



Farmland preservation near growing urban regions: Lessons from Oregon

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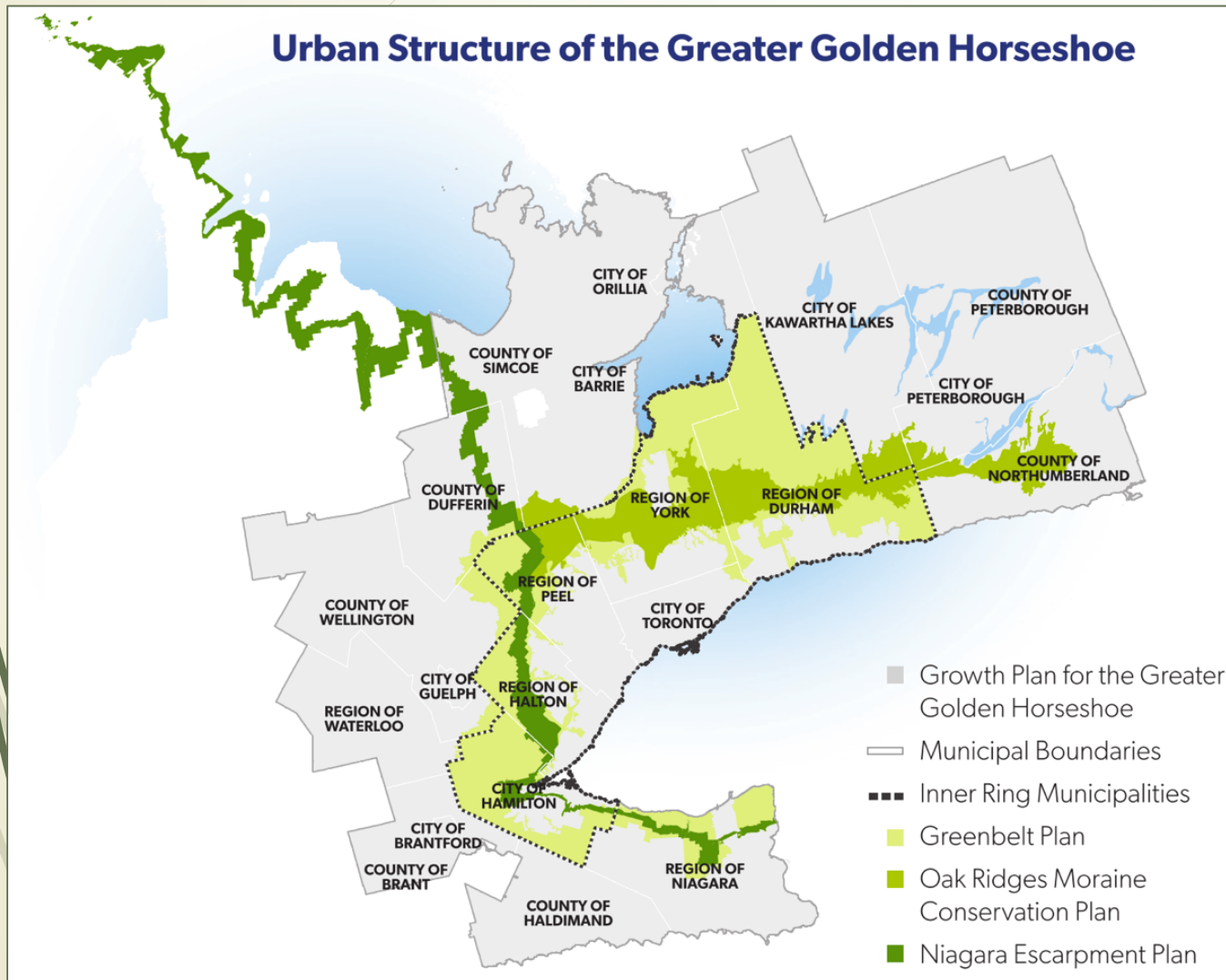
The question

- ▶ Agriculture in southern Ontario is facing certain challenges.
- ▶ Land use planning and policy in review process in Ontario, in part to address this concern.
- ▶ Oregon considered a model for agricultural land use planning.
- ▶ **Can Ontario learn from Oregon's experience with land use planning for agriculture?**

