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CLARK2045

Growth Management Plan Update



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Open house comment summary

July 23, 2025

One hundred and thirty-nine submittals were received as a part of the public open houses on May 28, 29 and June 2, 2025, and the online-self-paced open house from May 26 to June 30. Below is a summary of the input received:

UGA Expansion

Many commenters noted that all forecasted growth for housing, population, and employment should be accommodated within current UGAs and several mentioned that there is no legal reason to expand UGAs. Several commenters mentioned opposition to any city's expansion beyond its current UGA specifically for residential uses. Alternatives such as upzoning, upzoning to mixed use along arterials infill, lot splitting, and transit-oriented development were mentioned. Other commenters voiced support for expansion of the UGAs. One specifically mentioned expansion for La Center and Ridgefield to allow for the land to provide jobs in the area and the economic stability needed to support a growing community

Agricultural land/ food security/agricultural land study

Commenters noted the requirement to have a sufficient supply of agricultural lands, the desire to preserve prime agricultural lands and sustain a local agricultural economy. Several noted that due to climate concerns, the county should preserve agricultural lands to help with food security, climate resiliency and preserving access to local food.

Other commenters mentioned that most of the agricultural lands proposed for de-designation currently produce no agriculture and do not provide the food needed for the area. The need to mitigate any agricultural land losses and the fact that those lands are irreplaceable once lost was mentioned. One commenter noted following the example of some European countries, with an emphasis on preserving wildlands with efficiency methods such as increasing farming yields and reducing the amount of land needed for food production.

Some comments mentioned that any agricultural lands study will be rushed, cannot be done with sufficient time for public and expert input, and is vulnerable to legal challenges.

A Ridgefield open house participant and longtime landowner expressed the desire to retain open agricultural lands. Another Ridgefield participant expressed multiple concerns about how the City of Ridgefield's expansion plans could impact agricultural lands and conflict with the GMA. Another Ridgefield commenter expressed the desire to have their AG-20 land rezoned because it is not viable farmland anymore and would like to sell some to their relatives and make more housing.

Climate/Environmental

Commenters expressed support for the Clark County Climate Advisory Group (CAG) recommendations and urged approval of the Climate Element and its consensus derived policies and goals. Some commenters noted that farmlands are needed to build climate resilience and

others commented on building resilience to climate change in general. One commenter mentioned maintaining sustainability as a guiding principle. Another noted that urban sprawl will increase driving, take away farmland and decrease tree canopy, all of which will increase greenhouse gases. Another commenter supported expanding the tree canopy to mitigate urban heat island effects. One commenter supported the concept of "watershed democracy", the idea of basing political and land management boundaries on natural watershed boundaries rather than arbitrary grids.

Timeframe for completing Comprehensive Plan update

Many commenters noted the importance of meeting the December 31, 2025 deadline, and noted the potential for jeopardizing state funding for many types of policies and projects if it is not met. Opposition to delaying the adoption of the comprehensive plan update specifically for the agricultural land study was also mentioned.

Alternative 1

Commenters expressed support for alternative 1, with some mentioning that UGA increases were unnecessary. Another commenter mentioned that Alternative 1 does not accommodate growth and Alternatives 2 and 3 are too similar. A Ridgefield commenter expressed desire to stay with the current plan to allow infrastructure to keep pace and keep costs for services down, including schools and EMS. Another commenter on 5/29 indicated the desire to maintain alternative 1 until additional studies could be done and that maybe the developers have too much influence in the process. A 5/29 commenter expressed desire for this alternative to preserve agricultural lands and address climate and environmental issues, including sustainability. Several 6/2 commenters expressed desire for "no change" and support of alternative 1, particularly to preserve resource lands.

Alternative 2

Support for alternative 2 was expressed, with comments noting the need for job creation, economic sustainability within our cities, and access to the I-5 corridor which will ensure a financially sustainable future. Several others expressed support for Alternative 2 without any urban growth area (UGA) expansion. One commenter noted how "outdated" the current plan is.

Alternative 3

The idea that Alternative 3 supported sprawl was mentioned. One comment was specific to a particular parcel, supporting the inclusion of the parcel within the UGB as a part of Alternative 3. One 5/29 commenter was supportive of this alternative because they believe more housing inventory will bring down housing costs.

Housing

Several commenters mentioned the need for and support for affordable infill and middle housing. , One commenter noted that some housing should have lots with yards for kids to play, in addition to townhouses and apartments. Other commenters mentioned that La Center, Ridgefield, Camas and Washougal have failed to develop multifamily housing and should be required to provide for it. Others noted that any land added to the UGB should be designated for diverse housing types. Another noted that affordable housing is not necessarily based on supply but on the type of homes that are built. One commenter noted that based on experience in Portland, increased density does house more people but is not affordable and that the crowding, increased traffic and need for increased infrastructure detract from quality living for all residents. "Cottage development regulations," were mentioned. One commenter noted the need for greater integration of the

HOSAP with the plan and codes and to focus less on the building industry. An anonymous 6/2 commenter provided notes showing support for “innovative” housing approaches. Another 6/2 commenter expressed concerns that the planning process favors developers and that alternative approaches to new housing should be explored that do not impact resource lands.

