
Clark County

County Government

In the United States, government is divided into separate branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) and layers (federal, state, and local). Each branch and each layer is partially independent of the others. At the local level, government is further divided among general-purpose entities such as cities and counties, and special purpose districts such as schools, utilities, and fire districts. No government entity stands entirely on its own. Rather, each entity is part of a network of governments, working together to deliver services to the public. To understand a particular unit of government, it is useful to have a concept of its place in the overall system.

A county is a political subdivision of the state. Counties derive their existence from state law and powers expressly conferred by the state constitution and state laws.

A county is a political subdivision of the state. Counties derive their existence from state law and from powers expressly conferred by the state constitution and state laws. For example, counties are required to appraise property values for tax purposes, and to collect property taxes from their residents. In this regard, counties act as agents for state government.

Locally elected officials govern counties. The Clark County Board of Commissioners establishes policies on the basis of state law and in the context of local community needs and preferences. The commissioners run by district in the primary election and are elected at-large in the general election.

The three commissioners each represent a geographic area of the county. Commissioner Tom Mielke represents north Clark County, including Salmon Creek and Hazel Dell and the cities of Ridgefield, Battle Ground, La Center, Yacolt and Amboy. Commissioner Marc Boldt represents the portion of the county east of Interstate 205, north of the Columbia River and southeast of Battle Ground. Commissioner Steve Stuart's district is mostly within the city of Vancouver and fans out from the southwestern portion of the county east to Interstate 205 and north to Salmon Creek and Hazel Dell.

Counties co-exist with a variety of other overlapping local government entities, including cities. The relationship between county and city governments can vary. Many County services are "regional," meaning that they are provided to all residents of the County regardless of the jurisdictional limits of a city. Property appraisal is a good example. The County appraises all property, whether or not it lies within an incorporated city. Local county services, however, such as Sheriff's patrol, are generally provided only in the unincorporated portion of the County.

Organization of County Government

Clark County is a statute county, which means that the organization of the County is prescribed by state statute.

Clark County is a statute county, which means that the organization of the County is prescribed by state statute. The following organization chart provides an overview of the County structure, including its elected officials, administrator, and major departments. For simplicity, the chart does not include the advisory boards or other organizations that are partially or wholly under the jurisdiction of the County.

The voters of Clark County elect twenty-five officials, including three County Commissioners, ten Superior Court Judges, six District Court

Judges, an Assessor, a Treasurer, an Auditor, a Prosecuting Attorney, a Sheriff, and a County Clerk.

The Board of Commissioners appoints the County Administrator, who acts as the chief executive officer for the County. Reporting directly to the County Administrator are the heads of eight major non-elected departments:

- Board of Equalization
- Community Development
- Community Planning
- Community Services
- Environmental Services
- Public Health
- Public Information and Outreach
- Public Works

The Deputy County Administrator oversees six departments:

- General Services
- GIS (Geographical Information System)
- Human Resources
- Information Services
- Medical Examiner
- Office of Budget

Clark County Elected Officials

Term Expires:

Commissioner (District 1):

Tom Mielke 12/31/12

Commissioner (District 2):

Marc Boldt..... 12/31/12

Commissioner (District 3):

Steve Stuart 12/31/14

Assessor:

Peter Van Nortwick. 12/31/14

Auditor:

Greg Kimsey 12/31/14

Clerk:

Scott Weber 12/31/14

Prosecutor:

Tony Golik..... 12/31/14

Sheriff:

Garry Lucas 12/31/14

Treasurer:

Doug Lasher 12/31/14

County Elected Officials

Board of County Commissioners - The three-member Board of County Commissioners is the County's legislative body. The Board levies all County taxes and appropriates all funds for expenditure through the budget process. It sets land use policy in the unincorporated area and hears appeals to land use decisions. It enacts ordinances that have the force of law in the County. It appoints members of citizen advisory panels, hearings examiners, and members of the Board of Equalization. It approves all contracts and grant agreements. The Board adopts the County budget. Finally, it appoints the County Administrator, the chief executive of the County. Primary elections of Commissioners are held by district, while the general election is county wide. Commissioners serve a four-year term. Election terms are staggered so that no more than two Commissioners stand for election in any single year.