Study regions



Ontario: Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH)



- Urban and highly populated
- Rich agriculture
 - Excellent soils
 - Diverse, highly productive farms
- Signs of agricultural decline:
 - Loss of farmland
 - Loss of farm services and businesses
 - High rates of farmland rental (inner ring)



Impermanence syndrome

- ▶ When farmers perceive that their land may not remain in agriculture for much longer, and start to disinvest in the farm
 - ▶ Less labour, less maintenance & upkeep, no new investments (e.g. infrastructure)
- ▶ Shift away from livestock (too much conflict)
- ▶ Shift towards cash/field crops (low capital, low labour, quick return)
- ▶ Young people tend not to start farming
- ▶ Farm-related businesses and services leave

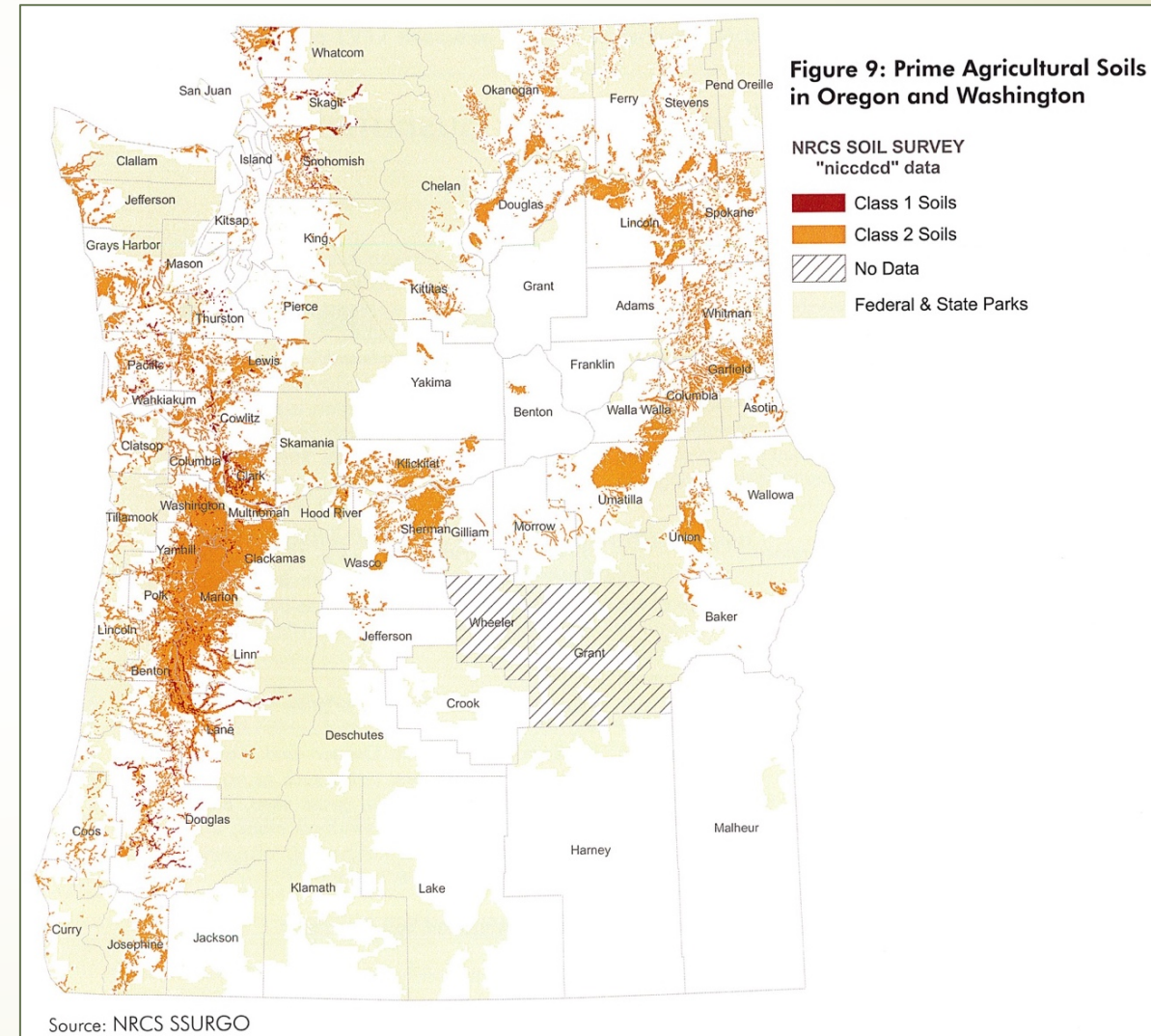
Oregon: Willamette Valley

Why Oregon?

- Recognized leader in land use planning in North America
- Ambitious land use planning system since 1973

Why Willamette Valley?

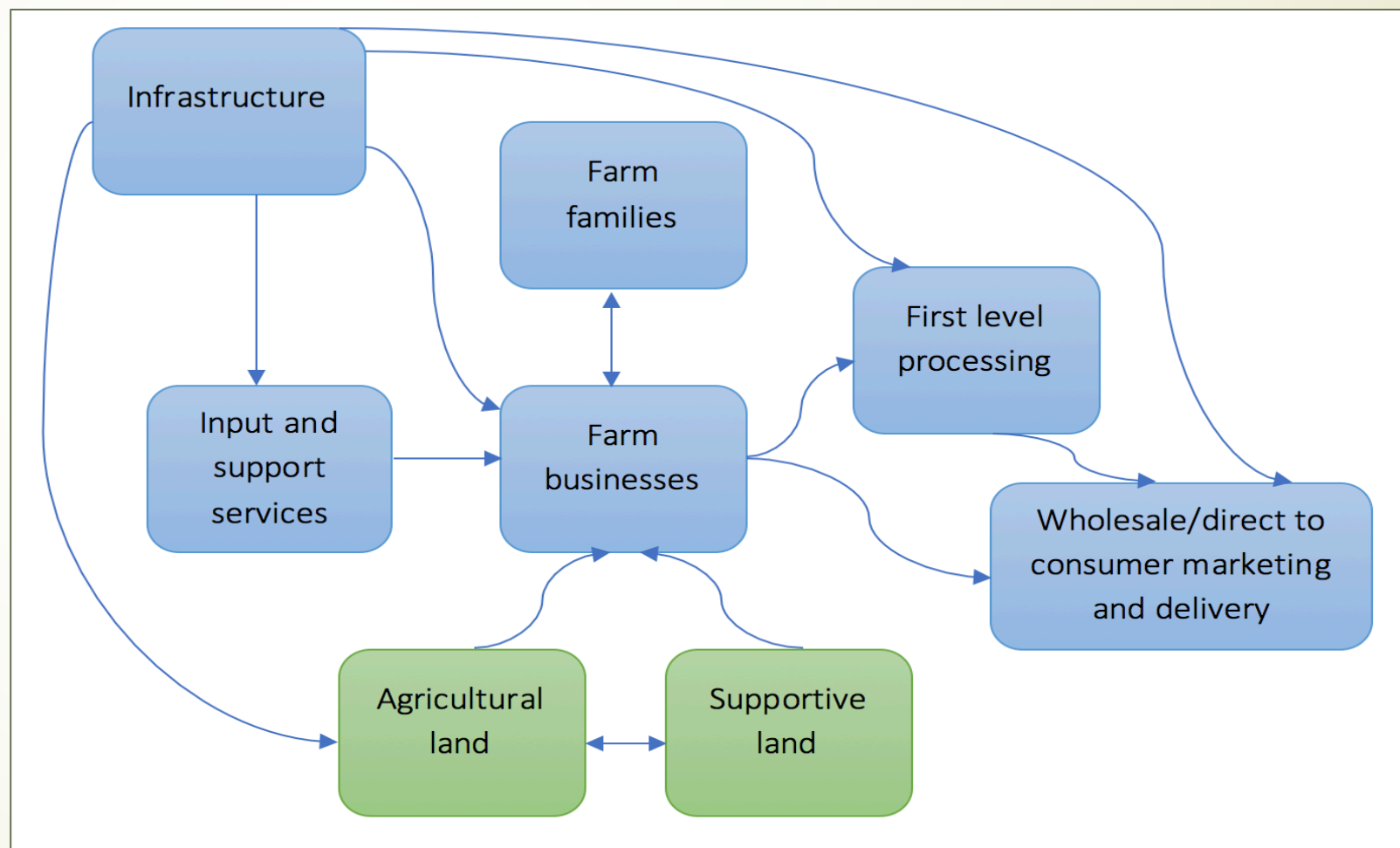
- Excellent agricultural land
- Population density & growth
- Parallel policy structure



