman Chamber of Commerce, Port of Morrow, Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC), and Business Oregon.

Policy 3.B: The City shall ensure sufficient infrastructure and support systems to sustain business development by collaborating with the Port of Morrow, Oregon Department of Transportation, GEODC, and other regional partners.

Policy 3.C: The City shall facilitate the safe movement of people, goods, and services throughout the region by identifying joint planning efforts and shared funding opportunities for key infrastructure investments based on the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP).

Goal 4. Attract and strengthen a skilled and technical workforce.

Policy 4.A: The City shall identify and pursue partnerships with local training and education or vocational studies programs, including with Columbia River Health Services, Blue Mountain Community College, Eastern Oregon University, other schools or universities with training programs and specialized education for specialized or target industry jobs that could support a workforce pipeline.

Policy 4.B: The City shall aim to maximize workforce recruitment from surrounding jurisdictions through joint marketing efforts with Morrow County and staffing agencies in the region to attract skilled employees in the construction or manufacturing, healthcare, or information technology sector for data centers and other employment gaps in key industry sectors.

Policy 4.C: The City shall attract employees by supporting the development of a variety of housing options and other community amenities, consistent with the City's Housing Capacity Analysis, Parks Master Plan, and Strategic Plan.

Goal 5. Respond to economic development opportunities with speed and flexibility.

Policy 5.A: The City shall identify and implement opportunities to increase staff capacity through interagency or interdepartmental collaboration.

Policy 5.B: The City shall update development standards as needed to allow for projected and desired employment uses and to ensure that development permitting is expeditious and efficient.