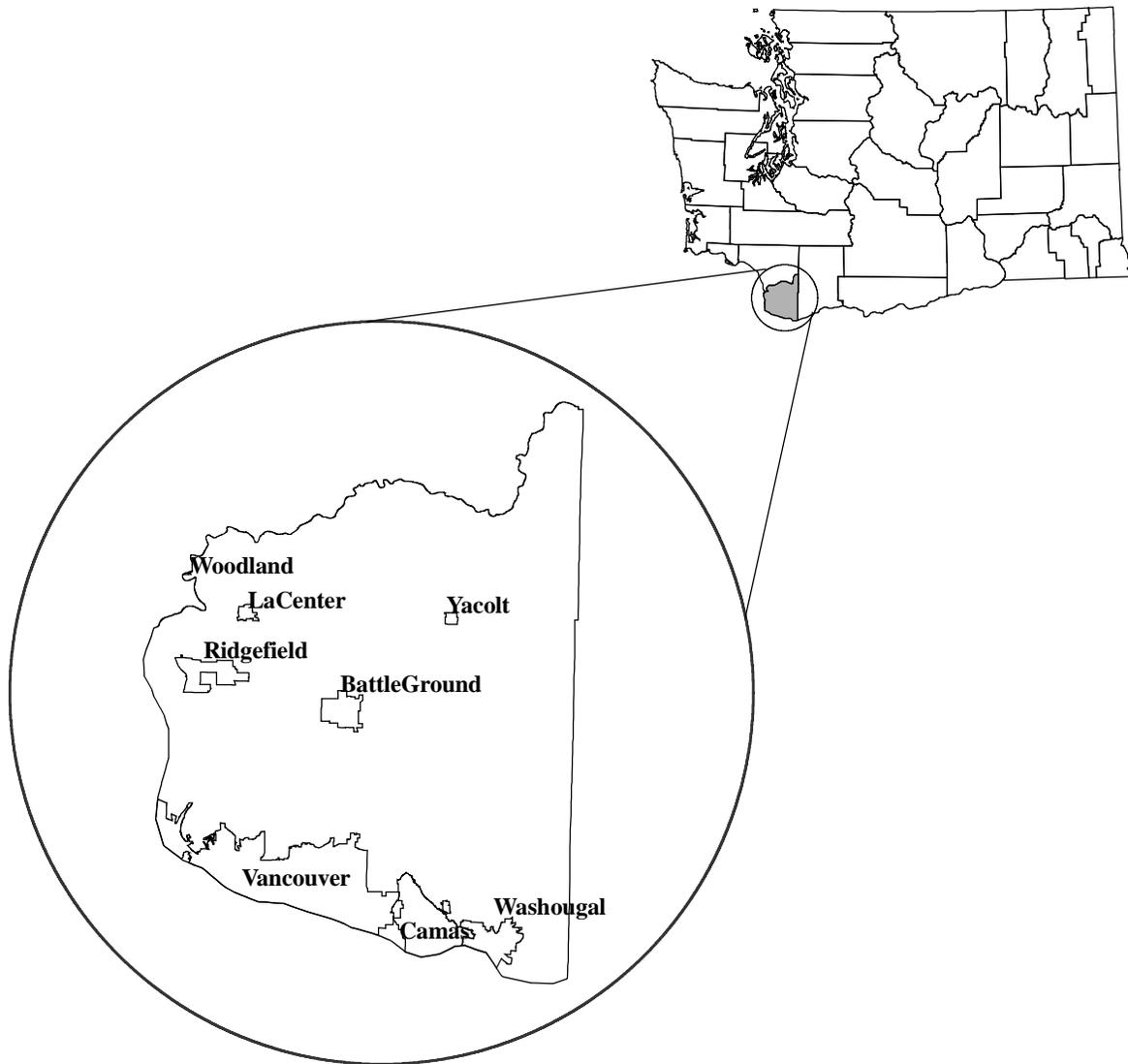


# CLARK COUNTY SECTION



# CLARK COUNTY

Clark County, Washington



# PROFILE

## GEOGRAPHY

Clark County is located in the southwestern part of the State of Washington, at the head of the navigable portion of the Columbia River, approximately 70 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The Columbia River forms the western and southern boundaries of the county and provides over 41 miles of river frontage. Urban Clark County is part of the northeast quadrant of the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area.

