

From: [Oliver Orjiako](#)
To: [Jeffrey Delapena](#)
Subject: FW: UGA
Date: Monday, April 14, 2025 8:21:46 AM
Attachments: [2025UGACountyLtr.pdf](#)
[2024FinalAgEconReport.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

FYI. Thanks.



OLIVER ORJIAKO
Director
COMMUNITY PLANNING

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From: Gerald Jones <zocaloranch1484@outlook.com>
Sent: Friday, April 11, 2025 5:57 PM
To: Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: UGA

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Gerald Jones

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Email: zocaloranch1484@outlook.com

Filename: 2025UGACountyLtr

TO: Sue Marshall, Glen Yung, Michelle Belkot, Wil Fuentes, and Matt Little

DATE: 4/11/25

SUBJECT: Clark County - Growth Management Act (GMA) – 2025 - 20-year Plan

COUNTY PARCEL – 986047199 (CNB), 212566000, and 212590000 – 44.92 acres

My wife, Beverly, and I own property directly adjacent to the City of Ridgefield that is zoned for agricultural. Our parcel 986047199 is zoned as CNB, with a Ridgefield mixed use overlay. These parcels are contiguous and are located on the north side of 412 NW 279th Street directly in front of the new Ridgefield school site that was recently approved to be built. We are long-time County residents who farmed the land for 35 years, but it is no longer commercially significant or viable for agriculture due to surrounding urbanization and the nature of the land itself.

The UGA project is a massive project that is not performed every year. This project is supposed to support housing, job growth, and a full range of services for the next 20 years through 2045. This project is not one that just showed up as a project to be performed by the County in 2025, it was well known as to the responsibilities of the Clark County Council, and Clark County Planning Commission. How will your plan support Ridgefield for the next 20 years given that your responsibilities are not fulfilled? Seems like blind planning!

As landowners, we fulfilled our responsibility by engaging Johnson Economics to conduct the Agricultural Resource Land Analysis for Determination of De-Designation in Clark County, Washington, at a cost of \$12,350.00. This cost does not include our legal fees. This document was provided to the City of Ridgefield, and to the County. With this email, I will include a copy of the land analysis performed by Johnson Economics.

The City of Ridgefield did their portion of the work on the UGA, yet the County Council chose not to perform your responsibility! Why would the County deliberately decide not to do your part of the process?

We bought parcel 212566000 in 1989, and it has been farmed for 35 years. Initially, we raised dairy calf's, then strawberries, raspberries, and currently a small portion is in thornless blackberries. Our 2025 property tax on this parcel was \$6,198.86 and the earned

income per year may pay 20 to 30 percent of the annual tax bill. We retired in 2004. I was employed full time as an accountant, while my wife held full-time positions as an office worker and teacher. The income from the farm has never been sufficient to live on, much less pay for the annual property tax. My wife and I are in our early 80's. We want to sell our land and get the best price available. There is no money in farming due to economy of scale, no one wants to farm due to the high cost and labor issues.

I ask one retired farmer – what type of farming would you get into that requires the least amount of equipment and labor. He said hay farming, but the customer has to pick it up in the field...no storage or delivery. We don't own hay equipment, so I ask Clark County Lawn & Tractor to provide me with the cost of the equipment I would need – \$131,563.92. It would take many years to recover the equipment cost, much less the cost of fuel, fertilizer, weed spray, and labor.

We have had several offers to buy our land subject to it being zoned for housing. So, developers know the need for affordable housing, yet the County believes their plan will work until 2045?

Hopefully, the State will grant an extension to the County, and you will perform your duty and responsibility on this subject but even if they do not, we urge the County to complete the resource lands study.

