Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update

Planning for growth 2025 – 2045

2025 Population, Housing and Employment Allocation – Issue Paper 5

Prepared by Community Planning

Purpose

This memorandum provides a basic framework and starting point from which, the county and its cities may consider population and employment allocation.

Background

In March 2023, Clark County began the process of updating its Comprehensive Growth Management Plan with the adoption of the Clark County Public Participation Plan and Preliminary Scope of Work (RES. 2023-03-05) to meet the 2025 periodic update requirement of Chapter 36.70A.140 RCW. Several issue papers have already been prepared to allow the Council to make decisions about the update:

In "Issue Paper 1 – Overview of Planning under the GMA in Clark County", Community Planning presented a high level overview of the four previously adopted comprehensive plans and a summary of the county's previous planning assumptions.

In "Issue Paper 2 – Forecasting Population and Jobs", Community Planning presented background information for a discussion with the cities and the Town of Yacolt on population and job planning assumptions for 2025 through 2045. On May 2, 2023, the Clark County Council adopted the Office of Financial Management (OFM) population projection of 718,1854 for the twenty-year period ending 2045 (Res. 2023-05-03).

In "Issue Paper 3 – Community Planning presented employment forecasts and suggested a high employment forecast based on input from Washington Employment Security Department (ESD). Issue Paper 3 was revised as Issue Paper 3.1 to include the 2025 projected base year. On August 8, 2023, the Council adopted the 2045 employment forecast of 269,000 jobs (Res. 2023-08-01).

Issue Paper 4 discussed Planning Assumptions that were used historically and impacts of new legislation that will require the County to use new tools to plan for housing at specific income levels.

Methodology

Allocation of population, housing and jobs is a key step in the planning process. There are three options for allocating that can be used by the Council:

1) placing growth where it has historically occurred within the urban growth areas (UGA) as documented by U.S. Census.
2) allocating growth by UGA based on the vacant and buildable lands model plus the potential capacity for jobs and population by considering factors such as redevelopment, filling vacancies, etc.; or
3) allocating growth by UGA according to the proportion of the total county identified vacant and buildable lands (used since 1994) and with additional refinement from the local jurisdictions as this allocation may impact housing allocation by income (see below).

The following are essential to the outcome regardless of which method is used:

- Maintain coordination and consistency with local comprehensive plans.
- Use official state population forecasts from OFM (already adopted).
- Use the employment projections from ESD (already adopted).
- Use estimates of the existing VBLM capacity for growth of the UGAs to inform decisions on allocation of growth targets.
- Continue using the inventory of available VBLM inventory information; a practice since 1994;
- Allow for flexibility where necessary.
- **VBLM update to run based on zoning and updates to zoning capacity based on middle housing updates to increase capacity in low density residential zones, zoning estimates provided by local jurisdictions and documentation of model overrides.**
- The urban/rural growth percentage split is updated to 95%/5% based on recent growth trends.
- Population allocation will be a key input into the housing allocation using the Housing Analysis Planning Tool (HAPT) created by WA State Department of Commerce.

VBLM Update

The Vacant Buildable Lands Model has been rebuilt to run based on zoning instead of comprehensive plan designation, as is required by HB1220 and included in guidance from the Department of Commerce. The zoning-based model also allows for full implementation of changes that were included in the 2021 Buildable Lands Report, to better capture residential development on non-residential land. The achieved density numbers in the 2021 BLR were not able to be used since the numbers were not reported based on zoning. Jurisdictions provided density estimates for each zone and percentage splits, if a zone allows for both housing units and employment capacity.

In general, the zoning-based model did not have a significant impact in capacity for the smaller jurisdictions. The most significant increase in capacity was in the Vancouver UGA due to an increase in zoning density anticipated as part of the proposed changes in the low density (single family) residential zones within the unincorporated portion of the Vancouver UGA. The changes in density reflect the increased density in the base zone, the allowance of duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes, cottage housing, compact lot subdivisions, two ADU's per lot and townhouse lots much smaller than the base zone. This increase in capacity is consistent with the guidance from Department of Commerce. However, this will require additional monitoring as part of the next buildable lands report.

As part of the update process GIS staff is creating a process to document overrides to the model from the local jurisdictions. An example would be the Vancouver Heights Sub-Area plan where the City of Vancouver purchased the land and created a sub-area plan for redevelopment of the site. The VBLM excludes publicly owned land, except Port Property, as not being available for residential or employment capacity.