Framework: “Agricultural Systems”

**Agri-
business
group**

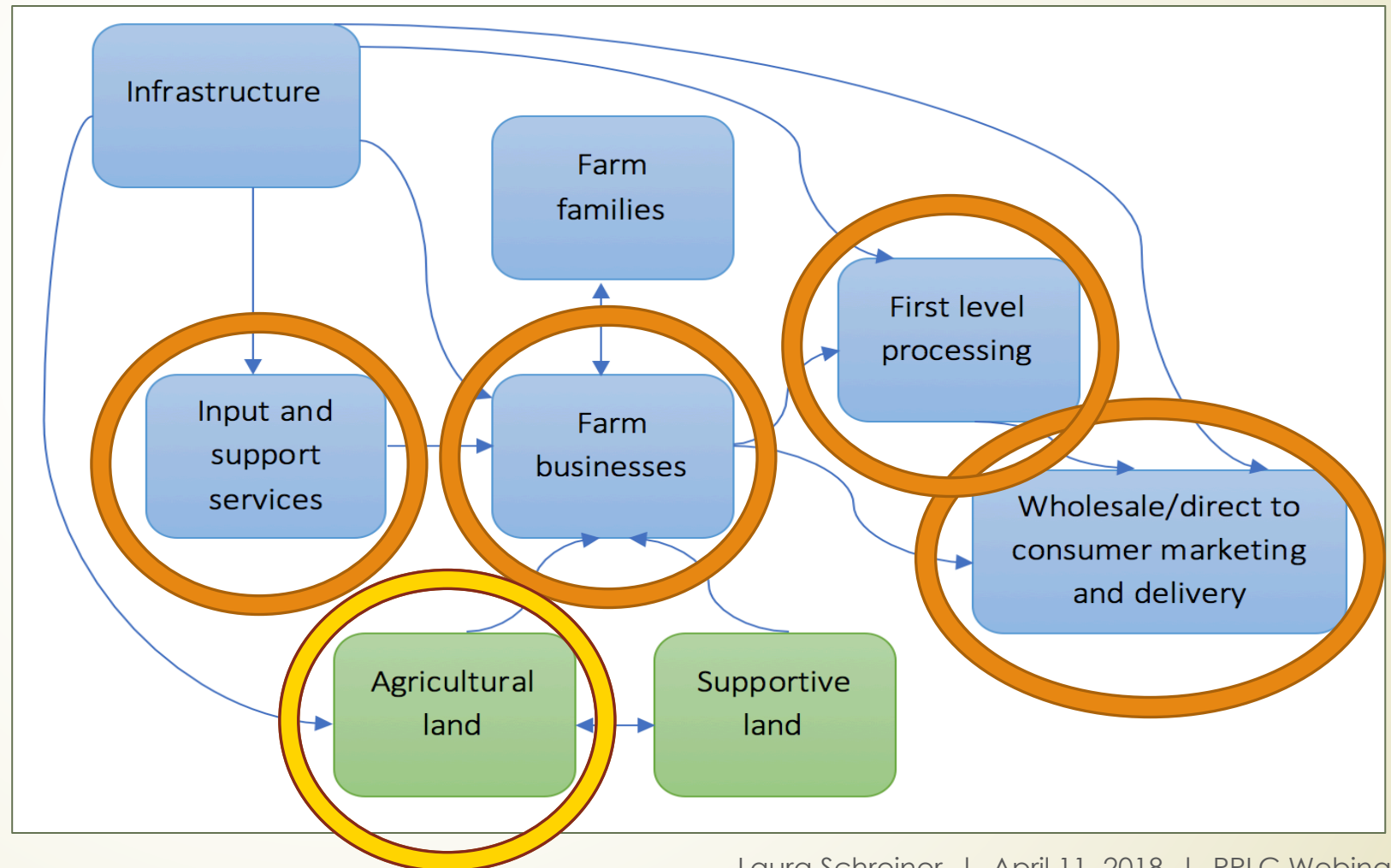