Assessor - The Assessor is responsible for the appraisal of real and personal property in the County for the purpose of assessing property taxes. The Assessor is elected at large to a four-year term.

Auditor - The Auditor is responsible for the recording of documents, titles, and deeds; the issuance of marriage licenses; the issuance of motor vehicle licenses; and conducting elections. The Auditor also provides accounting services, performs fiscal analyses, and conducts audits. The Auditor is elected at large to a four-year term.

Clerk - The County Clerk is responsible for maintaining the permanent records of the Superior Court, including all legal filings and records of court proceedings. The Clerk is also responsible for receipting monies received by the Superior Court. The Clerk is elected at large to a four-year term.

District Court Judges

Term Expires:

District One:

Vernon L. Schreiber 12/31/14

District Two:

James P. Swanger 12/31/14

District Three:

Darvin J. Zimmerman 12/31/14

District Four:

Sonya Langsdorf 12/31/14

District Five:

Kelli E. Osler 12/31/14

District Six

John P. Hagensen 12/31/14

District Court Judges - District Court is the trial court for ordinance infractions, misdemeanors, and civil cases involving amounts up to \$50,000. Clark County has six District Court Judges who are elected at large to four-year terms.

Prosecutor - The Prosecuting Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of crimes and violations of County ordinances. The Prosecutor also acts as legal counsel to the County and other local government entities. In addition, the victim/witness assistance program, adult diversion program, and the child support enforcement program are under the supervision of the Prosecutor. The Prosecutor is elected at large to a four-year term.

Sheriff - The Sheriff is responsible for the provision of police services in the unincorporated portion of the county, including patrol, criminal investigation, and emergency response. In addition, the Sheriff administers the regional County Jail. The Sheriff is elected at large to a four-year term.

Superior Court Judges - Superior Court is the trial court for felonies and for civil cases involving amounts over \$50,000. Superior Court also has jurisdiction over divorce, probate, juvenile, competency and domestic cases. Superior Court Judges are considered to be partially employed by the State of Washington, so the State pays one-half of their salaries and all of their benefits. Clark County has ten Superior Court Judges who are elected at large to four-year terms.

Treasurer - The Treasurer is responsible for the collection of property taxes, the distribution of property tax revenues to the State and other taxing districts, receipting all money received by the County, and cash and investment management. The Treasurer provides services both to the County and to other government entities, including school and fire districts. The Treasurer is elected at large to a four-year term.

Superior Court Judges

Term Expires:

Department One:

Roger A. Bennett 12/31/12

Department Two:

John P. Wulle 12/31/12

Department Three:

John F. Nichols 12/31/12

Department Four:

Edwin L. Poyfair 12/31/12

Department Five:

Richard A. Melnick 12/31/12

Department Six:

Barbara D. Johnson 12/31/12

Department Seven:

James E. Rulli 12/31/12

Department Eight:

