

INTRODUCTION

THE BACKGROUND

Clark County adopted its first comprehensive plan on May 10, 1979. The plan included a map that identified appropriate levels of development on all lands in Clark County. In rural areas, the plan designated and conserved forest, agricultural and mining land and set varying levels of housing densities for rural residential areas. The Plan also identified areas appropriate for urban intensity housing, commercial and industrial development.

Urban growth areas were adopted around each city along with adopted policies which limited the types of services permitted outside of urban areas. These policies were intended to help protect the rural character of rural lands and focus urban development within urban areas. The plan also included chapters related to transportation planning (including adopting an arterial road plan as a part of the county-wide plan map), identifying Heritage areas and creating policies on improving community appearance.

In 1980, county-wide zoning was applied that helped implement the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Newly established zoning districts included Forest, Agriculture, Rural Estate, Rural Farm and Suburban Residential for rural areas. Urban zoning districts were adopted and applied on the county-wide zoning map that provided a broad range of housing densities and distinguished between different intensities of commercial uses.

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature passed the State Growth Management Act or GMA (RCW 36.70A.010). The passage of GMA significantly changed the requirements for local planning. Under the GMA, each county is required to adopt a comprehensive plan. The law requires that each county required to plan under GMA do so in consultation with its cities:

- plan for a 20-year population forecast provided by the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and distribute this forecast equitably and realistically throughout the county;
- collectively identify urban growth areas for each city and town using service standards and land development suitability as measures; and,
- draft plans which, at a minimum, include land use, transportation, housing, utilities, capital facilities, and rural elements.

In 1991 the legislature amended the GMA to require adoption of "county-wide" planning policies that would provide a procedural framework for coordinated production of comprehensive plans. A Steering Committee comprised of elected officials from Clark County jurisdictions began working on county-wide planning policies in the summer of 1991. In August 1992, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the policies.

THE GOALS

Prior to adopting the Growth Management Act, the Legislature found that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and wise use of our lands, posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of the state. The Growth Management Act demonstrated the Legislature's understanding that greater regulation of property use is necessary to accomplish the goals set out in the GMA and an awareness that land is scarce, land use decisions are largely permanent, and, particularly in urban areas, land use decisions affect not only the individual property owner or developer, but entire communities.

The GMA established thirteen planning goals (RCW 36.70A.020) to guide the creation and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations in the counties and cities that are required to or choose to plan under the Act. These goals provided the basis for the policies in the Community Framework Plan. They include the following:

Urban Growth: Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

Reduce Sprawl: Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

Transportation: Encourage efficient, multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Housing: Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

Economic Development: Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services and public facilities.

Property Rights: Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

Permits: Applications for both state and local permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

Natural Resource Industries: Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.

Open Space and Recreation: Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.

Environment: Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

Citizen Participation and Coordination: Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

Public Facilities and Services: Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimums.

Historic Preservation: Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

The GMA in Washington has been amended numerous times since its original adoption in 1990. A list summarizing the amendments made by the Legislature, between 1995–2002, to Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington is included in Appendix C. All applicable Revised Code changes are included in Clark County's Comprehensive Plan 2003-2023.

THE VISION

Clark County is in the midst of continual change. As with any rapidly urbanizing area, problems exist that spark the need for managing growth:

- Growth throughout Clark County has sometimes been haphazard and without adequate availability of social and environmental services as well as public facilities;
- Prime agricultural, needed industrial and undeveloped lands have sometimes been inappropriately converted into low density sprawl;
- Transportation planning and infrastructure development have sometimes been inconsistent with other aspects of land use planning and sometimes have not been constructed in a timely manner;
- Access to education, training and living wage employment has sometimes been limited and inequitable; increasing housing costs has lead to limited affordability for an increasing number of residents;
- Local government processes and requirements have sometimes been inadequate to respond appropriately to changing conditions and quality of life value shifts;
- Natural resources, air quality and water quality have sometimes been degraded;
- Open and natural space development opportunities have been lost;
- Lands, structures and sites of historical and/or archeological significance have sometimes been compromised or sacrificed to other uses; and,
- Public processes at the neighborhood, community and inter-community levels have sometimes been inadequate and lacking in coordination.

The first step in addressing such challenges was to develop a vision of a desirable future. The Community Framework Plan was adopted in April 1993, as Clark County's long-term vision of what the county could become. Conceptual in nature, it proposes changing

past trends, which, if left unchecked, could result in problems similar to those experienced by other regions that failed to adequately plan for future growth. The Framework Plan envisions contained urban growth areas and rural centers within larger natural resource and rural areas. Consistent with the Growth Management Act, the Framework Plan emphasizes distinctions between urban, rural and resource to maintain a range of options for living which are valued by county residents.

