Clark County Comprehensive Plan

Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on Scope

Description of Proposal

Clark County is in the process of revising the 2004 Comprehensive Growth Management Plan as allowed under the Growth Management Act (GMA). This notice announces the County's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed update to the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. The environmental impact review process under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) will be used to inform the public of the choices between the proposed growth alternatives.

The SEPA process requires that the County, as lead agency, notify the public of its intent to prepare an EIS so that citizens have an opportunity to comment on the scope of the impacts to be examined in the EIS. This notice discusses recent comprehensive plan-related decisions made by Clark County and describes the alternatives and scope of impacts analysis to be considered in the EIS.

Proponent:

Clark County is the proponent for the comprehensive plan update.

Location of proposal:

The EIS will cover all of unincorporated Clark County within a "maximum study area" which is composed of those areas being considered for inclusion in an urban growth boundary.

Lead agency:

Clark County is the lead agency.

Context for Comprehensive Planning

The county's comprehensive plan must address state growth management goals, and be consistent with the County-wide Planning Policies as well as meet the requirements of RCW 36.70A. Since the County plan was adopted in 2004, conditions in the county as well as state and federal laws may have changed, requiring corresponding changes to the County's Comprehensive Plan. In addition, more accurate mapping and field determination of available buildable land has recently been accomplished, which may change the conclusions of the previous plan regarding the ability of the current urban growth areas to accommodate future population and jobs.

Recent Direction

The Board of Clark County Commissioners (Board) issued planning assumptions and policy directions related to the review of the county's growth management plan in early 2005. After receiving public input, the board directed staff to update the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. The county will assume an average annual population growth rate of 2.0% to the year 2024, the planning horizon of the comprehensive plan. The planning assumptions and policy directions are attached to this notice.

General Statement Regarding Impacts

The ultimate outcome of this EIS and comprehensive planning process will be adoption of new urban growth boundaries for Clark County. The plan does not in itself entail construction or other physical actions. As a result, the analysis and description of the plans' impacts are not detailed to specific sites, but instead give an overview of the impacts that could be expected under the various alternatives.

The EIS will present information about the relative impacts of the alternatives described below. SEPA Rules acknowledge that less detailed information is available on the impacts associated with the adoption of a comprehensive plan and allows the discussion of alternatives at a level of detail appropriate to the scope of the proposal. SEPA also permits the adoption of other documents where appropriate as part of disclosing existing conditions and anticipated impacts. For that reason, the EIS will adopt portions of the 2003 EIS and refer to elements of the environment that are unlikely to be affected by the changes proposed now.

SEPA encourages discussion of alternatives as different means to accomplish a stated objective. In this case, the level of detail will generally be focused on the Maximum Study Area, as each of the alternatives will describe a concept for organizing, distributing, and serving growth across the area. The alternatives will be considered in light of their ability to accomplish the objectives of GMA and the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and County-wide Planning Policies. The alternatives will be evaluated against the planning assumptions and the values and principles attached to this notice.

Alternatives

The No Action Alternative is the adopted September 2004 Comprehensive Plan, with the adopted urban growth boundaries, planning assumptions, policies, and implementing ordinances.

The other alternatives that will be analyzed will be different proposed urban growth areas located within the "Maximum Study Area" that are sufficient in size to accommodate the planning assumptions and policy directions of the Board. Those assumptions and directions are attached.

The Maximum Study Area boundary includes:

a) Urban growth areas adopted in September 2004.
b) Areas previously proposed and studied for urban expansion under the January 2004 map titled "Proposed Comprehensive Plan Map 2003-2023 Board Recommendation" except for the Meadow Glade area.
c) Expansion areas proposed by cities in June 2005.
d) Urban reserve areas included in the 1994 or September 2004 adopted plans.
e) Areas proposed by property owners close to existing boundaries or closely related to areas that meet other criteria.

A preferred alternative will likely be developed based on technical analysis, input from cities and the results of the environmental scoping and analysis. The preferred alternative is expected to be an area roughly equivalent to the January 2004 proposed urban growth boundaries plus lands selected from within the Maximum Study Area sufficient to meet the June 2005 planning assumptions and policy directions.

The only anticipated changes to 2004 comprehensive plan policies and the implementing ordinances would be those required to be consistent with the preferred alternative. Where it is expected that changes will be needed the EIS will disclose the policies that would be changed.

ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Below is a list of the elements of the environment defined by SEPA and proposed for evaluation in this EIS. By adopting portions of the 2003 EIS, the county will be able to use much of the data and analysis prepared for the September 2004 adopted plan as a starting point for additional data-gathering and analysis. Interested parties are invited to comment on the elements commonly included in SEPA, as well as other issues of concern. A list of issues is attached.

1) Natural Environment
    a) Earth
        i) Soils
    b) Water
        i) Surface waters
        ii) Groundwater and aquifer recharge areas
    c) Fish and Wildlife Habitat
        i) Habitat
        ii) Sensitive, Threatened and Endangered Species
        iii) Migratory species and migration routes
        iv) Wetlands
    d) Energy and Natural Resources
        i) Renewable and non-renewable energy sources
        ii) Scenic resources

2) Built Environment
    a) Land and Shoreline Use
        i) Land use, population, and housing
        ii) Economy
        iii) Historic and cultural resources
    b) Transportation
        i) Roadway Network (including Freight)
        ii) Transit
        iii) Non-motorized modes
    c) Public Services and Utilities
        i) Fire
        ii) Police
        iii) Schools
        iv) Parks or other recreational facilities

v) Libraries
vi) General government facilities
vii) Solid waste
viii) Sanitary Sewer
ix) Public water supplies

d) GMA Conformance
i) GMA Requirements
ii) County-wide Planning Policies
iii) Concurrency
iv) Fiscal Impacts
v) Public Involvement

Below is a general description of the way the EIS will cover each of the elements of the environment noted above.

A. Natural Environment

1. Earth: Soils

Impacts to soils would depend on where the alternatives direct new development. For instance, soil-related impacts could result if centers or villages were located in areas that have steep slopes, unstable soils or are subject to liquefaction. To the extent the alternatives give different levels of protection to open space or other natural areas, they could have impacts on these unique physical features.

2. Water: Surface waters, Groundwater and Aquifer Recharge Areas

Depending on the locations of proposed centers for residential development and the level of development intensity they would be expected to absorb, some of the alternatives could allow higher amounts of impervious surfaces (e.g., from new buildings and their associated parking, or roadways). In general, covering land with impervious surfaces increases the amount of water that runs off the land and is not absorbed during a storm. Increased runoff could have impacts on the storm and sanitary sewer systems, affect stream flows, and contribute to localized flooding. Those impacts may be mitigated by existing requirements for on-site storm water detention; in areas that are redeveloped to higher concentrations flooding potential may actually be reduced, if storm water improvements are conditions of approval.

The EIS will generally describe the water quality impacts that could be caused by increased vehicle use of streets, since roadway runoff contains a variety of vehicle-related pollutants that could be carried to streams and lakes.

A higher population in the county will increase the demand on the regional public water supply. The EIS will explore the relative impacts on the regional water supply that could be caused by the growth levels specified in the alternatives. Water conservation and other resource development are the primary mitigations for impacts on water supply.

3. Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Increasing urbanization in the county could reduce habitat, as well as the numbers and diversity of plants and animals. Steelhead salmon species listed as threatened under the ESA inhabit major rivers and streams in the county. Urbanization in the watersheds can affect those species. Wetlands provide many functions, such as managing stormwater runoff (as discussed in #2), and one of their important functions is providing wildlife and plant habitats. The significance of the

impacts will depend on the location and size of the proposed UGA expansions and proposed policies to protect critical areas and enhance water quality. The preferred alternative ultimately chosen would be required by federal law to protect threatened and endangered species. In addition, state regulations require the designation and protection of critical areas using the "best available science".

4. Energy and Natural Resources

Different land use patterns and transportation options in the various alternatives will affect the total vehicle miles traveled and therefore the amount of fuel used for commuting and other travel. The residential densities implied by the various alternatives may offer different opportunities for efficient use of fuel for heating, commuting, and other travel.

B. Built Environment

1. Land and Shoreline Use: Land use, Housing, the Economy, and Cultural Resources

The EIS will analyze the alternatives' compliance with GMA and the Shoreline Management Act, and consistency with County-wide Planning Policies. It will examine the impacts related to allocating future growth to areas currently used for other purposes. Consistency with GMA requirements for rural lands relative to urban growth boundaries would also be evaluated.