Countywide Population Allocation

Option 3 is the methodology staff is proposing. Table 1 below shows current population estimate, 2023-2045 growth projection, and the 2045 population forecast. The allocation assumes a 95%/5% urban

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rural split. The result in the middle column shows the need to allocate 181,216 people in the UGA's by 2045.

Table 1. County Population 2023-2045

	April 1, 2023 Population Estimate	2023-2045 Growth based on VBLM Allocation	2045 Population Estimate
County Total	527,400	190,754	718,154
Rural	69,284	9,538	78,822
UGA Total	458,116	181,216	639,332

Source: Clark County, Geographic information System and Community Planning, The Office of Financial Management (OFM)
Note: Based on 95/5 urban/rural split planning assumption

Table 2 below shows the 2045 population allocation to UGA's based on the percentage of total housing unit capacity by UGA that can be accommodated by the 2023 Vacant Lands Model. The percentage of each UGA's housing capacity is multiplied by the expected urban population growth to derive the 2023-2045 growth by UGA.

Table 2: Population Estimates and Allocation by UGA.

UGA	April 1, 2023 Population Estimate	VBLM % Capacity	2023-2045 Growth based on VBLM Allocation	2045 Population Estimate
Battle Ground	24,444	0.0705	12,774	37,217
Camas	29,352	0.0426	7,729	37,080
La Center	4,462	0.0214	3,884	8,346
Ridgefield	16,574	0.0588	10,656	27,230
Vancouver(City)	199,600	0.3689	66,855	266,455
Vancouver (UGA)	163,752	0.3974	72,010	235,762
Washougal	18,026	0.0378	6,848	24,874
Woodland	145	0.0010	185	330
Yacolt	1,762	0.0015	276	2,039
UGA Total	**458,116**	**100%**	**181,216**	**639,332**
Rural	**69,284**		**9,538**	**78,822**
County Total	**527,400**		**190,754**	**718,154**

Source: Clark County, Geographic information System and Community Planning.
Notes: This table is an estimate of 2023 population by UGA. The City of Vancouver estimate is based on the OFM 2023 population estimate.
VBLM capacity percentage was adjusted to account for the additional housing units allocated to the City of Vancouver.
^ 10% based on 95/5 urban/rural planning assumption

Countywide Housing Allocation

HB 1220 directed the Department of Commerce to project future housing needs for jurisdictions by income bracket and significantly altered how jurisdictions are to plan for housing in the housing element of their comprehensive plans.

The Department of Commerce has created a Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) to help jurisdictions plan for future housing need. The HAPT provides an estimate of future housing needed by 2045. The estimated housing need contains some assumptions that significantly differ from those used by the county in past planning efforts. There are several assumptions used in the HAPT (25-year needs projection, persons per household, vacancy rate, urban/rural Split) that are hardwired into the tool with little flexibility. In addition, Commerce provided two Methods A and B. Method A assumes that all housing needs are accommodated through new housing production. Method B assumes all jurisdictions accommodate equivalent shares of total countywide housing need at each income level, proportional to their size, in the projection year. Negative allocations indicate that the jurisdiction is already providing greater that its projected future share of housing at a given income level.

The first input into the projections is the selection of the 2045 population estimate (718,154). Table 3. below shows the number of housing units needed countywide and by income bracket. There were 12,000 housing units added countywide between 2020 and 2023.
This table has been updated from the Commerce tool to use a 2023 housing baseline, as opposed to the 2020 used by the original Commerce HAPT. It was assumed that all the housing units during that period were provided in the 120% of area median income band.

Table 3. Projected Housing Units Countywide by Income Band

Projected Countywide Housing Needs Based on User Inputs

Clark County		Affordability Level (% of Area Median Income)							
Population Target = 718,154		0-30%							
	Total	**Non-PSH**	**PSH**	**30-50%**	**50-80%**	**80-100%**	**100-120%**	**120%+**	**Emergency Housing/Shelter Beds**
Total Future Housing Needed (2045)	309,711	17,422	8,195	33,630	77,892	47,653	38,172	86,747	4,476
Estimated Housing Supply (2023)*	206,013	4,570	571	16,223	60,225	37,292	28,348	58,785	490
Net New Housing Needed (2023-2045)	103,698	12,852	7,624	17,407	17,667	10,361	9,824	27,962	3,986

** Note: Supply of PSH in 2020 is beds. However, projections of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045) are in housing units. See Overview tab for details.*

The second input has complete local discretion in the percentage allocation of the countywide total of 103,698 housing units. Tables 4a and 4b below reflects the share of housing growth using the draft proportion of total vacant and buildable housing capacity by jurisdiction. The share of housing capacity as determined by the VBLM is used as the initial step in the allocation process and is further refined based on specific jurisdictions plans for growth. The distribution of housing units by income band is also left to local discretion, but the countywide totals must be met.

