

1.0 Project Description

1.1 What is being proposed?

Clark County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan must address state growth management goals and be consistent with the Community Framework Plan (countywide planning policies), as well as meet the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA). Comprehensive plans are based on a set of assumptions that may not be realized over the lifespan of the plans. For that reason, comprehensive plans and growth that actually occurs are compared at least every eight years to enable corrections to be made. Clark County is scheduled to have an updated comprehensive plan by June 2016.

Clark County and the Cities of Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver, and Washougal, and the Town of Yacolt have or are proposing to revise their Comprehensive Growth Management Plans (Comprehensive Plans) to comply with the requirements of the GMA. The revisions focus on county-initiated technical changes to the comprehensive plan as well as minor city-proposed changes to Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to accommodate projected growth for the next 20 years (out to 2035).

Assumptions used in planning for growth in 2007 did not anticipate the economic downturn that followed in 2008, and from which recovery is still in process. Other conditions in the county, as well as state and federal laws, have changed, requiring corresponding changes to the County's Plan with this update. In addition, improvements in technology and data gathering/interpretations to more accurately map existing conditions and field determinations of available buildable land have 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, jobs, and vision of the communities.

1.1.1 Summary of the SEPA Process

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (2007 FEIS) included a full inventory of existing environmental conditions at the time of evaluation, along with an analysis of potential impacts to the environment from implementation of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and mitigation to minimize those impacts. The Draft 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) incorporated by reference the full build-out conditions of the preferred alternative analyzed in the 2007 FEIS, and refers to it as the No Action Alternative (Figures 1-1 and 1-2).

Based on input during the scoping process, four alternative scenarios were developed to provide the framework for evaluating the impacts of growth on the environment: Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative; Alternative 2 – Countywide Modifications; Alternative 3 – City UGA Expansion; and Alternative 4 – Rural, Agriculture, and Forest Changes. For additional details on each alternative, see Chapter 1 of the DSEIS for the Clark County 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. The DSEIS was published on August 5, 2015. The DSEIS was distributed to agencies and jurisdictions with interest in the project and made publicly available for review. During the 30-day public comment period, 154 commenters submitted a total of 227 communications via email, letters, and oral testimonies for a total of 696 individual comments. The commenters included state and local agencies, organizations, and many members of the public. The individual comments along with Clark County's responses to those comments are available in Appendix A.