The EIS will discuss the impacts caused by changes to the comprehensive plan and zoning maps, including the effects on development capacity – the theoretical number of housing units and jobs allowed by the zoning. The EIS will describe the number and type of jobs and housing units that could be available under the different alternatives, and how these patterns meet County housing and economic development goals. The alternatives do not require certain buildings on specific sites, but would allow certain types of buildings in general areas. Therefore, in terms of potential impacts on the aesthetic character of the county, the EIS cannot anticipate visual impacts of individual new buildings that would occur under particular alternatives The EIS will describe the overall visual effects that could be caused by the urban design components (such as transition zones and use of open space) of the land use concepts in the alternatives. The EIS will also generally describe how the land use patterns proposed for the urban growth areas could change the appearance of those areas.

The alternatives could place varying levels of redevelopment pressure on historic and cultural resources, depending on the locations and intensity of development they allow. Once the locations for urban growth boundary expansions have been identified, the EIS will examine the extent to which this constitutes a significant impact, using the County's map of areas having a high probability for cultural resources.

2. Transportation

The EIS will use information derived from a traffic assignment model to describe the effects of the alternatives' proposed roadway and transit changes, reflecting the growth levels and distribution patterns on vehicular traffic and congestion. It will describe the county's ability to meet level-of-service standards given the proposed distribution of land uses under each alternative. The EIS will also include information about the impacts of LOS standards for state facilities on the local street network.

3. Public Services and Utilities

The EIS will describe the relative effects the different alternatives would have on each of the cities' and other providers' ability to ensure adequate services to meet the demand generated not only by the amount of residential and commercial growth, but also by the distribution of that growth. In particular, impacts on fire and police services, school and recreational facilities, sewer and solid waste will be considered.

The EIS will also evaluate how well each alternative conforms to the policies and requirements of the Growth Management Act and the County-wide Planning Policies. It will also look at fiscal impacts from each alternative.

Another requirement for an EIS is to disclose unavoidable adverse impacts and irretrievable commitment of resources that could occur with adoption of one of the alternatives.

Scoping

Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required.
Comments should be provided in writing by October 28, 2005, to Marlia Jenkins.

Responsible official: Gordon Euler
Position/title: Long Range Planning Manager Phone: 360-397-2375 (4112)
Address: P.O. Box 9810, Vancouver WA 98666-9810
Date: September 26, 2005

Signature:

<Signature on File on Original Document>
Gordon Euler
Long Range Planning Manager

Attachment 1

Planning Assumptions
From the Clark county Board of Commissioners
Through June 28, 2005

Policy Assumptions

1. The population forecast is 584,310, an increase of 2% through 2024. Assume a 2.2% increase for the first six years of the capital facilities plan.

2. The base year for the plan is 2004 and the end year for plan is 2024.

3. The urban/rural population split is assumed as a 90:10 split.

4. Market factors are a 35% addition of lands for industrial lands, 25% addition for commercial lands and a 10% addition for residential lands.

5. Job creation goals are 1 new job for each new 1.75 people, including rural The following sources of jobs are counted toward the 110,077 jobs target:

    - vacant and buildable lands added to existing urban growth areas as needed to meet the target;
    - vacant and buildable lands inside existing urban growth areas;
    - sites not within the vacant buildable lands inventory for which development approvals have been granted;
    - sites where transportation studies, planning studies, and development agreements indicate that the employment potential is larger than that assigned under the employment density assumptions;
    - public sector employment on tax exempt lands;
    - vacant rural industrial and commercial lands (largely in rural centers);
    - proposed rural industrial land bank at La Center junction; and
    - rural home businesses.

6. The redevelopment factor is 5%.

7. Employment density is assumed as 20 employees per commercial acre; 9 employees per industrial acre; and 20 employees per business park acre.

8. Development on tax-exempt properties is not included except those owned by ports and housing authorities in the buildable lands inventory.

Consultative Assumptions *(countywide planning policies)*

9. Housing density assumptions are 8 units per acre in the Vancouver urban growth area; 6 units per acre in the Battle Ground, Camas, Ridgefield and Washougal urban growth areas and 4 units per acre in the La Center urban growth area.

10. New housing shall be "no more than 75% of any one product type" (detached or attached housing units).

11. Persons per household are assumed to be 2.59 persons per household.

Data-Driven Assumptions

12. Land is set aside for infrastructure at a rate of 27.7% for residential areas inside existing urban growth areas. The set aside addresses both on and off-site infrastructure. In urban growth expansion areas, the 27.7% is supplemented through a comparison between the acreage needed to meet school and park standards and current school and park land ownership. If a school or park land deficit exists, additional land is set aside for these purposes to meet standards.

Land is set aside for infrastructure at a rate of 25% for commercial, industrial and business park zones.