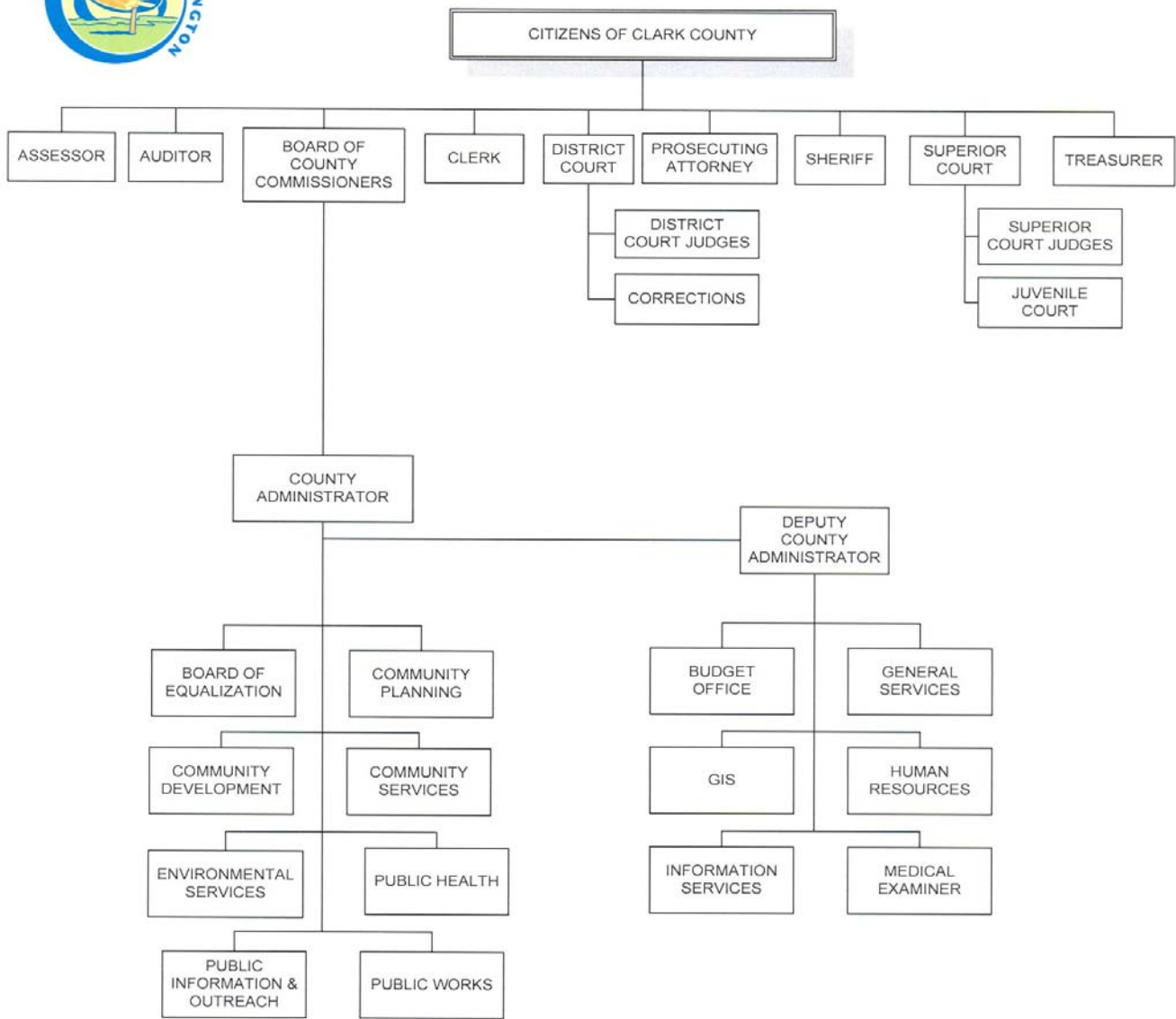
Diane M. Woolard 12/31/12

Department Nine:

Robert A. Lewis 12/31/12

Department Ten:

Scott A. Collier 12/31/12



The Budget Process

Legal Framework

State law establishes the general requirements of Clark County's budget process. It requires the County Auditor to initiate the budget process on or before the second Monday in July by requesting budget estimates for the ensuing year from each County department; the estimates must be filed on or before the second Monday in August. A compilation of these estimates, including revenue projections, is required to be presented to the Board of Commissioners on or before the first Tuesday in September. A compilation of budget submissions is made available to the public. The Board of Commissioners must schedule a budget hearing for the first Monday in October or the first Monday in December. If the hearing is scheduled in December, the Board may change the other dates in the process accordingly. The budget hearing may be continued for no more than five days. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board adopts the budget.

The Biennial Budget

Since 1985, cities in the state of Washington have had the legal ability to adopt biennial budgets. Clark County first established a biennial budget for the 1999/2000 period. The County adopts a full 24 month budget and provides for a mid-biennium review and modification for the second year of the budget.

The biennial budget is produced in five phases:

- **Phase 1 – Baseline Budget** A baseline budget is developed in the Budget Office using the prior biennium's budget, after making any known changes to controllable expenses, or items are removed for any known department reductions. This document is then submitted to departments for their review.
- **Phase 2 – The Submitted Budget** The submitted budget consists of department requests for resources to support their service requirements. It includes all budget adjustments requesting changed levels of resources. It is developed and reported at a line item level of detail with summaries at programmatic, departmental, and functional levels.
- **Phase 3 – Department Request** During this step, the Budget Office continues their work with individual departments to prioritize needs with available revenue. Elected officials are offered an opportunity to communicate directly with BOCC concerning their priorities as well as those of the county.
- **Phase 4 – The Recommended Budget** This is the submission of the County Administrator's budget recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. This is a balanced budget that prioritizes approval of budget adjustment requests based on the above criteria and is summarized at the program level.