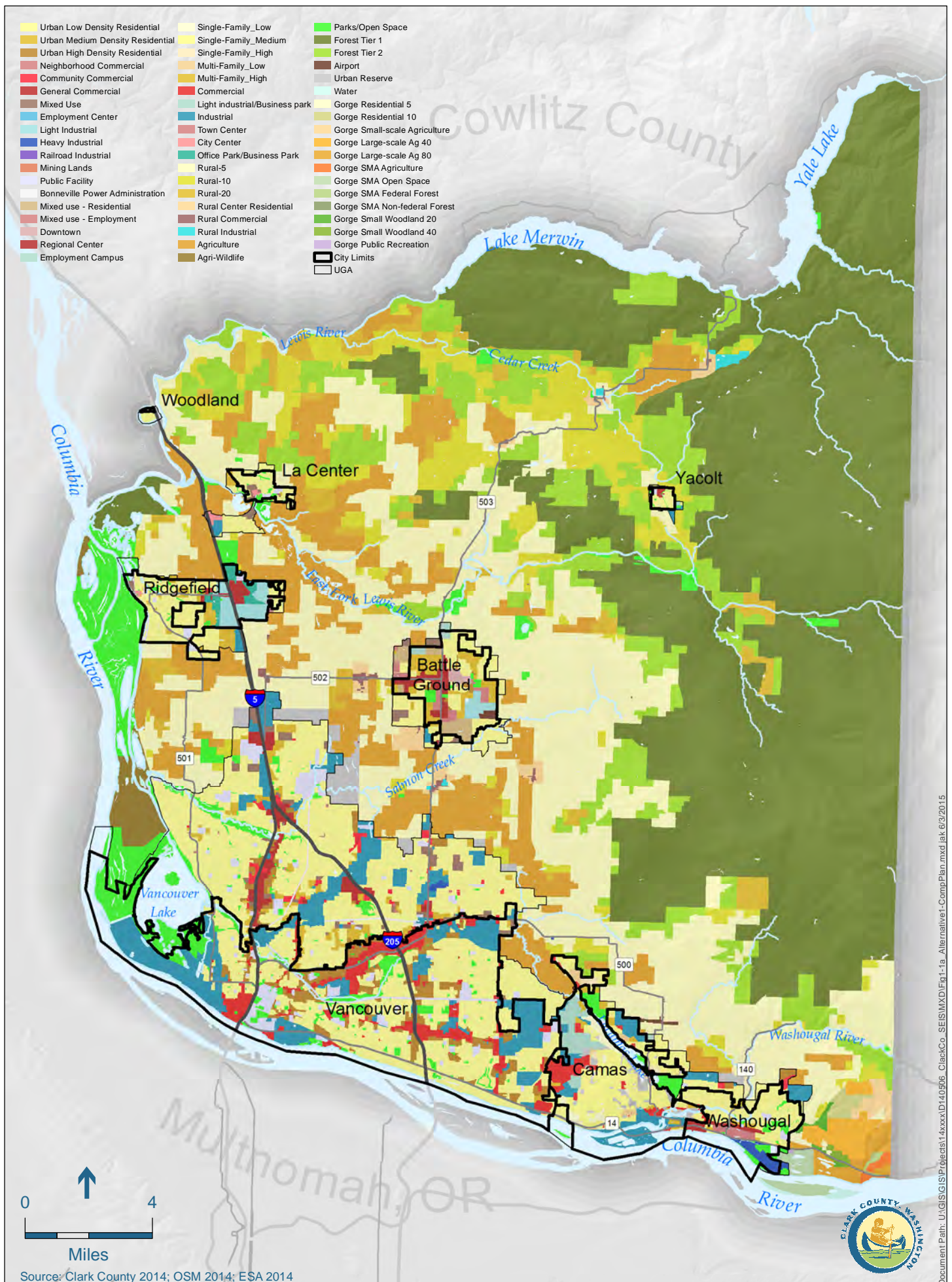


Figure 1-1: 2007 Comprehensive Plan Map (Existing Conditions)