13. Assume 10 % of the vacant residential inventory will not convert during the plan horizon.

14. Underutilized land is assumed to have the following capacity to accommodate growth within the plan horizon:

    - 30% of the underutilized residential inventory will not convert during the plan horizon;
    - Apply a building value per acre calibrated to the lowest 10 percentile ($256,000) to determine the properties that will accommodate future growth; and
    - Acreage properties in subdivisions are excluded from the underutilized inventory if 50% of the building value per acre criteria is apparent ($128,000).

    For commercial land the following criteria identifies an underutilized parcel:

    - A building value per acre of $50,000 or less.

    For industrial land the following identifies an underutilized parcel::

    - Abandon the primary, secondary and tertiary classification system.
    - A building value per acre of $50, 000or less to determine the properties that will accommodate future growth.

15. Assumptions for future development on critical lands are based on excluding the portion of a parcel encumbered by critical areas from the buildable lands inventory. The portion of a parcel not encumbered by critical areas is included in the buildable lands inventory.

- The 2004 critical areas map set should be used as a base, augmented by updated critical area ordinances maps that cities have adopted.
- The critical aquifer recharge areas map are not considered a constraint to development.
- 50% of the land designated vacant critical will convert (based on development data between 1996 and 2004) for both residential and industrial lands.
- Assume that 80% of the land designated vacant critical will convert (based on development data between 1996 and 2004) for commercial lands.

Attachment 2

Clark County Board of Commissioners
September 6, 2005
Comprehensive Plan Work Session
Values/Principles

- Maintain county tax base (generate revenue necessary to provide services).
- Balance between the cities.
- Equalize land allocation and jobs/population ratio so that cities have equitable share of jobs – diverse job base.
- Vancouver UGB: minimize residential growth (there will be some residential growth but not dense residential growth, especially where there already exists large-lot, high-value development). Minimize doesn't mean "don't" but lower density (maybe R-10, R-20 or newer larger lot zones) of residential growth.
- Each city must meet its density and housing mix requirements.
- Mapping: Put job lands close to transportation so that capacity is provided to job opportunities.
- Need creative opportunities for communities (e.g. form-based zoning, performance zoning).
- New growth needs to blend well with existing neighborhoods (i.e., transition zones, buffering, gradual transitions in development style, type).
- Ground-truth where residential and jobs "make sense" – no more "wetland industrial".
- Resulting tax-base (e.g., jobs, residential that doesn't result in great demand for schools) needs to be equitable for school districts. Tax base equitably distributed between residential and job producing lands.
- Focus Public Investment Areas – "hubs" of job growth that can be serviced effectively (adjust Transportation Improvement Program if necessary).
- Breaks/Green spaces between communities – natural borders.
- Minimize the conversion of productive farmland – those lands which have long- term commercial agriculture viability.
    - ➢ Is it being used today for commercial agriculture?
    - ➢ Balance goals e.g. economic development versus agricultural land preservation.
- Identify "real" urban reserve lands (they need to be readily capable of being converted to urban uses in the future – next 10 years). Think about the unexpected.
- Use an integrated view in examining the proposed boundaries and plan map.
- Critical areas:
    - ➢ Identify those areas that should "never" be urban (critical areas of county-wide significance).
    - ➢ Minimize inclusion of critical areas for cities that do not have critical area ordinances that have met the test of "best available science".
    - ➢ All other factors being equal, select the area that has fewest critical areas.
- Maintain a mix of housing options (a variety of housing densities – large, medium and small lots).

- Identify school sites or areas where schools buildings will be necessary inside the new hubs of residential areas (need sites close to where the children will be). Avoid penalizing property owners in the process.
- Maximize the potential for the county's railroad as a job-creating asset.
- Ensure good geographic distribution of commercial lands.
- Build on the work done for the January 2004 plan map proposal (but modest changes are acceptable).
- Prioritize lands that are most likely to provide "family-wage jobs" as defined in the comprehensive plan policies. Implications on Mapping • La Center needs greater economic diversification opportunities and multi-family land use designations.
- Ridgefield needs greater population (to balance employment opportunities). Meeting 75:25 housing type split may be an issue.
- Vancouver UGB – job producing reserve lands need to be included in the boundary.
- Camas density needs to meet 6 units/acre (but can be exceeded if city desires).
- Ground "truthing" is extremely important for employment.
- Lands with few if any restraints ("easy") should be allocated first for employment.
- Employment-reserve overlay for lands served by county railroad corridor Allocation.
- Guided by the values identified.
- Ground "truthing" will clarify/define the allocation (versus "assigned").