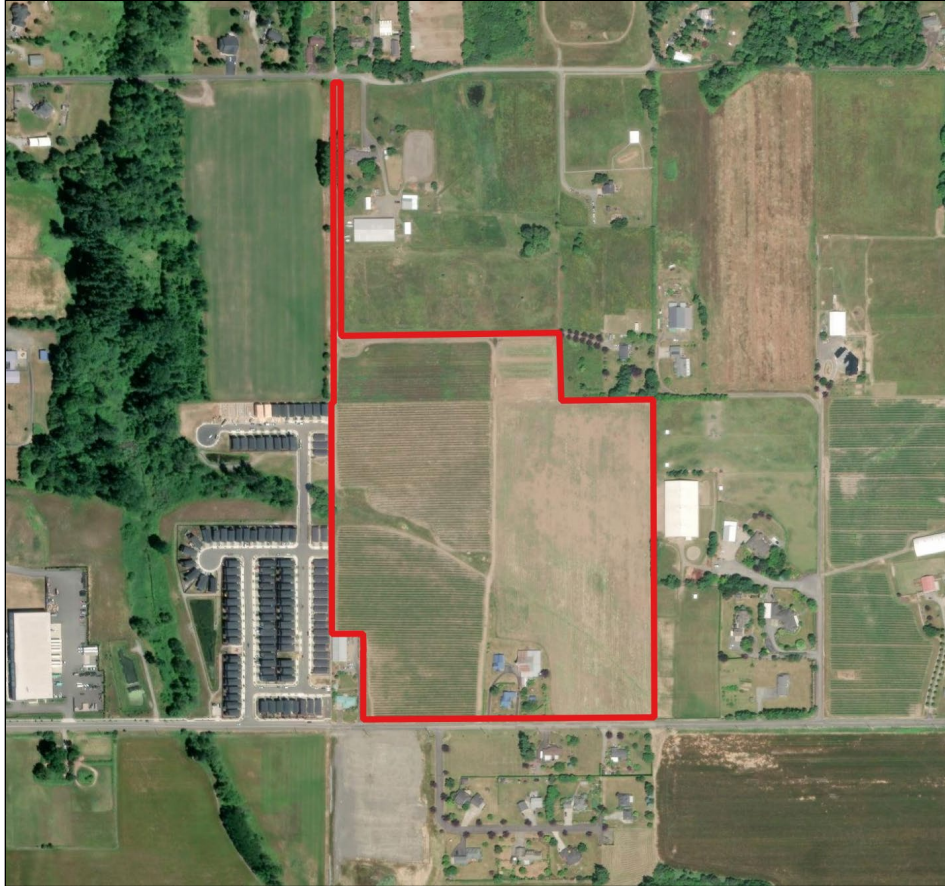
Thanks In Advance,

Gerald Jones

360-601-5764



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AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE LAND ANALYSIS FOR DETERMINATION OF DE-DESIGNATION IN CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

PREPARED FOR
GERALD AND BEVERLY JONES
JULY 2024

JOHNSON ECONOMICS, LLC
621 SW Alder St, Suite 506
Portland, Oregon 97205



**JOHNSON
ECONOMICS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

JOHNSON ECONOMICS was retained by GERALD AND BEVERLY JONES to evaluate a cluster of parcels in Clark County (referenced throughout as the “subject property”) under the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) to determine if they meet the criteria of agricultural resource lands. These criteria are:

- (a) *The land is not already characterized by urban growth.*
- (b) *The land is used or capable of being used for agricultural production (based on physical characteristics).*
- (c) *The land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture (WA 365-190-050).*

The analysis will consider site-specific and broader local trends in land use, urban growth, and future potential for agricultural use as detailed in WA 365-190-050. The main components of this study are:

- *Characterization of urban growth around the subject property.*
- *Determining if the subject property is primarily devoted to commercial agriculture production.*
- *Analysis of the long-term commercial significance of agricultural production at the subject property.*
- *Review of the criteria for agricultural resource lands in the context of the subject property.*
- *Assessment of the state of agriculture in Clark County, including agricultural and urban trends.*
- *Recommendations for de-designation of the subject property.*

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The property is characterized by urban growth. It joins the Ridgefield urban growth boundary (UGB), and almost 650 new homes have been built within two miles of the property since 2018. Developed land close to the property is primarily residential, commercial, or industrial, though immediately surrounding parcels are mostly agricultural.

The availability of public facilities and services is mixed at the subject property. It is outside the City of Ridgefield utility service areas, though Clark Public Utilities recently updated adjacent power and wastewater lines. Schools and emergency services are within four miles and the nearest hospital is about nine miles away.

The soils on the subject property are within a range of classifications and are suitable for most crops, including berries, which are currently grown on the property. The site holds consumptive irrigation rights that allow for farming this variety of crops. However, the productivity of farm operations is below a profitable level.

The property is designated as agricultural land under the Current Use program, a tax deferral that reduces the taxable value of each parcel. The total assessed fair market value of land in the parcels is over \$1.8 million, much higher than the current taxable use, rendering them infeasible to purchase for anything other than development.

Land in Clark County is trending towards more residential use and less agricultural use. From 2017 to 2022, land in farms decreased by 38%. Over that same period, Clark County’s population increased by 48,000 (a 10% increase) and almost 27,000 new residential units (16,000 single-family homes) were permitted.

Ridgefield is also trending towards more residential and commercial use and less agricultural use. From 2017 to 2022, Ridgefield’s population increased by over 200%, and over 3,000 new residential units (2,500 single-family homes) were permitted. Furthermore, over 430,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space is in planning or under construction within a mile of the subject property.

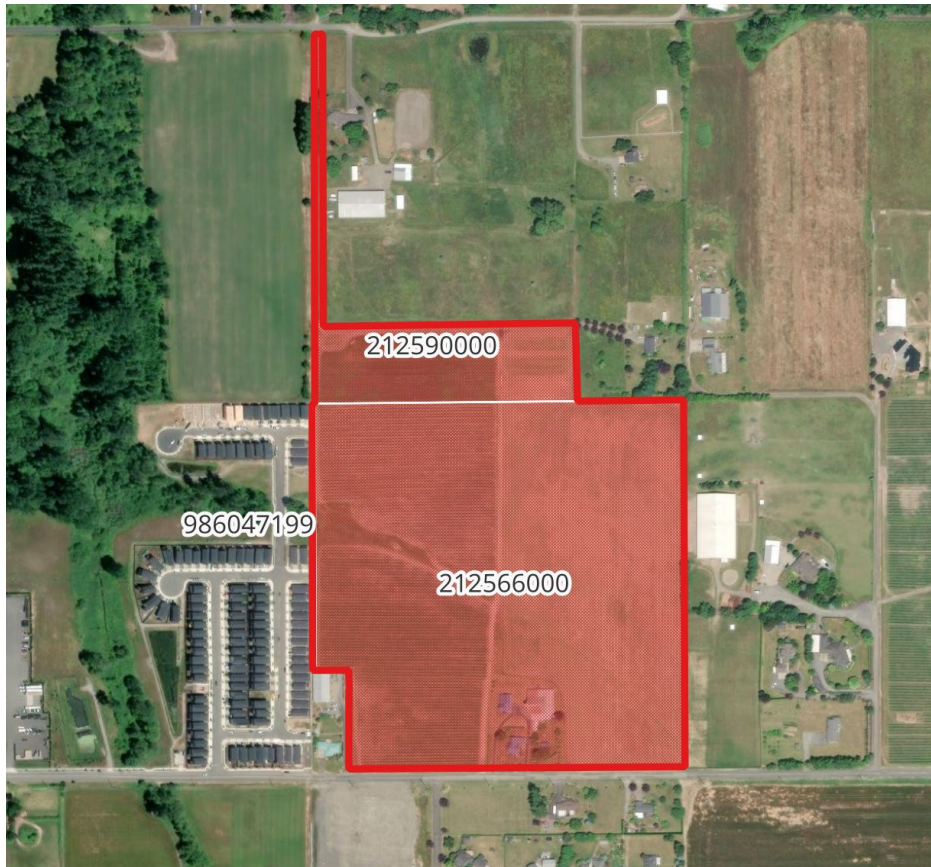
We find that the subject property does not meet the criteria of agricultural resource land as defined by the Washington Growth Management Act, and therefore, we recommend de-designation.