The purpose of the Framework Plan was to establish consensus about which lands will eventually be committed to urban uses and which should remain rural. It continues to have a major role in defining life in Clark County -- where we will work and shop, the types of housing we will live in, where our children will go to school, the lands that will serve as natural resources, the amount of open space we will enjoy, and how we will travel from place to place. The Framework Plan continues to be the foundation for Clark County's Comprehensive Plan 2003-2023 (20-Year Plan).

The 20-Year Plan has been developed to manage Clark County's growth in ways that will result in a better future for our community. It describes a future that will protect and conserve natural, financial and human resources to continue the quality of life enjoyed by Clark County's residents. The Plan could not have been successfully completed without extensive, broad-based citizen participation throughout the process. That level of participation must continue to occur for successful ongoing implementation and monitoring of the 20-Year Plan.

Clark County residents generally recognize continued growth will continue over the next 20 to 50 years, but, at the same time, they are concerned with some of the impacts growth may generate. Although the exact amount of growth and its timing are unknown, through the growth management planning process, general consensus has been developed about where growth should occur and what it should look like. Growth management can be generally defined as the combined use of a wide range of techniques by a community to determine the amount, type and rate of development the community desires and to channel that growth into designated areas.

In the next 20 years, Clark County and its cities will grow in population (to an estimated 534,191 people) and jobs (to an estimated 200,000). As a result, the character of the county will continue to change in ways which reflect the ongoing urbanization of city areas. This will include demographic changes such as:

- increased household growth and residential densities in some areas;
- an increased percentage of smaller households;
- increased percentages of older residents and residents with special service needs;
- increased racial, ethnic and cultural diversity;
- an increased need for equitable education and training as well as lifetime learning opportunities;
- increased percentages of workers employed in the service sector and of households with two or more workers;

- an increased percentage of residents living on fixed incomes;

- an increased need for varying types of housing including affordable housing;
- increased housing construction and land costs;
- increased travel demand, traffic volume and registered vehicles; and,
- an increased need to preserve and protect the natural environment.

Given the trends and changes coming to Clark County, maintaining and/or enhancing our quality of life will require considerable foresight, ongoing cooperative and broad-based planning, consistent monitoring of Plan implementation, and revisions to the 20-Year Plan where necessary to assure a high quality of life. This will require diligence on the community's part, not only to make sound decisions now but to monitor the 20-Year Plan in the future. While the 20-Year Plan will be updated over time to reflect changing attitudes and circumstances, it is important to remember that once development occurs it cannot easily be reversed. The results of the decisions the community makes or fails to make now will be with us for generations to come.

Through the planning process we have learned that most of us desire a high quality of life. That vision is comprised of:

- healthy, safe and productive neighborhoods and communities;
- friendly, cooperative and engaged residents who celebrate diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and cultures;
- a variety of housing options;
- a county where sustainable populations of salmon and other native species are a testimony to a healthy ecosystem; where our well-being is supported by the integrity of the ecosystem we share with other living species; and where, by ensuring healthy habitat for all inhabitants of Clark County, we ensure the quality of life we value.
- a thriving, sustainable economy with private and public workplaces and business centers that act responsibly toward their employees and the communities that foster their success;
- quality schools meeting the educational and training needs of all residents;
- public and private institutions working in true partnership with the community to deliver high quality services; and,
- open, responsive and accountable local government that works to create a true sense of community and to create democratic processes on all levels.

THE COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK PLANNING PROCESS

The citizen participation process for the Community Framework Plan resulted in the expression of a wide variety of opinions regarding appropriate population densities, property rights, provision and costs of public facilities and services and whether all urban development should occur within cities. Beginning with workshops and surveys conducted in 1991, planning staff collected and analyzed opinions that resulted in the identification of the six top issues which were:

- preserve open space and natural areas;

- protect property rights and keep taxes low;
- continue to permit large-lot rural development;
- encourage land development that preserves a sense of place and a feeling of community;
- encourage development of high capacity transit including light rail; and,
- develop a better balance of employment opportunities and housing in the county.

