



April 17, 2023

Chair Karen Dill Bowerman  
Clark County Council  
County Manager Kathleen Otto  
PO Box 5000  
Vancouver, WA 98666-5000

***Public Comment re: Clark County's Population Forecast for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update***

Dear Chair Bowerman, Councilors, & County Manager,

The 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update will be the map that our community will follow to develop the next iteration of Clark County. Since the establishment of the Growth Management Act in 1994, the Comprehensive Plan Update has occurred three times. With the annual rate of growth Clark County has been experiencing, the 2025 Update will have a profound impact on the region's future. The success of the update falls on this Council.

The issue before this Council, the population forecast, is one of many building blocks that began with the Buildable Lands Report. When planning for a community of Clark County's population size and accelerated growth rate, every percentage point or fraction thereof holds the future thousands of households and community members in the balance. By law, this body is charged with prudent planning to ensure the development of our community is not disrupted and aligns with the vision we have for the future of Clark County.

Clark County has seen sustained growth over the past two decades which has repeatedly exceeded OFM's population forecasts. Both the recent published buildable lands report and U.S. Census data affirm this pattern of accelerated growth. Additionally, Clark County remains one of the most desirable communities in the Pacific Northwest to live, work, and play which is why in-migration will be a heavy factor over the next 20 years. Our coalition believes OFM forecast is severely underestimating the amount of in-migration our community will see through the next planning horizon. As such, NW Partners for a Stronger Community asserts that the

Office of Financial Management’s middle population forecast based on the annual average growth rate of 1.26% is uncomfortably low.

**Supporting a Growth Rate Between the Middle and High Forecast**

- According to the U.S. Census data presented at the Council’s workshop on April 5, 2023, Clark County grew at an annual average growth rate of 1.7% from 2010-2020.
- From 2020 to 2022, Clark County population grew by 17,589 people. According to the U.S. Census Data, Clark County was home to 503,311 people in 2020. In 2022, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) reported the county’s population at 520,900 residents.
- “The population projection adopted by Council in 2016 assumed an annual average growth rate of 1.26% over the 20-year planning horizon (Issue Paper 7). The growth rate since 2015 has been 10% over the five-year period (Figure 2) or an annual average rate of 2%.” (BLR, pg. 3). This is an underestimate of 0.74%.
- OFM itself asserts that 80% of Washington’s future population growth from now until 2050 will come from migration. On March 28<sup>th</sup> during an informational session with OFM, staff Mike Mohrman announced that “About 80% of the state’s growth between now and 2050 is expected to be attributed to migration.” (Mike Mohrman, [Growth Management Act and Comp Plan Update \(03-28-23\)](#) > [Clark/Vancouver Television \(cvtv.org\)](#) start at 8:50).
- With an annual average growth rate of 1.4% from now until 2045, Clark County’s population would land at 717,198 residents in 2045. Doing the math, 717,198 minus 698,416 (OFM preferred middle number) represents a difference of 18,782 additional residents for the 20-year planning period or an additional 939 residents per year. The additional 18,782 residents will not be accounted for in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update should this Council select OFM’s middle population forecast.

Below, our coalition has provided two data sets that fall between OFM’s middle and high forecast numbers. These two projections of 1.4% and 1.45% predict growth from now, 2022 (520,900 residents) to 2045. We have included the delta between OFM’s middle projection and other scenarios.

<b>Population by 2045</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>	<b>Difference</b>
698,416 (OFM middle)	1.26%	-
717,178	1.40%	+18,762
725,356	1.45%	+26,940
791,809 (OFM high)	1.51%	+93,393

It is for the above reasons, among many, that NW Partners for a Stronger Community-Comprehensive Plan Update Taskforce urges the Clark County Council to adopt a population forecast and associated annual growth rate between the middle and high forecasts outlined by OFM. As stakeholders in the community, we believe adopting a more realistic forecast will benefit Clark County and sets the table for more accurate planning as the Council moves through other elements of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.

The NW Partners for a Stronger Community- Comprehensive Plan Update Taskforce is available for collaboration and to be a resource to the Council and Clark County staff. We look forward to working with the Council in the coming months to ensure an optimal outcome to the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Sincerely,



**Stephen Horenstein**  
Shareholder  
Schwabe



**Justin Wood**  
Government Affairs Director  
Clark County Association of  
Realtors



**Noelle Lovern**  
Government Affairs Director  
Building Industry Association  
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