-
- **Phase 5 – The Adopted Budget** The adopted budget is approved by the Board of County Commissioners. It is adopted at the fund and department level.

Community Involvement

The Board of Commissioners has established specific objectives for community involvement. These include:

- To use a variety of informational techniques that help increase the community understanding of Clark County government and services.
- To continue public opportunities for meaningful input to our planning and budget process.
- To create opportunities for active involvement, in order to increase collaboration with some decisions.
- To create opportunities for consensus decisions with some programs or initiatives.

In implementing these directives, County management pursued the following as a part of the 2011/12 budget process:

- Public meetings with elected officials and heads of departments.
- Briefings to local newspapers regarding the recommended budget and process.
- The Administrator's 2011/2012 Recommended Budget was distributed in November 2010.
- A public meeting with elected officials and the Board of Commissioners was open to the community and televised.
- Public hearings were conducted for citizens to address the Board directly.

Budget Responsibilities

The Budget Office is responsible for the budget process. The Auditor has overall responsibility and authority as the Chief Financial Officer of the County and complies with the basic legal requirements relating to budget responsibilities.

Elected officials and department directors are responsible for preparing and submitting their budget requests according to a published schedule. Officials have the opportunity to explain their budget requests to the County Administrator prior to publishing the recommended budget. Additionally, officials have discretion to address the Board of Commissioners during the public hearing process. After budget adoption, officials are required by law to maintain spending within the limits of the adopted budget.

Budget Amendments

It is sometimes necessary to request additional budget expenditure authority due to unforeseen issues. Requests to amend the budget are submitted to the County Administrator for review prior to being presented to the Board for approval. Supplemental appropriations that change departmental budgets require a public hearing prior to approval. Notice of the supplemental appropriation hearings are advertised for two weeks prior to the hearing. At the hearing, members of the public may testify regarding the supplemental appropriation. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board votes to approve or disapprove the supplemental appropriation.

Supplemental appropriations that change departmental budgets require a public hearing prior to approval.

Budget transfers, which shift funds within a department's budget, may be approved by the County Administrator throughout the year upon the presentation of the request.

Budget Schedule

The following schedule displays the timing of 2011/12 budget activities

2010 Schedule to prepare 2011/12 Biennial Budget

May 21	Computerized budget system available to departments
July 30	Department budget submissions
Aug. 2 – Sept. 4	Department budget meetings with Board
October 11	Department budget requests published
November 2	County Administrator recommended budget published
November 17	Board work sessions on recommended budget
December 6	Public hearings
December 7	Public hearings
December 8	Adoption of 2011/12 biennial budget

2010						
May 2010	July	August	September	October	November	Dec. 2010
Budget system available	Dept budgets submitted	Depts meet with Board	Depts meet with Board	Dept budget requests published	Recommended Budget published	Public Hearings
					Board work sessions on Recommended Budget	Adopt 2011/12 Biennial Budget

Local Community

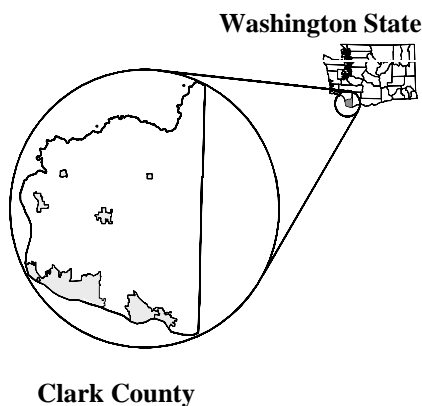
Clark County is located in the heart of the Pacific Northwest. The county is named for William Clark (August 1, 1770 - September 1, 1838), an American explorer, soldier, Indian agent, and territorial governor. Along with Meriwether Lewis, Clark led the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803 to 1806 across the Louisiana Purchase to the Pacific Ocean. Afterward he served in a militia and as governor of the Missouri Territory. From 1822 until his death in 1838, he served as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.