III. SITE ANALYSIS

The subject property is comprised of three parcels that total 44.6 acres. The parcels are mapped with their ID numbers below. The two larger parcels (212590000 and 212566000) are zoned for agricultural use, and the small parcel (986047199) is zoned Commercial – Neighborhood Business (CNB).

FIGURE 3.1: PARCELS CONTAINED IN THE SUBJECT PROPERTY



SOURCE: Clark County, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

PROPERTY BACKGROUND

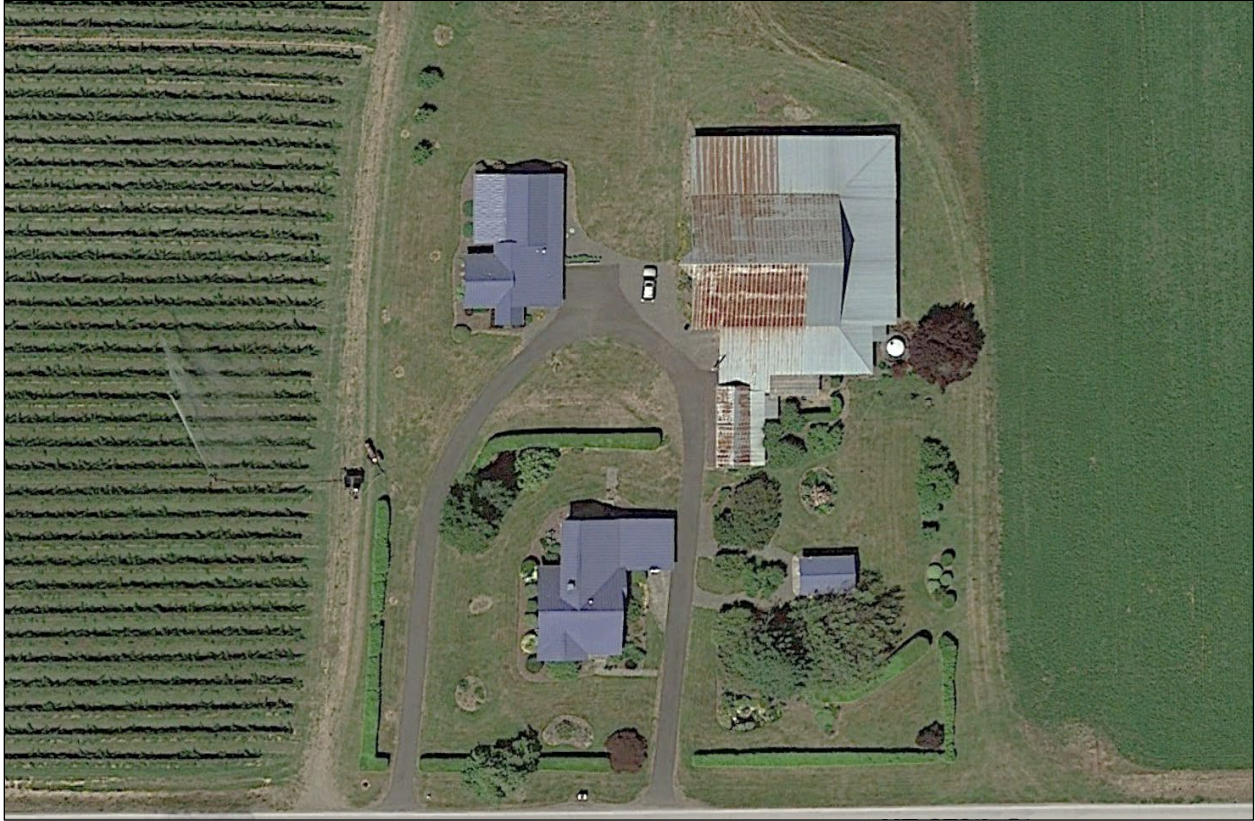
Before 1989, the farm was owned by the Garland Pittman family and produced pole beans and hay. Gerald and Beverly Jones bought the property in 1989, continuing to grow hay. They also purchased cows from local dairy farmers and resold the cows after their first calf.