**Agricultural
land base**



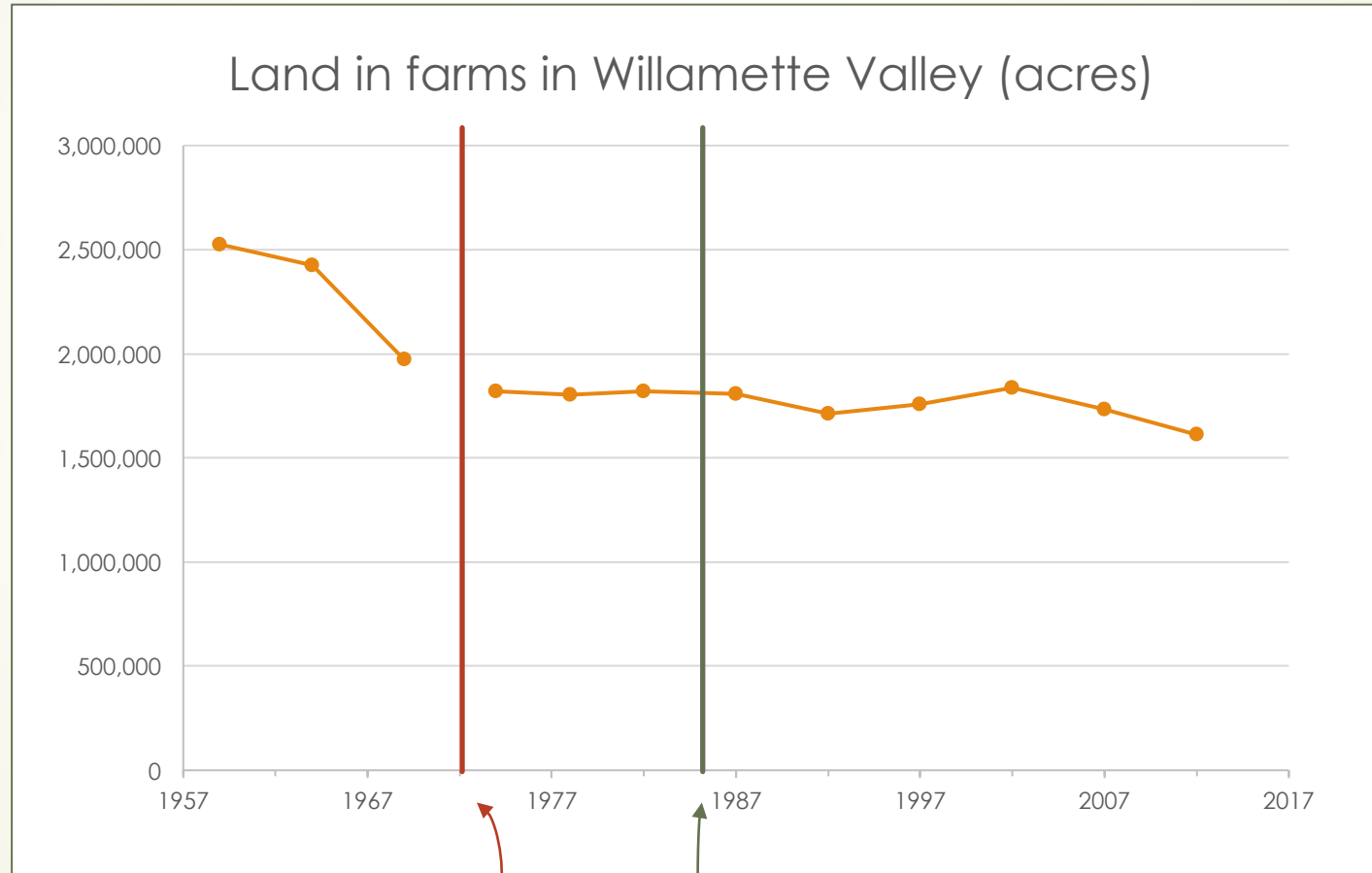
Indicators of agricultural system success/viability