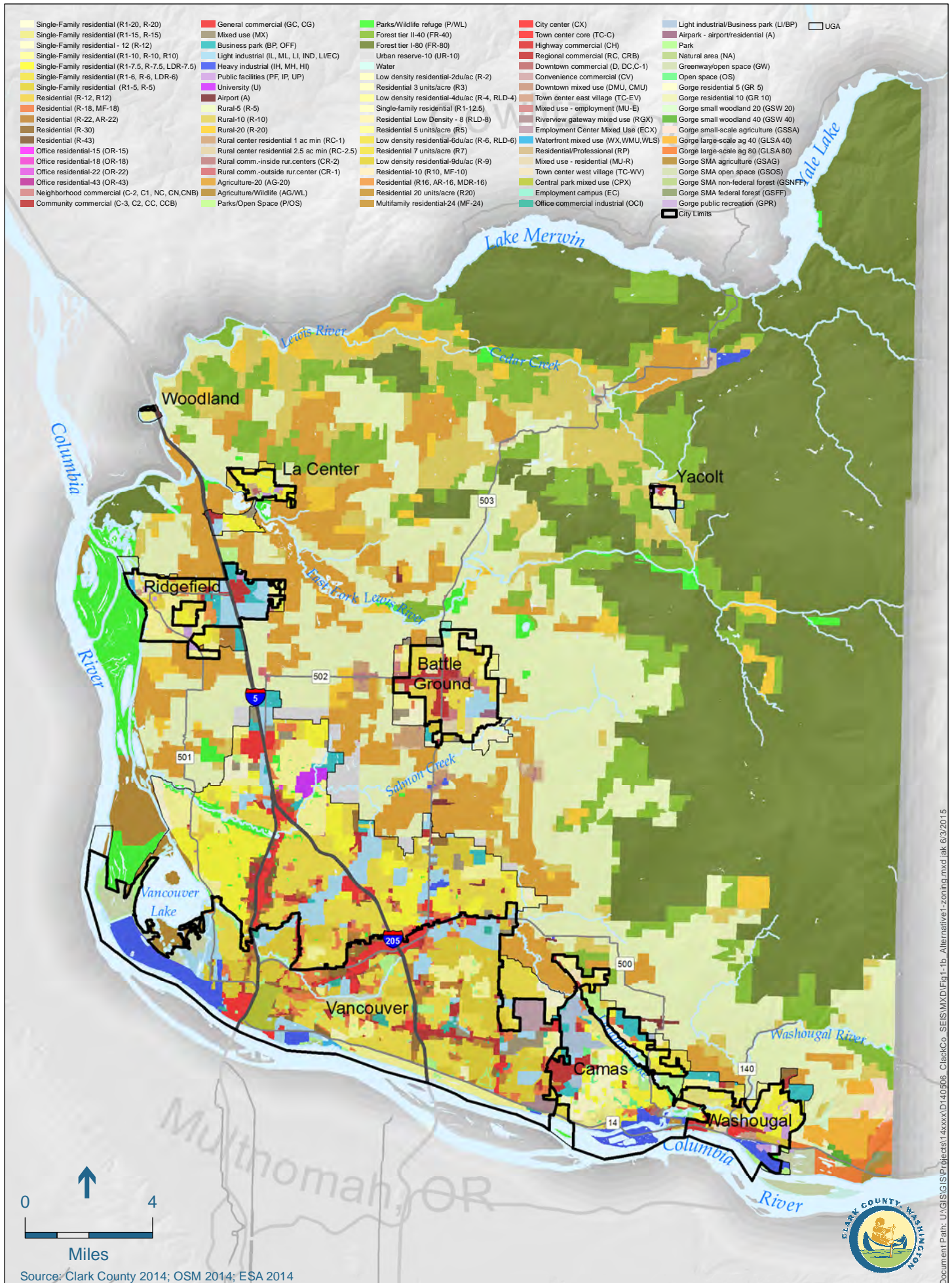
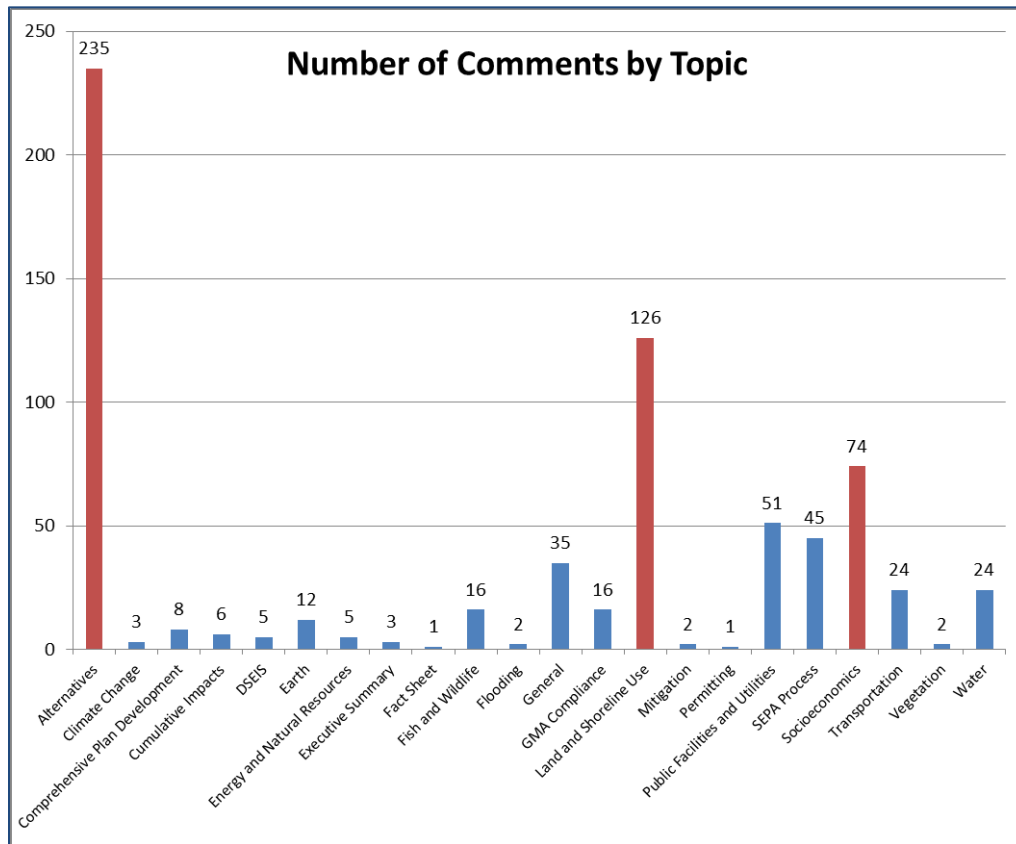


Figure 1-2: Current Zoning Map

The most common topics from the comments received were the alternatives, land and shoreline use, and socioeconomics.