About 20 years ago, Gerald and Beverly Jones began leasing the farm to Jerry Dobbins. He rotated crops of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and fescue grass. The Jones farm was only 37 acres of 300-400 acres throughout Washington and Oregon that Dobbins farmed. In 2018, Brett Jones took over 17 acres of blackberry farming and has continued that operation. In 2019, Kevin Dobbins grew clover on the remaining 20 acres of the agricultural parcel, but that area is not being farmed now.



There are four buildings on the largest parcel. The main home and farm buildings were built between 1930 and 1940 and the smaller house was added prior to 1951; the exact construction years are unknown. According to the Clark County Assessor, the farm buildings are in fair to badly worn condition. There are no buildings on the other parcels.

FIGURE 3.2: BUILDINGS ON LARGEST PARCEL, 2021



SOURCE: Google Earth, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

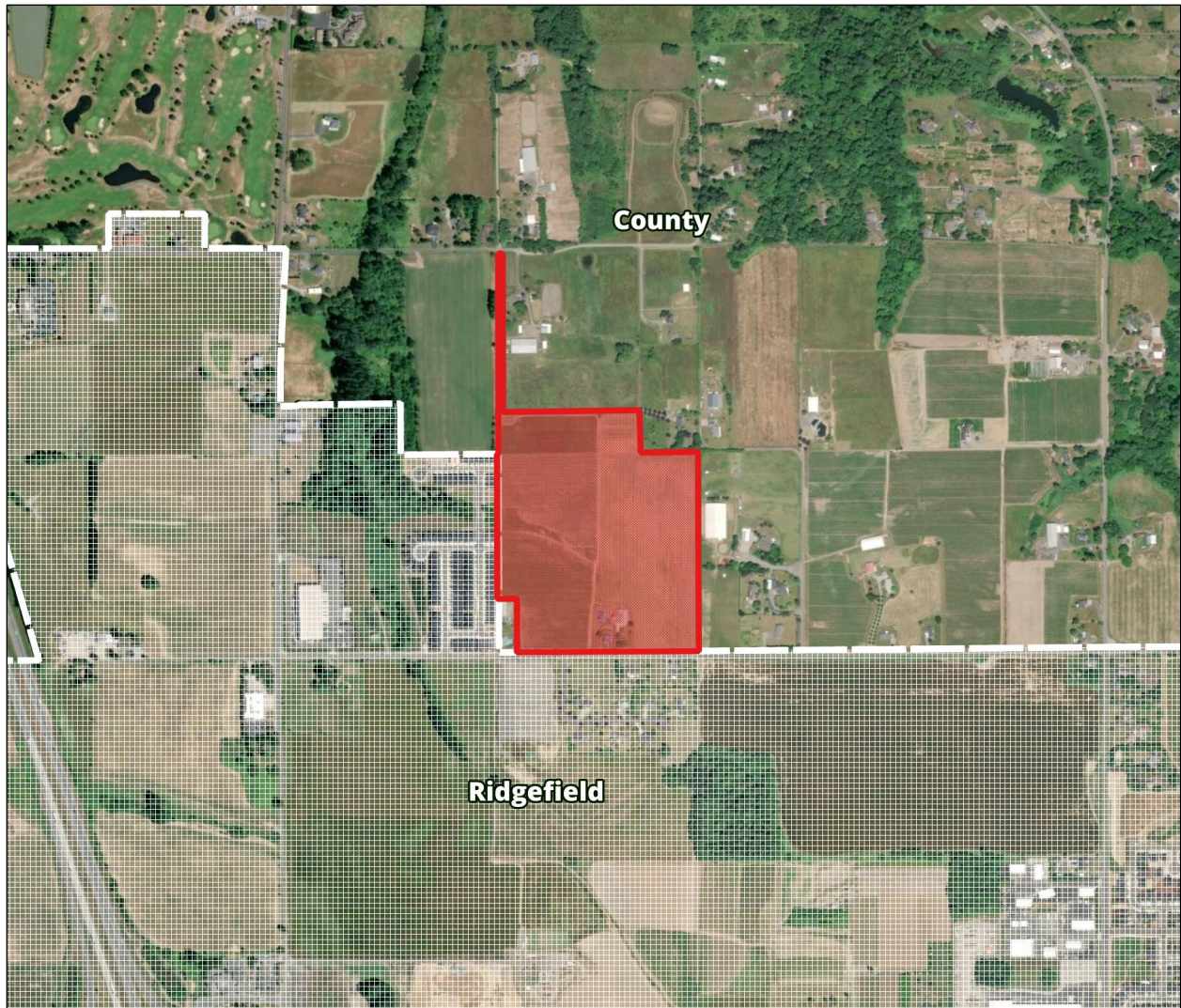
Two out of the three parcels are within the Current Use program and have been since the development of Clark County's comprehensive plan, adopted in the 1990s. Current Use allows open space, timber, agricultural, and forest lands to be taxed at the value of their current use, rather than at their assessed value. This program is a tax deferral, so if the lands are withdrawn, the owner must pay at least seven years of back taxes at the assessed value, plus interest in some cases. This is detailed later in the report. Clark County does not use the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs), which is a tax deferral program similar to current use.



IV. CHARACTERIZATION OF URBAN GROWTH

The subject property is adjacent to the Ridgefield Urban Growth Boundary to the west and south. The parcels on the inside edges of these boundaries are primarily residential or agricultural. These boundaries were last updated in 2022, according to Clark County’s GIS system.