From an urban hub on the Columbia, the county spreads through a rapidly growing suburban band, across agricultural lands and a network of towns, to the slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range. It is compact, measuring approximately 25 miles across in either direction. The population estimate for 2004 is 383,300, which is about 611 persons per square mile. The Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean exert a strong influence on the climate, economy, and recreational activities of the county. The Columbia is the only fresh-water harbor for ocean-going commerce on the entire West Coast of North America and the only water-grade route through the Cascade Range between Canada and California. The county has served deep-sea commerce since 1906.

Clark County lies within a geographic basin known as the Willamette-Puget Trough, formed by the Cascade and Pacific Coast Mountain Ranges. It is bounded on the south and west by the Columbia River, on the north by the Lewis River, and on the east by the foothills of the Cascades. Along the Columbia are low-lying bottomlands, from which a series of alluvial plains and terraces extend north and northeast. Land elevations rise from less than 10 feet on the south and west floodplains to over 3,000 feet above mean sea level (msl) in the eastern portion. The western half of Clark County lies at the junction of the Columbia River and Willamette Valleys and is comparatively level over the southern portion. While progressing northward and eastward, the terrain develops into rolling hills, culminating in the Cascade Range.

The land area of the county comprises 401,280 acres (627 square miles), approximately two-thirds of which lie in the foothills of the Cascade Range. Primarily of old igneous rock, the foothills have been eroded into numerous ridges and narrow creek bottoms. Terraces and benchlands, where the Columbia and other rivers meandered during early geological times, are large in area. As the land has slowly risen, the rivers have cut deeper, leaving these former river bottoms well above flood state. Throughout the foothills of the Cascade Range, soils may generally be classified as silt and clay loams to depths of 60 inches, culminating in strongly weathered basalts and stony silt and clay loams. Good farming land, of high and better than average productivity, is limited in area and includes the floodplains of the Columbia River. Lands of average productivity cover most of the higher terraces and benchlands from five to 15 miles inland from the Columbia River. Soils throughout this area may generally be classified as silt and clay loams, with substan-

# CLARK COUNTY

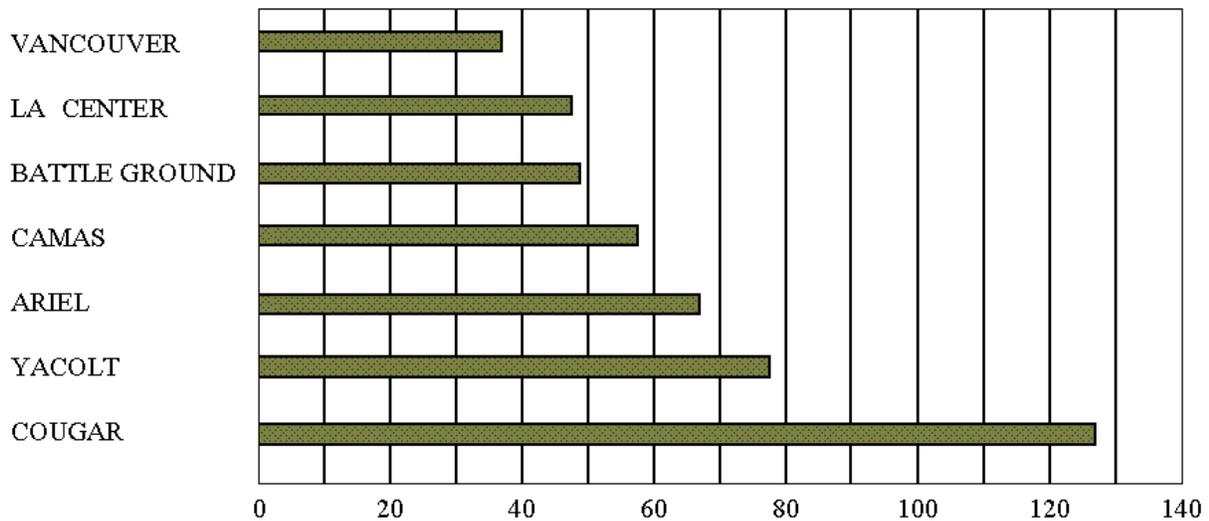
tial areas around Orchards, Sifton, and immediately east of Vancouver classified as gravelly silt, clay loams, and gravel.

# CLIMATE

Clark County’s climate is influenced by the physical geography, which produces the wet, mild winters and moderately dry summers—characteristic of the region. The county’s geographic position between two mountain ranges serves to insulate it against dramatically differing climates 100 miles in either direction.