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Table 4a. Projected Housing Units by UGA and Income Band_Method A

		Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)						
		0-30%						
	Total 2023-2045	Non-PSH	PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%
Vancouver Unincorporated + Rural Clark County	44,038	5,265	3,124	7,132	7,238	4,245	4,025	13,010
Battle Ground city	6,979	830	493	1,125	1,141	669	635	2,086
Camas city	4,226	536	318	726	737	432	410	1,068
La Center city	2,123	258	153	350	355	208	197	601
Ridgefield city	5,815	875	519	1,185	1,203	706	669	657
Vancouver city	36,527	4,620	2,741	6,258	6,351	3,725	3,532	9,300
Washougal city	3,735	438	260	594	603	353	335	1,152
Woodland city	105	12	7	16	16	9	9	37
Yacolt town	150	17	10	23	23	13	13	52
Total 2023-2045	**103,698**	**12,852**	**7,624**	**17,407**	**17,667**	**10,361**	**9,824**	**27,962**
		12%	**7%**	**17%**	**17%**	**10%**	**9%**	**27%**

Note: City is referencing UGA except the Vancouver UGA

Table 4b. Projected Housing Units by UGA and Income Band_Method B

Jurisdiction		Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)						
		0-30%						
	Total	Non-PSH	PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%
Vancouver Unincorporated + Rural Clark County	44,037	5,845	3,435	7,921	13,808	4,708	1,187	7,134
Battle Ground city	6,979	539	395	1,116	1,214	335	1,208	2,172
Camas city	4,226	648	372	1,068	1,680	1,052	-233	-362
La Center city	2,123	165	95	272	704	296	252	340
Ridgefield city	5,815	613	306	1,149	2,421	856	796	-326
Vancouver city	36,527	*4,662*	*2,724*	*5,450*	*-3,110*	*2,629*	*6,230*	17,941
Washougal city	3,735	342	275	452	972	480	314	900
Woodland city	105	5	4	10	25	14	12	34
Yacolt town	150	34	18	-32	-47	-9	58	128
Total 2023-2045	**103,696**	**12,852**	**7,624**	**17,407**	**17,667**	**10,361**	**9,824**	**27,962**
		12%	**7%**	**17%**	**17%**	**10%**	**9%**	**27%**

Note: City is referencing UGA except the Vancouver UGA

Tables 5a and 5b. condense the seven income brackets from Tables 4a and 4b, respectively, to three income brackets. Less than 80%, between 80% and 120%, and greater than 120%. This more clearly illustrates that over half of the new units needed over the next 20 years will need to be affordable at 80% or less of the area median income. This will require a significant increase in land allocation for multi-family housing.

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Table 5a. Projected Housing Units by UGA and Income Band – Method A

		Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)					
	Total 2023-2045	<80%		>80 - 120%		>120%	
Vancouver Unincorporated + Rural Clark County	44,038	22,759	52%	8,270	19%	13,010	30%
Battle Ground city	6,979	3,589	51%	1,304	19%	2,086	30%
Camas city	4,226	2,316	55%	842	20%	1,068	25%
La Center city	2,123	1,117	53%	406	19%	601	28%
Ridgefield city	5,815	3,783	65%	1,375	24%	657	11%
Vancouver city	36,527	19,970	55%	7,257	20%	9,300	25%
Washougal city	3,735	1,894	51%	688	18%	1,152	31%
Woodland city	105	50	48%	18	17%	37	35%
Yacolt town	150	72	48%	26	17%	52	35%
Total 2023-2045	**103,698**	**55,550**		**20,185**		**27,962**	
		54%		**19%**		**27%**	