FIGURE 4.1: RIDGEFIELD URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY, 2022

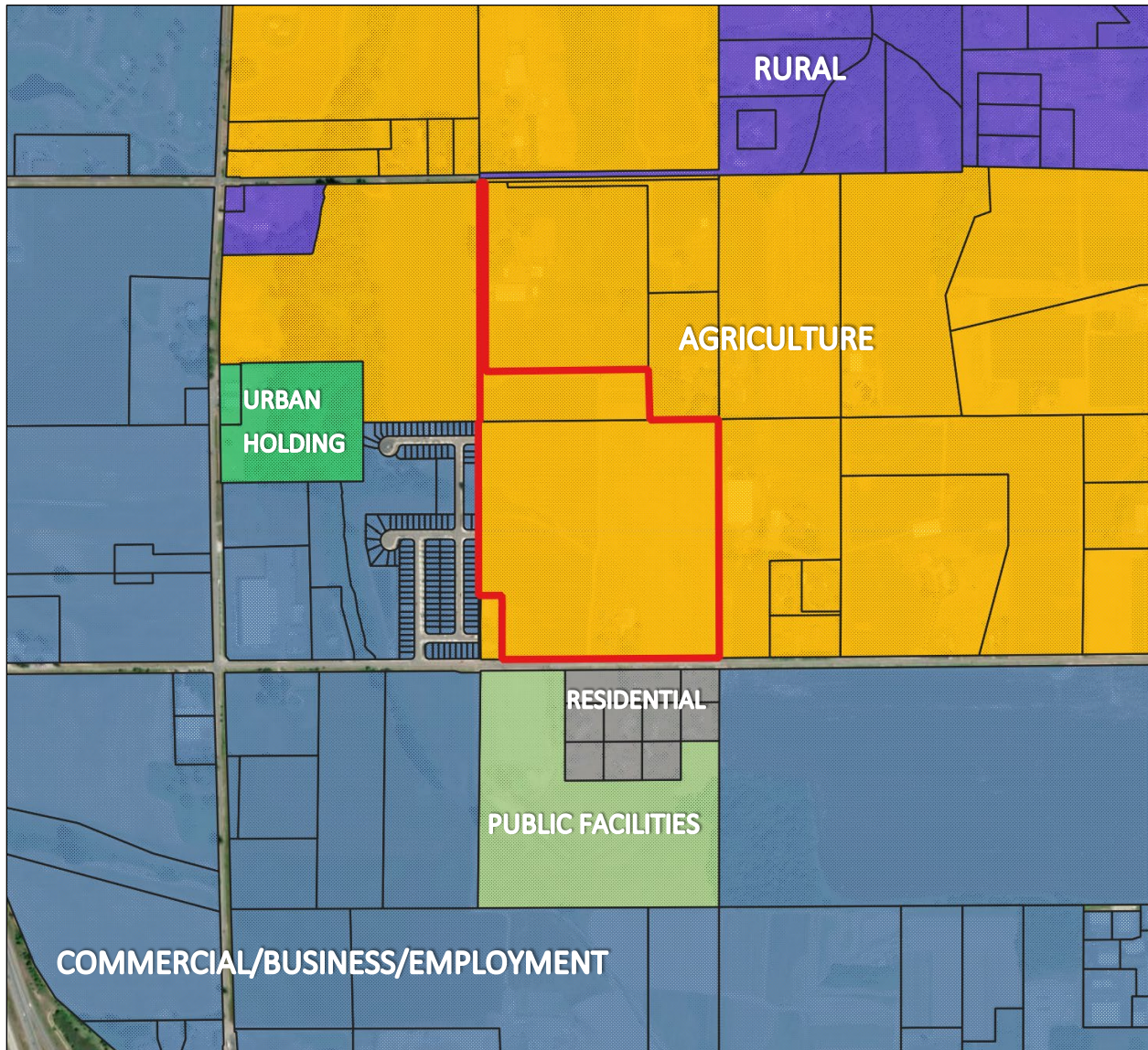


SOURCE: Clark County, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

The subject property is primarily zoned for agricultural use. Agricultural zoning continues to the north and east of the property. The land to the west and south of the subject property is zoned for commercial, business, and employment uses.