Prevailing winds over most of the county are northwesterly during the summer and southeasterly during the winter. These are tempered by nearly uniform ocean temperatures ranging from 50° to 55°. The result is a relatively high precipitation and a moderate temperature range from summer to winter. Prevailing winds over the southeastern portion of the county are east by southeast during the winter, resulting from the counterclockwise circulation of low-pressure areas.

**AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION**



## AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURES

	VANCOUVER		BATTLE GROUND		LA CENTER		CAMAS	
	°F	°C	°F	°C	°F	°C	°F	°C
<b>JANUARY</b>	38.0	3.4	36.0	2.2	38.8	3.8	35.9	2.2
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	42.2	5.7	39.7	4.3	43.0	6.2	41.6	5.4
<b>MARCH</b>	46.5	8.1	44.0	6.7	46.3	8.0	44.3	6.9
<b>APRIL</b>	50.5	10.4	48.5	9.2	52.9	11.7	49.5	9.8
<b>MAY</b>	56.5	13.7	54.2	12.4	59.6	15.5	54.4	12.5
<b>JUNE</b>	61.6	16.6	59.3	15.3	63.2	17.5	58.6	14.9
<b>JULY</b>	66.5	19.3	64.0	17.9	68.1	20.2	62.3	17.0
<b>AUGUST</b>	66.5	19.3	64.0	17.9	67.5	19.9	63.3	17.5
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	60.3	15.8	58.0	14.6	65.4	18.7	60.1	15.7
<b>OCTOBER</b>	53.7	12.1	51.0	10.6	54.9	12.8	51.9	11.1
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	45.5	7.6	44.0	6.7	45.2	7.4	44.3	6.9
<b>DECEMBER</b>	39.5	4.2	38.0	3.4	42.3	5.8	40.2	4.6
<b>AVG. ANNUAL TEMP.</b>	52.3	11.4	50.1	10.1	53.9	12.3	50.5	10.4

There are four definite seasons of the year, but the trend from one to another is very gradual. The average annual temperature in the county is approximately 50°F. The average growing season on the western plains ranges from 154 days at Battle Ground to 178 days at La Center and 222 days at Vancouver. Seasonal differences in precipitation are much more marked than those of temperatures. The county has a very definite winter rainfall climate, with 63 to 70 percent of the total annual precipitation occurring in the five months of November through March. Normal annual precipitation ranges from 38 inches on the western floodplains to over 114 inches in the mountainous northeastern part of the county. The precipitation falls mostly as rain, with the normal annual snowfall ranging from less than six inches on the western plains to over 22 inches for the northeastern portion of the county.

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

Clark County, located in the southwestern portion of the state, was the most rapidly developing county in the state of Washington in the 90's and has gained attention as one of the faster growing areas on the national level. In 1980, its 192,227 residents accounted for 4.7 percent of the state's population. As of April 2004, the county's population had grown to 383,800, representing 6.2 percent of the state-wide total. Growth in Clark County can be attributed to a number of factors. Some of the key factors include its relationship with the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, transportation facilities, quality schools and quality of life.

Clark County is one of six counties included in the Portland-Vancouver, Oregon-Washington, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The other five counties are Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington, and Yamhill—all in Oregon. In 2004, the metropolitan area population was 2,040,550. Clark County represents 18.8 percent of the total metropolitan population.

Clark County contains a number of transportation facilities that makes the county a regional hub for commerce. The area is served by the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean, from which the Port of Vancouver provides port services as a fresh water, deep draft harbor for ocean-going commerce. Transcontinental rail lines, serving major north-south and east-west lines, serve the county. Interstates 5 and 205 provide access to major economic centers; and the Portland International Airport, just fifteen minutes away, provides scheduled air transportation.

Residents consider the quality of life in Clark County very high. Many residents enjoy the suburban setting and way of life. Clark County has a number of parks and open space areas for enjoyment. The opportunity to just drive a few minutes and be in a rural setting is appealing to many. There are a number of recreational opportunities within a short drive, including the Cascade Mountains for skiing and other outdoor activities, the Pacific Ocean and numerous rivers and streams, the Columbia River Gorge, the activities of downtown Portland, and a short drive to Seattle.