**Agri-
business
group**

**Agricultural
land base**



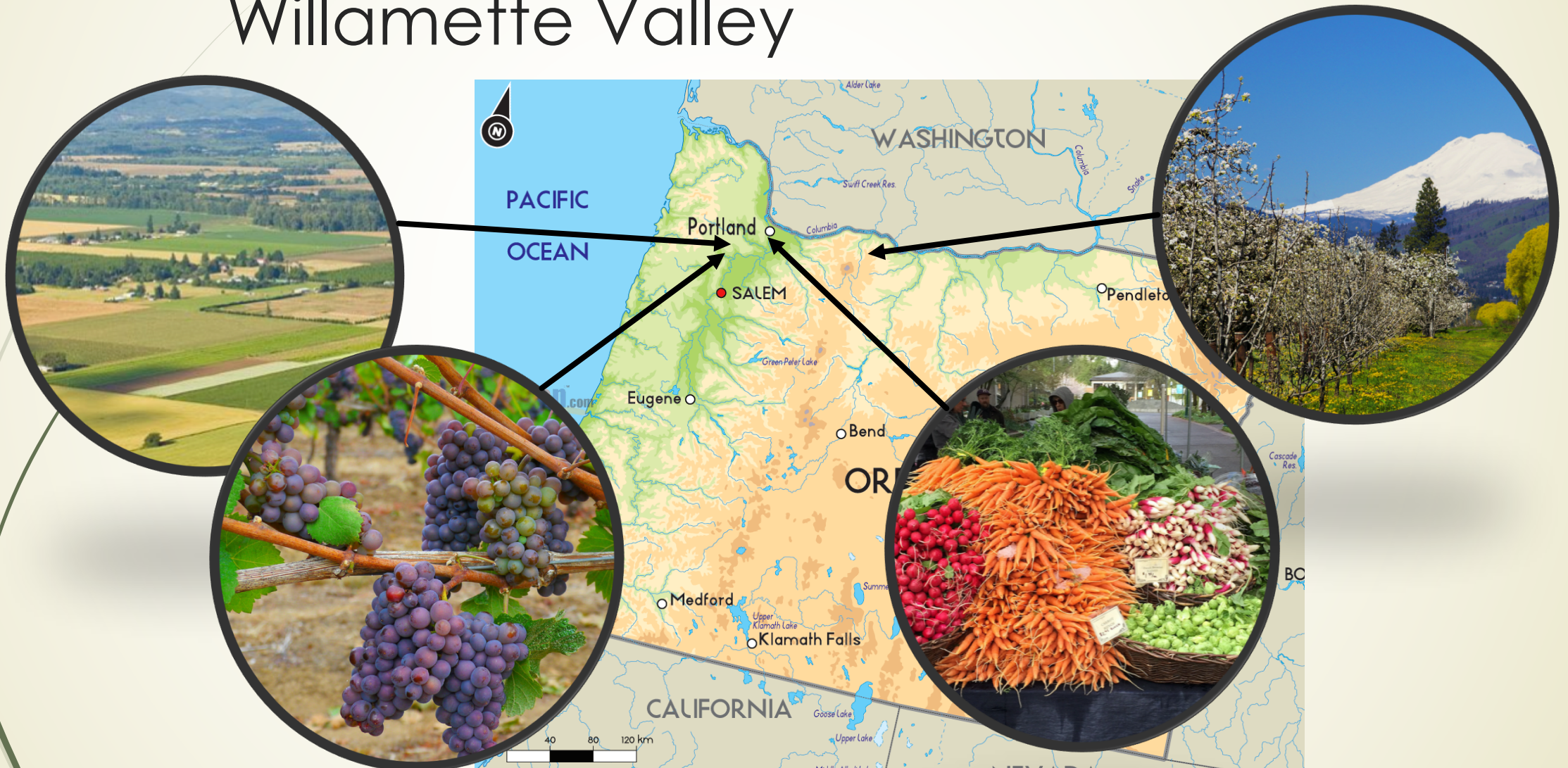
Indicators of agricultural system in Willamette Valley



Land use laws passed

Land use system fully implemented

Indicators of agricultural system in Willamette Valley



How has Oregon done it?