FIGURE 4.2: CLARK COUNTY ZONING, SUBJECT AND SURROUNDING PROPERTIES



SOURCE: Clark County, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

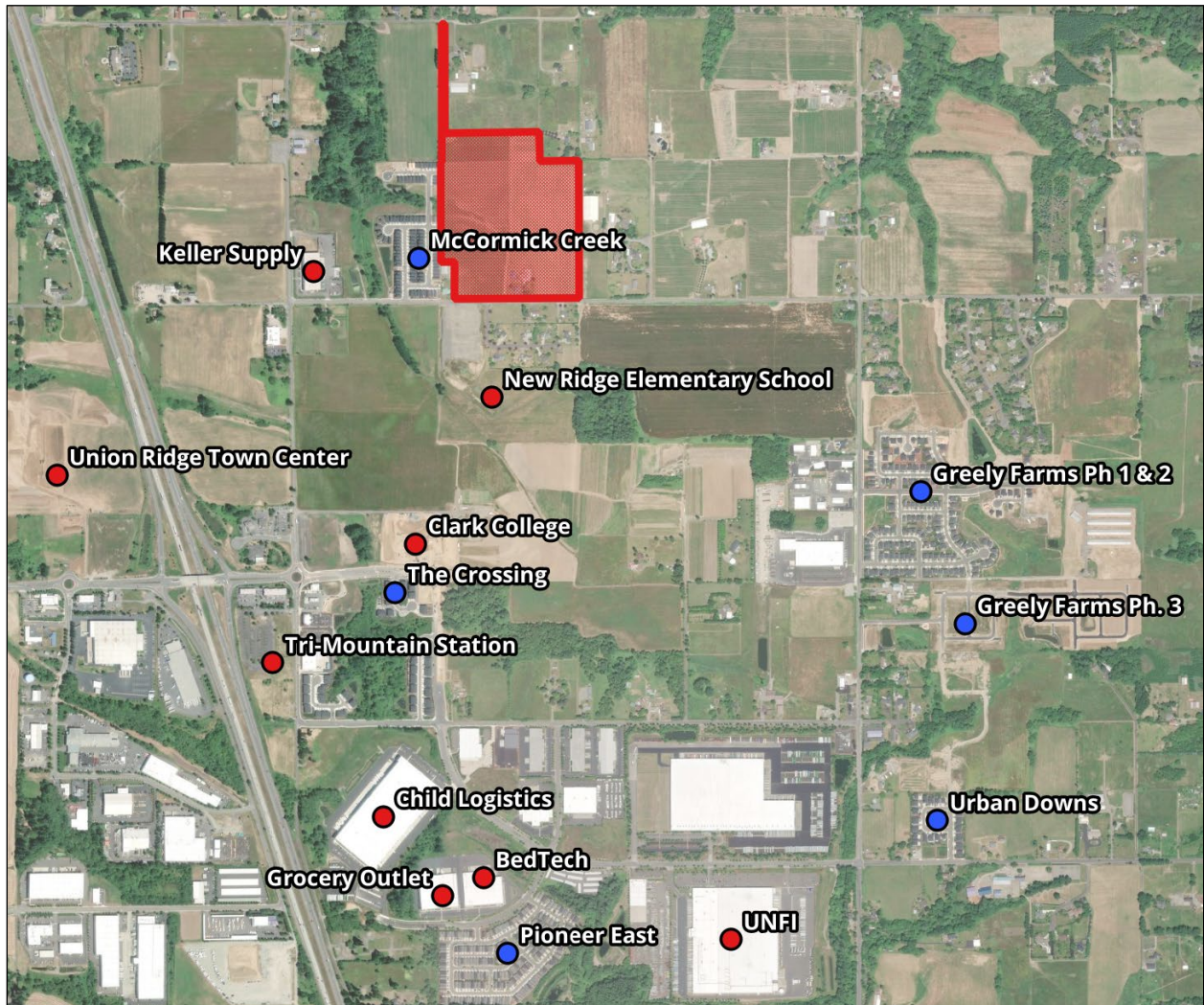
Within about a mile of the subject property, five subdivisions have been built out since 2018. McCormick Creek, immediately to the left of the subject site, was completed in late 2023 and includes 90 homes. About half a mile to the south is The Crossing, a 132-unit townhome development completed in 2023, and south of that is Pioneer East, completed in 2022 with 209 units. Greely Farms to the southeast was built starting in 2019 with 185 units in its first two phases. The third phase, which has 179 units, is still under construction. The last recent subdivision is Urban Downs, located just south of Greely Farms with 27 homes.

There are also several commercial, educational, and industrial developments within the same radius. Union Ridge Town Center to the west is expected to be completed by early 2025. It will have 14 small commercial sites anchored by Costco. Tri-Mountain Station, a nine-building commercial center, is still waiting on permits. Clark College at Boschma Farms, opening in 2025, will specialize in advanced manufacturing technologies, reflecting Ridgefield's large



industrial sector. The remainder are small to large warehouse buildings. These developments are mapped below: blue points are residential, and red points are commercial/industrial/educational buildings.

FIGURE 4.3: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN PROXIMITY, 2024