Virtual open house/In-person open houses

Some possible improvements for the on-line virtual open house were recommended such as goal statements for each of the alternative, so it is clear what they include. The need for additional information about transportation and utilities was also mentioned. The need to ensure the comments were shared with the planning commission and county council was mentioned and questions about why they had not yet been shared were voiced. A comment was made that the maps provided at the open houses were dense and confusing. A 5/29 commenter was appreciative of the open house presentations and stated they gained a much better understanding of the process and timeframe.

Water planning and quality

Some commenters questioned if water supply, water quality, groundwater infiltration and groundwater recharge were considered as a part of the alternatives. Twenty-seven postcards supporting strong clean water protections as a top priority in the comprehensive plan were received and suggested nature-based solutions including rain gardens, restored wetlands and green roofs as preferred solutions. Protecting drinking water through the preservation of natural areas, limitations on lawn chemicals, better sewage treatment to remove micro-plastics were also brought up.

Equity

Comments from a group of community-based organizations outlined that the legislature prioritized participation of historically excluded populations and provided funding to engage those communities in Comprehensive Planning which demonstrated that affordable housing, climate justice and food security policies are critical. Others noted that equity is deeply embedded in the Climate Element in the GMA, that completing an Ag study is fiscally irresponsible and fundamentally inequitable and recommended that food security be prioritized in the study.

Parcel specific comments

Several comments were specific to one or more particular parcels, supporting the existing zoning and citing environmental, transportation and community impacts of the proposed rezoning. Others supported the proposed zone changes included in Alternative 2 or 3 for their parcel. Other commenters suggested a particular zone that they want to be applied to their parcel or supported inclusion within the UGB. One commenter supported the addition of some parcels on the east side of Ridgefield to the UGA because they are bordered by the city on three sides, have urban services and could provide housing, parks and employment. A Ridgefield commenter indicated desire to sell half their 1.5-acre parcel to recover high development costs. A 5/29 commenter indicated support for the proposed R-32 upzone in the Covington Road area to accommodate housing and follow development trends. A 5/29 commenter who lives near a new housing development on NE 157th was concerned about infrastructure and parking demands created by the increased use.

Proposed rezoning of lands east of WSU/Ramble Creek area to Business Park (BP)

A significant number of commenters expressed opposition to the proposed UGA expansion and proposed rezoning of lands to the Business Park designation. Multiple reasons for the opposition

were noted including: loss of housing potential; loss of agricultural lands; environmental impacts; existing topography health impacts; no demand for BP land; property tax increases; decreased property values; use restrictions; inability to build a new house or divide the land; livability impacts; creation of one of the largest areas of BP in the county; impacts to WSU; existing traffic; fundamental incompatibility; other better locations for BP zoning, specifically along 199th Street; and inadequate infrastructure (of many types) to support the change including many references to transportation and roads.

Some commenters cited that the change would not be compliant with the county code, comprehensive plan/goals or the state Growth Management Act and raised transparency concerns. Many requested the land remain in R-5 zoning with one commenter stating that losing the R-5 zoning would make it impossible for future farming and multi-generational land ownership. Changing the area to mixed use zoning was mentioned by some commenters as a better alternative. Others mentioned understanding that there was supposed to be retention of green and open spaces in this area. Another mentioned that the county should be assisting the landowners to continue farming. The area was mentioned as not suitable for BP due to

A landowner in the proposed BP rezone area expressed strong concerns that multiple issues, including wetlands and drainage, transportation, and change of character would result from the rezone. This landowner also was seriously concerned about the zone change creating a situation where their current use (mixed residential and agricultural) would become legal non-conforming.

One commenter expressed concerns that the land to the south of the proposed rezone would be adversely affected by the rezone, and that there might be more appropriate areas for this use.

Another landowner in the rezone area expressed strong concerns about the drainage and wetness of the lands proposed for BP, as well as insufficient infrastructure for commercial traffic.

A 6/2 commenter expressed frustration at the changes in focus and plans over time in the 179th and WSU areas. They desire better communication of modifications to the plans. Another 6/2 commenter expressed concern that the current development pattern of the WSU campus being surrounded by mostly housing would be upset by proposed higher-intensity BP uses. An additional individual echoed the concerns about increased commercial traffic and also the issue of not being able to develop their land for residential uses after the rezone.

An extensive testimonial comment was provided at the 6/2 meeting which focused on the Salmon Creek and BP rezone proposal. The testimony echoed the themes that other concerned landowners had provided (i.e. wetlands, transportation, conflicts with current uses), with additional focus on the potential long-term negative effects of the proposal on home values and residential development patterns in the area.