In 1992, county staff refined concepts into three alternative community framework plans. Each of these three plans achieved different goals expressed by the public in the 1991 public processes. In June and July 1992, a second round of public workshops was held, illustrating the three alternatives with maps and written information. County and city planning staff participated in the workshops by providing information and explaining the features of each alternative. A newsletter describing the alternatives and inviting comment was mailed to every household. Approximately 700 people attended the 1992 workshops and more than 750 people gave written responses. The majority of participants preferred the concept known as the "Hometown" alternative, which conserves resource lands and natural areas and allows for the development of a high capacity transit system. Written comments also indicated that the following features appealed most to the respondents:

- preservation of open space;
- a compact development pattern, with employment, shopping and a choice of housing located close to each other;
- preservation of rural lands; and,
- the potential for development of alternative types of transportation including light rail.

The county then prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Community Framework Plan. It identified the potential negative impacts associated with each alternative. Using this information and the input from the second round of public meetings, in October 1992 the county and its cities, prepared and distributed for comment a draft Community Framework Plan. In addition, a newsletter describing the draft plan and many of its key policies was mailed to every household. It invited residents to attend upcoming county meetings and indicated that a DEIS was available.

A third round of public meetings ("Previews") was held in December 1992, with more than 200 people attending. As with previous meetings, there were diverse opinions with respect to densities, property rights and government controls. Frequent comments included:

- hometown alternative is the best alternative plan concept and reflects values from previous public input;
- no more strip malls are wanted and there is need to blend existing strip development into more user-friendly places;
- the county needs more open space, parks and trails, and needs to preserve the beauty of Clark County;
- urban areas should have more dense development (including "granny" flats, duplexes, condominiums, and mixed-use development) with large open spaces as buffers and with high density development placed in urban areas and near transportation facilities;

- passed over parcels should be developed (infill) before allowing new development outside urban areas; and,
- land zoned for industrial uses should be increased.

Other comments emphasized the need to:

- preserve the character of the existing neighborhoods;
- provide larger lots (1/2 to 5 acres in size);
- develop incentives to conserve resource lands;
- adopt right-to-farm and harvest ordinances;
- ensure that rural centers do not have high densities; and,
- reimburse residents for down-zoning.

To further verify the direction provided at the public meetings in June, July and December 1992, a random sample survey was conducted in November and December 1992. More than 400 residents were selected on a statistically valid basis. The results are documented in the Clark County Planning Survey, dated January 12, 1993, by Riley Research Associates.

The survey found that residents favored the description of the Hometown concept, as well as the individual components described. While the average rating was 6.33 on a 10-point scale, 84 percent rated the plan a 5.00 or higher. The highest rated components, in descending order, included the following:

- preservation of resource lands;
- strict design and appearance standards in high density developments;
- directing of rural development to towns;
- requiring larger lots in rural areas; and,
- directing a larger share of transportation to mass transit.

Comments received in response to the DEIS, both written and oral, were addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Draft Community Framework Plan.

THE PROCESS

The county's 20-Year Comprehensive Plan 2003-2023 builds upon the efforts undertaken during the process of developing the Community Framework Plan and the 20-Year Plan revised in 1997. Goals and policies in the 20-Year Plan are designed to further reflect the consensus achieved and, more specifically, to answer the questions about how we will live and plan for longer term development in Clark County over the next 20 years. The overall goal of the plan is to provide maximum flexibility for each county resident to pursue his or her own goals and community goals by:

- providing a more detailed analysis of existing and likely future conditions as a basis for decisions;

- minimizing government regulation and review while protecting the public interest; and,
- setting regulations that are straightforward so that professionals are not required to interpret them.

THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Over the past four years, the growth management update process, has involved the people of Clark County (both interest groups and individuals) in an early and continuous way in planning to comply with the review and update requirements of the Growth Management Act. This community involvement program included the processes that led to the updated 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

The planning process for the Framework Plan began in October 1991 and culminated in the adopted 1994 Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. It involved staff from the eight cities and Clark County; individuals and interest groups; and representatives from the special districts, other agencies and utility providers in a broad-based, public driven effort. The 20-Year Plan has had a similar process of outreach and input and involved many of the same parties.

Most major planning programs involve a citizen involvement component, but it is rarely the central focus of the effort. In the case, of the 1994 Plan adoption, and again in the 2003 Plan update, the county wanted every interested party to have an opportunity to participate in the planning process in a meaningful way, and to use the program to develop new relationships with affected agencies and groups. The typical approach of appointing a special citizen's advisory committee was explicitly rejected in favor of outreach to the general public at all key decision points and hands-on involvement from affected agencies and groups.