Note: City is referencing UGA except the Vancouver UGA

Table 5b. Projected Housing Units by UGA and Income Band-Method B

Jurisdiction		Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)					
	Total	<80%		>80 - 120%		>120%	
Vancouver Unincorporated + Rural Clark County	44,037	31,008	70%	5,895	13%	7,134	16%
Battle Ground city	6,979	3,263	47%	1,543	22%	2,172	31%
Camas city	4,226	***3,768***	89%	***820***	19%	-362	-9%
La Center city	2,123	1,235	58%	547	26%	340	16%
Ridgefield city	5,815	4,488	77%	1,652	28%	-326	-6%
Vancouver city	36,527	***9,727***	27%	***8,859***	24%	17,941	49%
Washougal city	3,735	2,041	55%	793	21%	900	24%
Woodland city	105	45	43%	27	25%	34	32%
Yacolt town	150	-27	-18%	49	33%	128	85%
Total 2023-2045	**103,696**	**55,549**		**20,185**		**27,962**	
		54%		**19%**		**27%**	

Countywide Employment Allocation

The GMA does not dictate a data source that must be considered in planning for future employment. For the 1994, 2004, 2007 and 2016 planning efforts, the number of anticipated new jobs in Clark County was developed by the Washington State Employment Securities Department. The forecasts were based on anticipated population growth, workforce participation, unemployment, and percentage of Clark County employees who commute to Oregon for work.

Table 6 below shows the number of net new jobs based on allocation method number 3 as listed above. The Council chose to plan for a total of 73,500 net new jobs for the period between 2025 and 2045. The

88,100 number in the table below is from the initial 2023-2045 estimate provided by the ESD and used here to correspond with the 2023 VBLM capacity for housing and employment. According to the 2023 vacant land model, the county has a land capacity for 65,091 net new jobs.

There are four areas of employment that warrant some consideration as to the land use impacts. The first two relate to specific employment sectors, Construction and Government jobs. Construction employment is primarily done on a job site and there typically isn't dedicated land type to accommodate those jobs in a permanent way. Most of the workers are in the field and don't report to a location other than a job site. We recommend discounting these jobs in relation to land needed for construction employment. The Employment Security department estimates the number of construction workers not on site between 20-25%. The Public sector employment is not accounted for in the model. ESD estimates up to 8,600 new public sector jobs over the next twenty years. We anticipate that most of those public sector jobs will occur on existing facilities, and therefore will not require new lands. Data from the census indicates that 6% of jobs countywide are located in areas outside of the Urban Growth Areas, this data seems to be consistent over the last 20 years and would likely continue. To be consistent with the five percent population allocation to the rural it would make sense to assume five percent of employment to the rural area. Work from home is reducing the amount of land needed to accommodate employment, however while there has been a significant increase in the number of people working remotely due to the pandemic it's unclear what the long-term implications will be. The data in the ESD memo does not anticipate significant increases over the next 20 years but cites a four percent increase/total increase.

Table 6: Employment Capacity and Allocation by UGA.

Jurisdiction	Land Capacity		Distribution	Land Allocation	Work from home (4%)	Construction-Field (77.5%)	Government (100%)	Jobs Allocated
Battle Ground	7,677	11.8%	172	7,847	416	594	392	9,249
Camas	11,363	17.5%	255	11,615	615	879	549	13,658
La Center	2,096	3.2%	47	2,142	113	162	45	2,463
Ridgefield	7,998	12.3%	180	8,175	433	619	148	9,375
Vancouver (City)	18,025	27.7%	405	18,424	976	1,395	5,522	26,317
Vancouver (UGA)	15,168	23.3%	341	15,504	821	1,174	1,754	19,253
Washougal	2,404	3.7%	54	2,457	130	186	187	2,961
Woodland	-	0.0%	-	-	-	-	0	0
Yacolt	360	0.6%	8	368	19	28	3	419
UGA Total	**65,091**	**100.00%**	**1,463**	**66,534**	**3,524**	**5,038**	**8,600**	**83,695**
Rural								**4,405**
County Total								**88,100**

Source: Clark County, Geographic information System and Community Planning

*Note: The 88,100 jobs include 8,600 jobs in the government sector. These government jobs are assumed to occur on public land or existing facilities which are excluded from our vacant land model.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Much has changed since Clark County first adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1994. The county's demographic characteristics have continued to change. Community Planning recommends that population, housing, and employment be allocated to each UGA based on the above methodology, using the 2023 VBLM capacity output as the baseline.

NEXT STEPS

With respect to individual UGA allocations, a limited number of alternative land use scenarios should be identified. The scenarios should be used to inform the county on transportation modeling and a SEPA Threshold Determination. Proposals from the cities should also be considered.

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