- ▶ Land use system created in 1973
- ▶ State-wide, mandatory, implemented by local governments
- ▶ Key features of Oregon's planning system:
 - ▶ Minimum agricultural lot sizes
 - ▶ Special zoning for highest value farmland, with restrictions on land use (e.g. on new dwellings, types of businesses allowed)
 - ▶ Property tax benefits for farmland
 - ▶ Urban growth boundaries
- ▶ ...6 lessons for Ontario

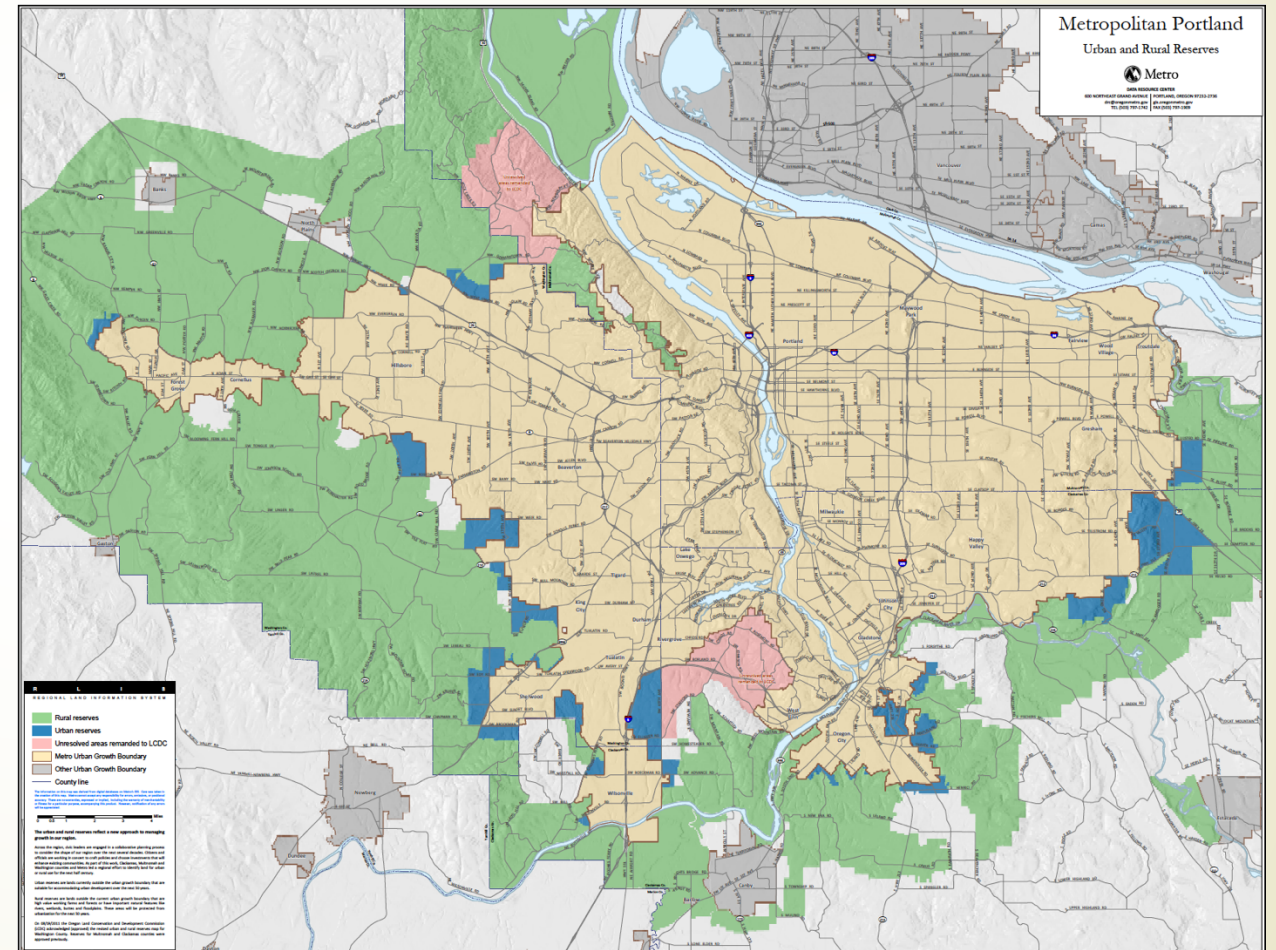
Lesson 1: Firmer, rational urban growth boundaries create greater land use certainty