Of the approximately 670 comments submitted, over 200 discussed the alternatives. Most of the alternatives-related comments either: supported Alternative 1 (21%), supported Alternative 4 (21%), or provided a general comparison or ranking of the alternatives (18%). Of the approximately 125 comments on land and shoreline use, the majority discussed zoning (30%), development patterns (30%), or general land and shoreline use issues (18%). Some comments also discussed housing (10%) and the methodology used (3%), while fewer comments discussed cost and critical areas (approximately 2% percent each). While not a topic covered in the DSEIS, over 70 comments discussed socioeconomic issues. Most of these comments covered economic stability (47%), community character (20%), quality of life (15%), or socioeconomic conditions in general (15%).

1.1.2 What are the planning assumptions used in developing the alternatives to manage growth?

The Board of County Councilors (BOCC) adopted a number of assumptions that are used to guide land use planning for the next 20 years. The following table summarizes these assumptions, which were used in the development of the growth alternatives that are the subject of this document. Assumptions for the 2007 Comprehensive Plan are shown for comparison.

Table 1-1. Summary of Planning Assumptions

Assumption Factors	2007 UPDATE	2016 UPDATE
Total population projection	584,310 total county population	577,431 total county population
Projected new residents	192,635 new residents	128,586 new residents
Urban/rural population growth split	90% of the population in urban areas; 10% in rural areas	90% of the population in urban areas; 10% in rural areas
Annual population growth rate	2.0% assumed per year	1.26% assumed per year
Number of new dwelling units	66,939 new urban dwelling units 7,438 new rural dwelling units	43,517 new urban dwelling units 4,835 new rural dwelling units
Average residential urban densities	Vancouver = 8 units/ net acre La Center = 4 units/net acre Remaining cities = 6 units/net acre Yacolt = no minimum	Vancouver = 8 units/ net acre La Center = 4 units/net acre Remaining cities = 6 units/net acre Yacolt = no minimum
Housing type ratio	Up to 75% of one housing type	Up to 75% of one housing type
Persons per household	2.59 persons per household	2.66 persons per household
Number of new jobs	138,312 new jobs	100,022 new jobs
Employees per acre	20 per commercial acre; 9 per industrial acre; and 20 per business park acre	20 per commercial acre; 9 per industrial acre; and 9 per business park acre
Jobs to household ratio	N/A	1 job for every 1 dwelling unit*
Residential infrastructure deduction	27.7% deducted from gross residential land supply	27.7% deducted from gross residential land supply
Commercial/industrial infrastructure deduction	25% deducted from gross commercial/industrial land supply	25% deducted from gross commercial/industrial land supply
Vacant Land per Vacant Buildable Lands Model (VBLM) definition	Vacant if residential building value is less than \$13,000 Vacant if commercial/industrial building value is less than \$67,500	Vacant if residential building value is less than \$13,000 Vacant if commercial/industrial building value is less than \$67,500
Absorption Rate	Redevelopable land would absorb 5% of projected population & job growth	Redevelopable land would absorb 5% of projected population & job growth
Market factor – % of additional land added to specified supply to accommodate growth for market flexibility	10% additional residential land capacity 0% for commercial, business park, industrial land capacity	15% additional residential land capacity 15% additional commercial, business park, industrial land capacity

*This is the jobs to household ratio goal for 2035.

1.2 The Preferred Alternative

On February 23, 2016, after consideration of the DSEIS analysis and all public comments received, the Clark County Board of County Councilors (BOCC) selected a preferred alternative for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. Under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-655, a preferred alternative can be a compilation of various features from any of the alternatives analyzed in the DSEIS. The Preferred Alternative for the Clark County 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update includes components of the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), Alternative 2, and Alternative 3 as analyzed in the DSEIS.

The County Geographic Information System (GIS) department ran the vacant buildable lands model (VBLM) and rural capacity estimate on the Preferred Alternative based on revised information received since the DSEIS was published in August 2015 (Appendix B). The summary results of the VBLM capacity analysis indicate that in aggregate, Clark County can accommodate population growth of 135,122 persons, which is sufficient to accommodate the 20-year projected population growth of 128,586. The updates to the VBLM and rural capacity estimates account for minor changes in the planning assumption numbers (Table 1-1) and in the potential new parcels created by full build-out of the Preferred Alternative as compared to the DSEIS.