William Clark

The city of Vancouver is the county seat and is home to historic Fort Vancouver which was built by Hudson's Bay Company in 1824. From the city's urban hub on the Columbia River, the county spreads through suburban and agricultural lands with a network of towns, to the slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range.

Geography and Climate



Located in southwestern Washington State, Clark County is approximately 70 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It is physically compact, measuring approximately 25 miles across in either direction, encompassing 656 square miles. The Columbia River forms the County's southern and western boundary, and the Lewis River forms the northern perimeter. The climate in Clark County is influenced by its geography, with the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean exerting a strong influence on the climate, economy, and recreational activities. The marine influence produces the wet, mild winters and moderately dry summers characteristic of the region. About 70 percent of annual precipitation occurs between November and March. The temperate climate has an annual average daily temperature of 51°F and average high temperature of 61°F. Annual rainfall averaging 40 inches a year contributes to waterways and lakes in the region.

The Columbia River boundaries of the County provide over 40 miles of river frontage. The Columbia is the only fresh-water harbor accommodating 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.

US Census estimated *Quick Facts* for Clark County as of 2010 include:

Total 2010 Estimated Population	435,600
Population Change (2000 to 2010)	+2.6%
Population Change (2009 to 2010)	+1.0%
Median age, 2010	35
White Population, 2008	91.3%
Black Population, 2008	1.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.9%
Asian Population	3.3%
NHOPI* Population	0.4%
Hispanic Population	4.7%
Married	54.8%
College Graduate	27.9%
Homeownership rate	61.6%
Housing units	168,969
Median Household Income (2009)	\$50,199

NHOPI: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

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 sea level 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.

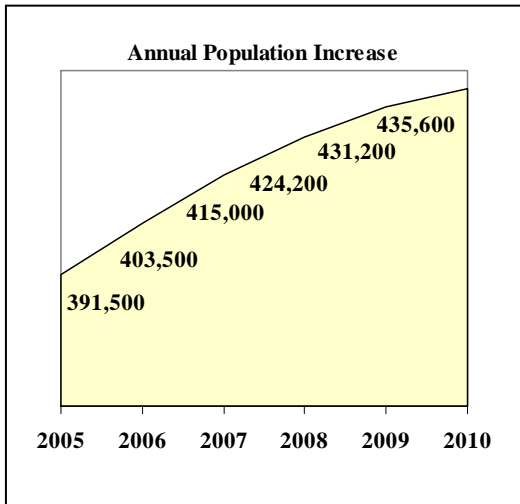
The Cascade Mountain Range dominates the eastern border of the region, with the peaks of Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood, and Mount Adams prominent features on a clear day. The Cascades extend from southwestern Canada through Washington and Oregon into northern California. The earliest attested use of the name Cascades is in the writings of botanist David Douglas where he describes the great white-capped mountains that loomed above the rapids as the "mountains by the cascades" and later simply as the "Cascades".

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.

The county's geographic position between two mountain ranges serves to insulate it against dramatically differing climates within one hundred 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°F to 55°F. 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.

There are four definite seasons of the year, but the trend from one to another is very gradual. The average growing season on the western plains ranges from 154 days at Battle Ground to 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 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.

Demographics



Clark County is one of seven counties included in the Portland Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). The other counties are Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington, and Yamhill—all in Oregon – and Skamania County in Washington. In 2006, the metropolitan area population was 2,137,565 of which Clark County comprised 19.3 percent. From 2000 through 2006, Clark County’s population increased by 67,700. Clark County has a 2010 estimated population of 435,600.

Clark County developed rapidly throughout the 1990s. Beginning in 1980, its 192,227 residents accounted for 4.7 percent of the state’s population. As of April 2010, the county’s population had grown to approximately 435,600, representing 6.5 percent of the state’s total population. In the last five years, Clark County’s population has increased eleven percent but the pace has slowed from more than three percent per year to just over one percent per year.