Another extensive testimonial comment was provided on 6/2 by an individual “on behalf of the concerned residents of Ramble Creek.” The comment expressed the concerns of other individuals regarding potential effects to transportation and infrastructure. The comment included a multi-page printed supporting document that listed many specific concerns about the proposed zone change, including GMA compliance, lack of need for new BP lands, and environmental impacts, among other issues. The supporting document provided a proposed alternative approach to rezoning the area.

Parking/Transportation

One commenter had questions regarding the proposed plan for NE 139th St running east from NE 72nd Avenue. Other commenters recommended adoption of parking reform based on SB 5184 to allow more affordable housing units, child care centers, and small businesses. One commenter included a discussion about the best location for electric vehicle charging stations and the importance of running the economy on clean electric. One commenter focused on bicycle issues with need for more bike parking and facilities. However, a 5/29 commenter stated that they believe too many resources (traffic lanes etc.) are being dedicated to bicycles.

Several commenters noted that at the two entrances for Dogwood Park along 124th Street, there is a need for a crosswalk. There is no place to safely cross NE 124th, except at the corner of NE 99th Street. Visitors park on the street and walk to Dogwood Park and especially during the evening rush hour, the situation is unsafe. Older adults and children were mentioned specifically due to the higher speeds that cars travel.

Generally, several comments indicated frustration at the overall congestion level and lack of perceived planning for future transportation increases.

A Ridgefield commenter expressed specific concerns about the plans to expand “commercial” on 10th Avenue, and whether the planned infrastructure is sufficient. Another Ridgefield comment indicated frustration at seeing underutilized busses that tax dollars support.

A 6/2 commenter wondered why there is not additional industrial development proposed along the Vancouver Chelatchie rail line and that this would be an approach to limit traffic and address climate change. Another 6/2 commenter stated that the railroad development could potentially help climate change and that the county should retain the rights to future development. A 6/2 commenter stated the increased housing (apartments) put strain on rural roads and that taxes should support the expected uses (autos) vs. bike lanes that are underutilized.

Other comments that did not fit into the categories above

1. One commenter supported the annexation of Hazel Dell and Salmon Creek by the City of Vancouver.
2. One commenter mentioned the need for single level housing for older adults.
3. Another commenter outlined a court decision on I-2066.
4. One commenter mentioned support for being willing to truly consider evidence that contradicts your beliefs, and admit the possibility you may be wrong with links to YouTube videos.
5. One commenter noted that they question some of the statistics related to the comprehensive plan update including the population projection, urban rural split percentages, allocations, amount of housing built and amount needed, how much population would be included in rural area and other related information. The commenter mentioned several discrepancies in numbers, noted that the county is not supporting home ownership, and concerns over young people leaving the county, not enough jobs and not planning enough for jobs. They believe statistics show that 10% growth allocation to the rural area is needed and provided several attachments.
6. A commenter noted that they believe that there were flawed resource designations placed on parcels in 1993. Outlines that aerial photo and current use tax status was used to determine resource land rather than objective criteria required by GMA including soil types.

7. One commenter noted the need for rent caps in the county.
8. A commenter noted their support for alternative types of development. They provided links to information regarding the Leopold Preserve in Virginia that used less land for housing and kept the remainder as a nature preserve.
9. Another commenter stated their belief that the infill development at 3707 NE 60th Street demonstrates institutional classist targeting of poor, older people in Unincorporated Clark County. The commenter noted concerns over cutting of several very large old trees without permits by developer, the SEPA determination, pedestrian connectivity in general and for children walking to school, waste removal, lack of covered entries on houses and their opposition to cottage developments in general.
10. One commenter noted current lack of a “climate section” in the comprehensive plan and that “Parks” were not fully represented in the open house presentation, with support for more parks as a major issue for them.
11. Another commenter submitted a lengthy written comment at the 5/29 open house with supporting documents. The comments express concerns about multiple process and analysis issues with past and present comprehensive plan adoptions and interpretations. At the 6/2 open house this commenter submitted similar written comments with printed supporting materials. The materials cover a wide range of topics and concerns, but primarily focus on preservation of rural lands and assumptions made in previous plan updates.
12. A 5/29 commenter provided a general comment that the entire process needs to be refocused and not simply follow past practice. This commenter indicated a wholistic approach is needed with better consideration for sustainability and preservation.
13. A 5/29 commenter expressed generalized concerns for livability and the effects of rapid growth on the community, including traffic and crime. They were concerned about housing affordability for people on fixed incomes.
14. A 6/2 testimonial comment stated that they disagree with the underlying 20-year population projection of 718,154 adopted by the county. They believe that because the projection is too high, all of the alternatives are flawed. They urge the county to reassess the projections.