Under the Preferred Alternative, the current plan would be re-adopted. Furthermore, updates would be made to accommodate revised planning assumptions and existing development trends, and to incorporate necessary changes in policy direction, updates to land use/zoning designations, and the BOCC's principles and values. The original intent of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan would be refined based on new studies undertaken over the past nine years. This information would also be used to resolve any technical or mapping inconsistencies. Some zoning designations would be altered to reduce the minimum lot area and provide more parcels. And lastly, the urban growth areas (UGAs) of Battle Ground, La Center, and Ridgefield would be expanded to better support residential and employment growth, as described in more detail in the following sections.

Table 1-2 summarizes the difference between full build-out conditions under the existing Comprehensive Plan and zoning and the full build-out conditions under the Preferred Alternative.

Table 1-2 Comparison of Rural Build-out Conditions

Zone	Existing Conditions 2007 Comprehensive Plan		2016 Preferred Alternative		Net Change	
	Number of New Parcels	Acreage Affected	Number of New Parcels	Acreage Affected	Number of New Parcels	Acreage Affected
Rural	5,195	34,438	5,383	35,578	188	1140
Forest*	387	4,356	412	4,842	25	486
Agriculture	908	14,582	1,750	20,252	842	5670
UR	70	307	n/a	n/a	-70	-307
Other**	479	3,437	479	3,437	0	0
TOTAL	7,039	57,119	8,024	64,108	985	6,989

*The Rural Capacity Estimate excludes property in the current use program for Timber and Designated Forest Land.

**The 'Other' category is a combination of all other zoning designations that have vacant or underutilized parcels per the Rural Capacity Estimate, which are not directly affected by the zoning changes proposed in the Preferred Alternative. The exception is the Urban Reserve-10 zone that will be converted to R-5 upon implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

1.2.1 Rural Clark County

The Preferred Alternative includes changes to rural County lands that would organize and consolidate some comprehensive plan land use designations County-wide. Some additional changes are also proposed to affect more localized areas. See Figures 1-3 and 1-4 for depictions of the Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map, respectively, under the Preferred Alternative.

1. Rural Lands

Under the Preferred Alternative, Rural-5 (requiring a minimum of 5 acres per lot), Rural-10, and Rural-20 comprehensive plan land use designations would be consolidated to create a single “Rural Lands” designation that would be implemented with R-5, R-10, and R-20 zones. In addition, some parcels zoned R-20 adjacent to agricultural and forest parcels would be rezoned to R-10 (see discussion under Agricultural and Forest Lands below). An estimated 5,383 new parcels could be created under full build-out conditions in the Rural zones if all parcels were developed to the maximum extent possible. This includes parcels that would result from a zone change from R-20 to R-10 and those in Urban Reserve (UR) that would be converted to R-5. However, only 188 of the 5,383 potential new parcels are a direct result of the proposed changes under the Preferred Alternative (see Table 1-2).

2. Resource Lands

a. Forest Lands

The Preferred Alternative includes replacing the FR-40 zoning designation with an FR-20 zoning designation. Parcels zoned FR-40 would be rezoned to FR-20, with a new minimum parcel size of 20 acres. An estimated 412 new parcels could be created under full build-out conditions in Forest zones. Only 25 of the 412 potential new parcels are a direct result of the changes proposed in the Preferred Alternative (see Table 1-2).

b. Agriculture Lands

The Preferred Alternative also includes replacing the AG-20 zoning designation with an AG-10 zoning designation. Parcels zoned AG-20 would be rezoned to AG-10, with a new minimum parcel size of 10 acres. An estimated 1,750 new parcels could be created under full build-out conditions in the Agriculture zone. The changes under the Preferred Alternative account for 842 of the potential 1,750 new parcels (see Table 1-2).

c. Rural Centers

The GMA requires counties to designate ‘limited areas of more intensive rural development.’ In Clark County, such areas are called Rural Centers; Amboy, Fargher Lake, Brush Prairie, and Hockinson are examples. The Preferred Alternative would combine the “Rural Center Commercial (CR-2)” and “Rural Commercial (CR-1)” into a single comprehensive plan designation of “Rural Commercial.” The only major difference between the zones is that CR-2 parcels are located in Rural Centers and CR-1 parcels are not.