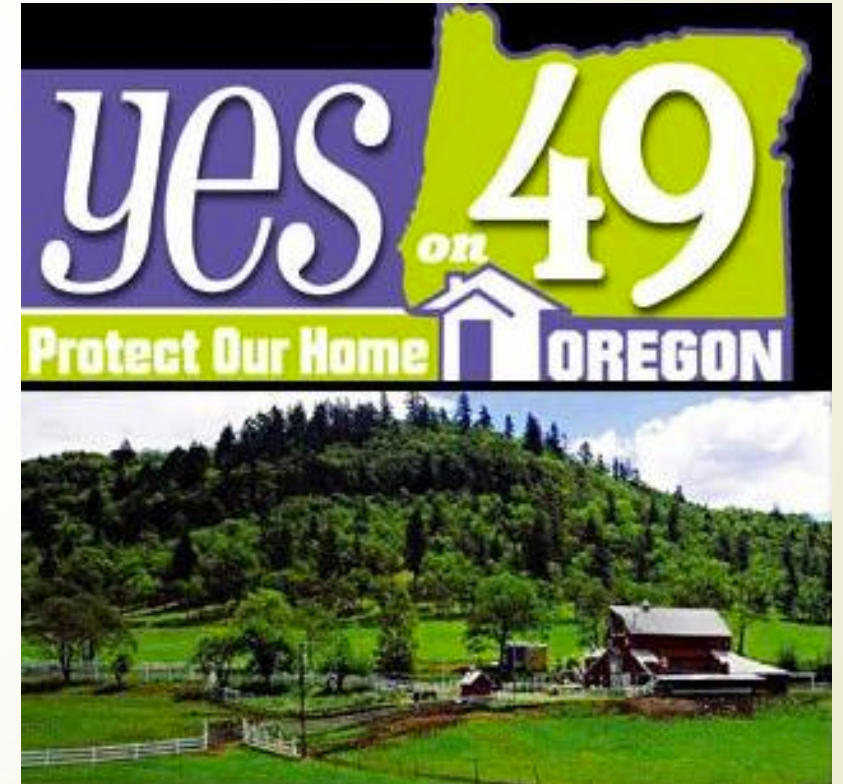
Lesson 2: “Agricultural systems”-based planning is possible, and requires resources

Metro Portland's urban and rural reserves

- Historically: land brought into UGB based on a strict hierarchy based on soils
- New system: land is selected for development on a more complex methodology, which considers *agricultural system*



Lesson 3: Citizen engagement and support is critical



Lesson 4: A watchdog is important

Working with Oregonians to enhance our quality of life by building livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, and conserving natural areas.

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Lesson 5: Strong rural planning and strong urban planning are mutually dependent

Lesson 6: Land use planning alone is not enough



Conclusion

- ▶ Oregon's system has its problems and critiques
 - ▶ Politically susceptible, lack of regional planning, "expanding boxes"
- ▶ However, by North American standards it has been quite successful in:
 - ▶ protecting agricultural land from development
 - ▶ supporting farming (the "agricultural system")
- ▶ Holds key lessons for Ontario as we try to improve our planning for agricultural systems
- ▶ (and much potential for future comparative research!)

Thank you!

Policy brief with additional information:

http://rplc-capr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FarmlandPreservationLessonsOregon_PolicyBrief.pdf

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