The comprehensive plan update public involvement program has been successful in ensuring citizen participation as the center of the planning process, and has lead to a multi-faceted dialogue with other agencies and the public to develop a consensus-based growth management program. The 1999-2003 comprehensive growth management plan update included the following components:

- A **Steering Committee** of Mayors and County Commissioners to review and comment on regional growth management related policies and programs.
- A **Technical Advisory Committee** of planning staff from the county, eight cities, and special districts including the school districts, Port of Vancouver, C-TRAN and Clark Public Utilities to coordinate technical analysis and suggest appropriate policies to the Steering Committee.
- A **newsletter** were sent to every household in the county (over 100,000 households) reporting on the 20-Year Plan's update purpose, policy decisions, next steps and informing residents of upcoming opportunities for involvement. The newsletter was sent in March 2001.
- A county-wide letter from the Board of Commissioners was sent to all households and property owners in March 2002. The letter explained the update process, developing criteria and an invitation to attend five public meetings.
- A mailing list was established for **mailing to those with specific** interest in the GMA update process. Information was mailed to those residents who indicated

an interest in more specific information on growth management topics (over 2,555 people).

- A **speaker's bureau** of staff planners who went to every organization or group requesting a presentation on the growth management planning update program. They talked to several hundred people at public and private organization meetings.
- Joint sponsorship of seven **cable television segments** on growth management issues aired 126 times over the course of the planning update effort.
- **News releases** to all media to explain the issues and process to them. The county also bought advertising in local newspapers to announce public meetings and to announce the 5 possible land use alternatives.
- A statistically valid, random-sample **telephone survey** of residents' opinions to examine what type of jobs Clark County residents were traveling to Oregon to take.
- The **urban** areas were reviewed by each city with the assistance of county staff liaisons.
- Joint sponsorship and staffing of the **Youth Town Hall** 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 annual program focusing on growth management, environmental and transportation planning.
- **Thirteen Planning Open Houses** were held throughout the county to explain key issues and get public input on alternative long-term approaches to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. Planning open houses were staffed by the cities and county staff.
- Special **workshops for public officials held concurrently with** public meetings in order to give officials an opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the implications of growth management for their jurisdiction or special district, and to discuss the issues with other public officials in the same position. The county Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners met jointly twice to help select a preferred alternative land use scenario.
- An **Open House** at the planning offices on six Tuesday nights between March and April, 2003 to explain the draft alternative land use plans and the results of the draft environmental impact statement.
- Two **Open Houses** were held in 2004 to explain key issues and get public input on the Capital Facilities Plan analysis.
- An ongoing effort to have **with concerned citizens** regarding their specific requests and other growth management related issues.
- Three **Open Houses** were held in August 2004 to explain the August 2004 land use plan map.
- A **website** that was updated weekly with "what's new", policies, notice of meetings, copies of staff reports, agendas, minutes, maps, a glossary, timelines, contact info, data and complete documents.
- A series of **public hearings** before the County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners prior to adoption of the 20-year Plan update were held. The public hearing were televised on CTV and aired 8-10 times each.

- **Major information materials** such as the DEIS and FEIS were distributed through the Community Development Department, Vancouver; North Clark County Resource Center, Battle Ground; Sheriff's Office precincts and branch libraries. Hard copies and CD-ROMs were provided. Materials could also be downloaded from the county's web site.
- In December 1998, the Clark County Board of Commissioners appointed an 18-member Endangered Species Act Citizen Advisory Committee to assist the county in developing a local salmon recovery plan. The members represent conservationists, rural landowners, development interests, fish recovery groups, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The plan is targeted for development within three to five years and will respond to the National Marine Fisheries Service's 4(d) rule and Washington State's Statewide Salmon Recovery Strategy. This local recovery plan will also be consistent with the Lower Columbian Fish Recovery Board's goals and objectives.
- In 1995 Clark County appointed a twelve member citizens based Fish and Wildlife Focus Group. Its mission was to develop recommendations for a Wildlife Habitat Conservation Ordinance. Based largely on the recommendations from the group, a Habitat Conservation Ordinance was developed and adopted by the county in 1997.
- There have also been several other task forces and advisory committees that have addressed ESA issues, including the Stormwater Task Force and the Clean Water Commission.

PLAN ORGANIZATION AND USE

This Plan aims to reflect the uniqueness of Clark County, and seeks to preserve those unique qualities. This Plan has been written to recognize and reinforce the positive characteristics which make Clark County a special place.