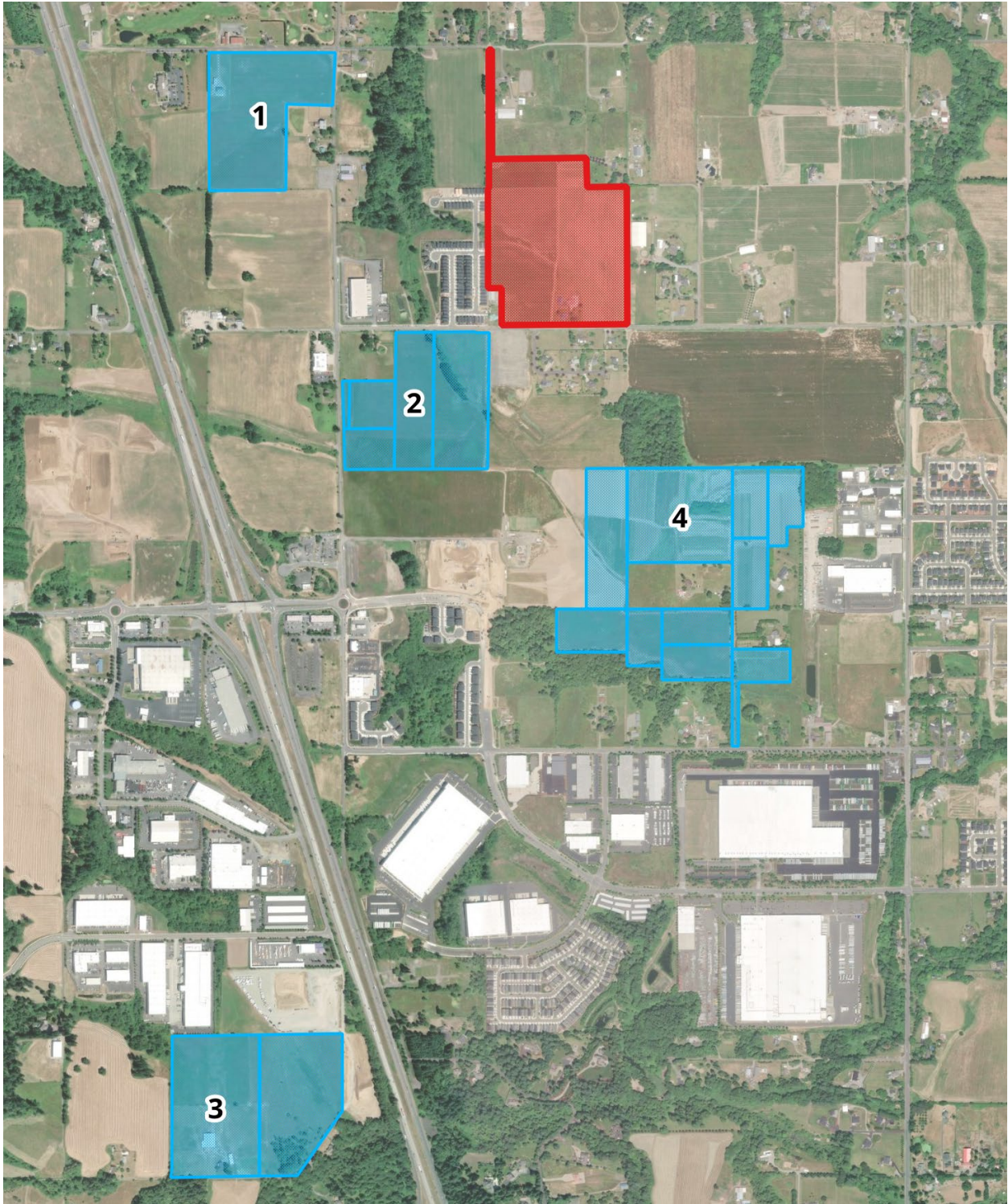


SOURCE: Clark County, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

Eight parcels near the subject site were recently listed for sale (clusters 1-3, shown below). There are also twelve parcels that will be listed for sale soon (cluster 4, shown below). These parcels are advertised as zoned for commercial, employment, and industrial uses, though the parcels in clusters 2 and 4 are currently designated as agricultural land under Current Use, according to Clark County land records.



FIGURE 4.4: LAND FOR SALE IN PROXIMITY, 2024



SOURCE: Clark County, local brokers, local media, JOHNSON ECONOMICS



V. CURRENT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

About 17 acres of the subject property are currently being farmed with blackberries. Over the last 20-30 years, a variety of berries and grasses have been grown on this portion – parcels 212566000 and 986047199.

FIGURE 5.1: STREET VIEW OF BLACKBERRY FARMING, 2019



SOURCE: Google Earth, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

The remainder of parcel 212566000 (about 20 acres) is not being farmed, and the grass and weeds currently growing there are unsuitable for haying. There is no satellite imagery available.

Within half a mile of the subject site, there are several other small farms. To the east, there are three other blackberry farms; these have operated since at least 2015. A large agricultural property immediately to the southeast that produced corn in the mid-2010s is being developed for residential homes. This development seems to be in its final stages. An agricultural property to the northwest was a Christmas tree farm at some point, but does not currently appear to be farmed, and was recently listed for sale as employment land.