All of these factors, along with population growth, have sparked the local economy. The economy in Clark County has been steadily growing, as the population continues to increase at a fast pace. The labor force has been on a rise, increasing from 127,500 in 1990 to 187,400 in 2003. Unemployment rates have consistently hovered around four to seven percent for the past eight years with a jump up to around 10 percent in 2003. The economy of the county is diversifying. In the past, the county depended on wood products as the key industry, which has seen a decline since the early eighties. However, since the crunch on wood products in the early eighties, the economy has rebounded with new industries locating in the county. Since then, Clark County has been the chosen site for a number of high technology operations. Some major plants located in the county include Hewlett-Packard, Sharp, SEH America, Kyocera, and Matsushita Electric. A number of these plants have been expanded in recent years. Underwriters Laboratories has constructed a new plant in Camas. In addition, WaferTech has constructed a plant in Camas and is looking to expand. The headquarters of Nautilus will be relocating in the Columbia Tech Center. Additionally, construction is underway on the new Legacy hospital in Salmon Creek. These opportunities have diversified the employment base and reduced the reliance on a single timber-dependent employment base. The types of industries and jobs being created have stabilized the economy.

The Port of Vancouver continually handles record tonnage, as it expands its port facility and industrial park. The Port has expanded its capability to handle dry bulk commodities. In addition to the Port of Vancouver, the Port of Camas-Washougal and the Port of Ridgefield provide numerous services in their industrial parks and have experienced continual industrial growth.

In addition to the economic growth in Clark County, the development of a full service satellite Washington State University campus in Vancouver has enhanced the availability of higher education in southwest Washington. WSU-Vancouver is the primary provider of junior-senior and graduate level college education. This campus provides an opportunity for young adults to remain in Clark County for their education and produce a well-educated work force.

As the population has located to suburban areas in Clark County, the downtown area of Vancouver experienced a period of economic stagnation. However, in recent years, the downtown area has re-

bounded and is experiencing a revitalization of its business core. The skyline of downtown Vancouver has been changing with development of new residential and office buildings as well as the Vancouver Center convention and hotel project scheduled for completion in the Spring of 2005. Several other buildings in the downtown area have been remodeled into modern office space. The rehabilitation of Officers' Row into commercial and residential housing has made a major contribution to the resurgence of downtown Vancouver. The Vancouver waterfront is changing, with the development of new office, retail, and residential centers.

A number of business and industrial parks are situated around the county, with concentrations in east Clark County and along the I-5/I-205, Fourth Plain, and Mill Plain corridors. These parks provide a number of services and build-to-suit options.

The Ridgefield Junction is picking up steam with new developments occurring like the Dollar Tree Stores regional distribution center located in the Union Ridge Development and there are plans for a large multi-use project in the area.

Due to the factors listed above, the county has outpaced the nation in terms of population and economic growth. Given Clark County's geographic location, access to major transportation routes and services, and growing population, stable economic growth is expected to continue into the future.

## AMENITIES

Clark County, situated along the mighty Columbia River, with the majestic Cascade Mountains for a backdrop, is an ideal setting for work and play. The mix of rural farmland and forests, along with urban densities, make for a quality of life for everyone to enjoy. There are a number of recreational and cultural opportunities in the surrounding area to accompany a well-balanced economy and community. The county is abundant with urban and rural parks and natural areas for cultural and outdoor activities.

The County has a number of cultural activities to offer. Some of the main attractions include over 20 art organizations, many available through the Columbia Arts Center, and community events, such as the Clark County Fair and Fourth of July Festival. The County is rich in history, beginning with Fort Vancouver and Officers' Row. There are many historical sites throughout the county, accompanied by historical and air museums. Additionally, there are a number of community churches, social, and fraternal organizations available. The metropolitan amenities of Portland are just minutes away, across the Columbia River.

Recreational opportunities are numerous in and around Clark County. There are over 40 miles of river frontage available along the Columbia to enjoy. The Pacific Ocean and beaches are just over an hour away. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest, including Mount Adams Wilderness Area and Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, along with Mount Hood National Forest provide numerous

outdoor activities within an hour's drive. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, beginning in Clark County, provides a number of sightseeing and recreational opportunities, including world class windsurfing and boating. Picnicking, hiking, equestrian trails, biking, canoeing, fishing, hunting, skiing, swimming, and boating are common activities. In addition to the natural recreational opportunities, Clark County has a wide selection of golf courses; and plans are in the works for more.

There are over 70 federal, state, county, and city parks within Clark County, providing urban and rural outdoor activities. Public Parks and trails, greenways, open spaces, and wildlife areas attribute to the splendor of Clark County. Two outstanding features in the county include Central Park in Downtown Vancouver and the Columbia River Renaissance Project, which is a community vision to provide multi-use development and access to the Columbia River.

The expanding economy, affordable housing, quality schools, and exceptional recreational and cultural amenities are what make Clark County such a livable place.