Clark County's 20-Year Plan contains a total of twelve (12) elements, which cover not only the eight elements required by state law but optional elements that are important to the future success of growth management in the county.

It should be emphasized that the entire "Plan" consists not only of the 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan but also includes the Community Framework Plan and the attached 20-Year Plan map. For a thorough understanding of how the plan was developed, all components of the plan should be reviewed.

The organization of the 20-Year Plan is described in the following outline. Within certain elements and for certain cities, policies for urban growth areas are included within the county's plan.

Otherwise, it is presumed that city policies are consistent with the county's plan. The three major components of the 20-Year Plan are as follows:

Introduction

Community Framework Plan

Chapter 1: The **Land Use Element** describes the way in which the Plan will allocate land for different purposes and will permit or encourage development at differing densities.

Chapter 2: The **Housing Element** describes housing needs and the direction the county and its cities will take to influence the type, location and affordability of housing throughout the county. The issues addressed include fair share housing, infill, accessory units and special needs housing.

Chapter 3: The **Rural and Natural Resource Element** describes the designation and proposed level of development for rural and natural resource lands in the county.

Chapter 4: The **Environmental Element** describes specific environmental goals and requirements as the basis for development regulations and general goals for land use planning and parks acquisition. Additionally, the element describes critical areas including wetlands, water recharge areas and wildlife habitat that are to be protected throughout the county.

Chapter 5: The **Transportation Element** describes the way in which key transportation components, including roadways, transit, freight, aviation and bicycle and pedestrian movement have been planned and integrated into other elements of the 20-Year Plan to further environmental, economic and other goals and policies. It highlights policies on various modes of transportation, identifies concurrency issues and includes capital facilities planning for transportation.

Chapter 6: The **Capital Facilities and Utilities Element** describes the investment in public infrastructure needed to support the land use, housing, transportation and economic development elements. Emphasis is on water, sewer and storm drainage, with fire protection, law enforcement, schools, libraries, government buildings and other facility needs also being discussed.

Chapter 7: The **Parks and Open Space Element** describes the direction and strategies to provide for parks and open space in the county. This element is linked to the land use plan and the proposed densities to guide the acquisition and development of parks. Plans for urban (active) parks, regional parks, open spaces and trails are discussed.

Chapter 8: The **Historic Preservation Element** describes directions and strategies to recognize and finance protection of historical and archaeological sites in the county.

Chapter 9: The **Economic Development Element** describes the policy direction and implementation strategies to provide for increased employment opportunities and higher family wages in the county. This element is linked to the land use and transportation elements as an integral part of the Plan.

Chapter 10: The **Community Design Element** describes policies and strategies to provide for design standards and the framework for consistent development in

the county. Like historical and critical areas, community design is an element that can assist the community in achieving its potential. This element is included in order to encourage better designed development in the future.

Chapter 11: The **Annexation Element** describes the intent of designating areas within the urban growth boundary and provides for the annexation of the county's urban areas to cities.

Chapter 12: The **Procedures for Planning Element** describes how the plan is to be used and processes for amending and updating the plan.

The Community Framework Plan component of this document should be reviewed to obtain an understanding of the framework that the county and communities and used to develop their 20-Year Plans. Guideline policies from the Framework Plan helped ensure the overall vision expressed by county residents would be achieved in the Growth Management Plans. The policies also help ensure that land uses and major infrastructure improvements can be planned for both within the 20-year horizon required by the GMA and the longer term development of the county.

The 20-Year Plan was developed following adoption of the Framework Plan. It contains the substance of the plan. For each element included there is generally an introduction, a discussion of that element's relationship to other elements, a description of existing conditions, estimates and projections of future needs, and goals and policies.

For some elements, strategies for implementation of goals and policies are also presented. Policies are intended as necessary to the achievement of goals, while strategies are more specific tools or activities which may help achieve adopted policies. The word "shall" is used to state explicit county commitment to following a policy and to requiring that it be followed by cities and towns. Use of that word indicates minimal flexibility or room for negotiation, while use of the word "should" implies either that there may be more consideration of varying interpretations and/or the policy is somewhat less defined at this point. The number of policies or strategies given for a particular goal in comparison with those for another goal should not be interpreted as an indication of the degree of commitment to the goal; all goals stated have equal commitment from the county. Likewise, no priority is intended by the order in which the twelve (12) elements are presented.