In December 1994, Clark County adopted a comprehensive land use plan pursuant to the State of Washington Growth Management Act of 1990. The Clark County 20-year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan identified key indicators to be compiled and summarized on an annual basis. The Department of Community Development completed the first analysis of available data in 2000, for the period 1995-1999. The report provided an overview of population, housing, employment, wages, per capita income, land absorption, and urban versus rural development. In September 2004, Clark County completed its most recent updating process and adopted a new 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. As adopted, the plan is intended to guide growth through December 2023. The current plan is focused on managing urban growth boundaries, projecting population growth, planning housing needs, and balancing growth in rural and urban areas. The plan is central to determining density and zoning, paying for growth and concurrency, and locating business, industry, and jobs.

Local Economy

Regionally, SW Washington faces tougher challenges than the rest of the state or the nation, with an unemployment rate of over 13% in Clark County. Unemployment continues to weigh on the local economy, and many Clark County families have less buying power than they did before the recession. The median income was about \$50,200 in 2009, down from about \$54,300 in 2006.

The outlook for Clark County for 2011/12 remains flat. The housing market has high inventories and foreclosure rates. Our forecast calls for a further decline in new construction in 2011, followed by modest improvement in 2012. Ten years ago, new construction was valued at \$1 billion annually. It peaked at \$1.5 billion in 2007. Current estimates put new construction at an assessed value of \$265 million in 2011 and \$345 million in 2012.

On the positive side, the private sector is slowly adding jobs at the national level, and consumer spending is up slightly, both nationally and in Clark County. A major concern remains the potential local impact of state budget cuts, especially in the area of health and social services.

<u>Top Private Employers</u>	<u>Employees</u>
SW Washington Med. Center	2,625
Fred Meyer	1,405
WaferTech	950
Wells Fargo & Co.	942
SEH America	842
Legacy Salmon Creek Med. Center	830
Safeway, Inc.	775
Vancouver Clinic	767

The local labor force increased from 179,370 in 2000 to 217,610 in 2009. The number of jobs in 2000 was 113,758 and reached a high of 132,571 in 2007, then dropped to 127,429 in 2009. The County's employment base has changed from manufacturing and government to one dominated by retail trade and services.

Official estimates for per capita income show Clark County in 2000 at \$28,885 and in 2008 at \$35,789. The median household income in Clark County was \$51,196 in 2000 and \$51,929 in 2008. It dropped to \$50,199 in 2009. The 2008 national median household income was \$52,029.

Transportation facilities, serving both sides of the Columbia River, have created a regional hub for commerce. The area has served deep-sea commerce since 1906. Transcontinental rail lines serving the County traverse major north-south and east-west routes. Interstate highways provide access to economic centers. The Portland International Airport, just fifteen minutes south of Vancouver, is an essential community and economic development asset.

Higher education opportunities in the Clark County area include a full-service satellite of Washington State University (WSU), with a campus located in Vancouver. Clark County has a relatively well-developed higher education sector, as well as access to additional programs in the greater Portland area.

Quality of Life / Recreation

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area arises in Clark County and is famous for sightseeing and recreational opportunities such as windsurfing.

Clark County residents enjoy the opportunity to choose a rural lifestyle within close proximity to urban amenities. There are a wide variety of recreational opportunities and cultural activities in the area. The metropolitan amenities of Portland are just minutes away across the Columbia River.

The County has over 20 arts organizations, many available through the Columbia Arts Center; and numerous community events such as the Clark County Fair and Fourth of July Festival. There are historical sites and museums throughout the region, including the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

Recreational opportunities are numerous in and around Clark County. There are over forty miles of Columbia River frontage for fishing and boating. The Pacific Ocean beaches, Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams ski areas, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument are all within an hour's drive. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area arises in Clark County and is renowned for sightseeing and recreational opportunities, including world class windsurfing and boating. A diverse selection of golf courses can be found in the County and the Portland metropolitan area.

The County partners with the City of Vancouver to operate a jointly funded parks and recreation program. Of 35 neighborhood and community parks added as a result of the successful creation of the Metropolitan Parks District, 20 are now complete with 11 more in the design/permitting phase. The rest are in preliminary planning stages. The 20 completed projects have added almost 300 acres of public park land with approximately 180 acres to be added in the remaining projects.