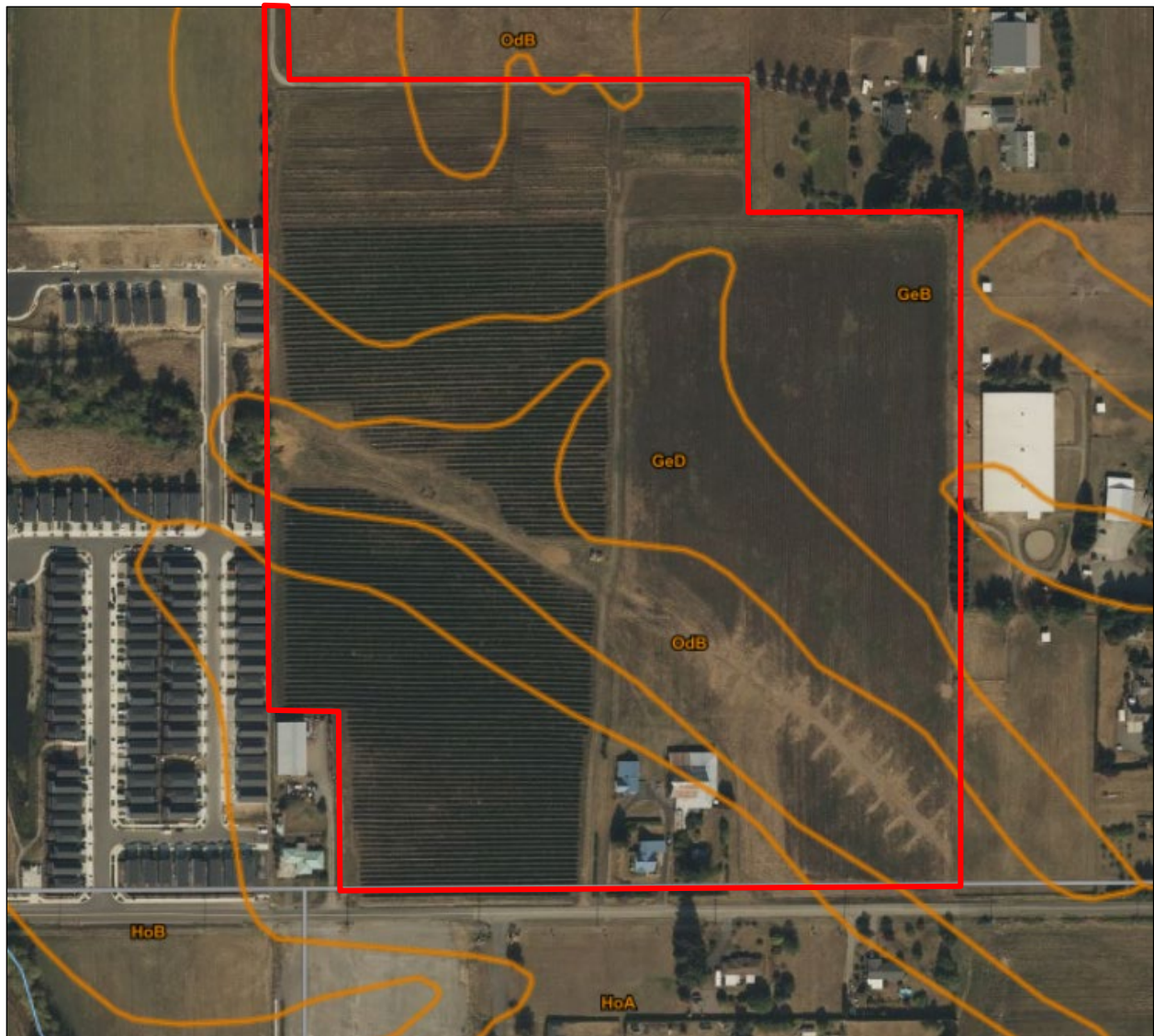
VI. COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR AGRICULTURE

LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION & WATER RESOURCES

Land capability classification refers to the suitability of soils for growing field crops. Class I soils are the most versatile soils and Class VIII the least. Generally, land with soil classified at IV or higher is unsuitable for most crops but may be appropriate for pasture/grazing use.

The subject property is made up of a mix of soils and land capability classifications. Most of the property area, especially on the north and east sides, is Gee silt loam (GeB and GeD), both 0-8 percent slopes and 8-20 percent slopes. These are Class II and IV soils, which, according to the Clark County Assessor, are suitable for most crops and pasture. The southwest corner is Hillsboro silt loam (HoA) and Class I, suitable for any crops. There are also a few small areas of Odne silt loam (OdB). This soil type is Class VI and generally not suitable for most crops.

FIGURE 6.1: USDA SOIL CLASSIFICATION, 2019



SOURCE: USDA Web Soil Survey, JOHNSON ECONOMICS



Additionally, the subject property has good access to water resources to support agricultural use. The largest parcel holds a consumptive irrigation right claim from the East Fork of the Lewis River, allowing for farming of water-intensive crops such as berries. Consumptive water use, which can include consumptive use of groundwater or consumptive use of surface water, describes water use that removes water from a supply without returning to the supply. The other parcels do not hold claims to water rights.

AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES

To the south of the subject property is North 10th Street/Northwest 279th Street, which has two travel lanes, each about 15 feet wide. These are separated by a double yellow line. There are no bike lanes or sidewalks. The posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour, and the closest intersection, North 10th Street and North 65th Avenue to the west, is controlled with stop signs on North 10th Street. North 65th Avenue is included in the Ridgefield Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (2024-2029) as a development-funded project; it will be completed by a private developer, as part of a larger project, rather than by the city. An additional road just south of the subject property is expected to be added within this time frame as well.

The subject property is currently under the jurisdiction of the Rural/Resource Sewer District. However, it is adjacent to the City of Ridgefield Wastewater Service Area on the south boundary of the site. The jurisdiction recently extended the sewer line east from the planned Ridgefield Elementary School site on North 10th Street/Northwest 279th Street to North 10th Avenue. There is also a new pumping station for the residential homes in development on North 10th Avenue. Similarly, the Clark Public Utility District (CPU) installed new power lines and poles around the subject property.

Water is also provided by Clark Public Utilities. There is a CPU well just south of the property. The City of Ridgefield is in the process of updating their Water System Plan, which is expected to be completed by fall 2024. This update could provide more information about where to look for water system expansions in the future.

AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

The subject property is less than half a mile northeast of the Clark-Cowlitz Fire Rescue Station 21, within the Clark-Cowlitz Fire District. It is about four miles east of the Ridgefield Police Department. The nearest medical center with an emergency department is Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center, about nine miles to the south of the subject property. There is a primary and urgent care clinic about a mile southwest of the subject property, on Pioneer Street.

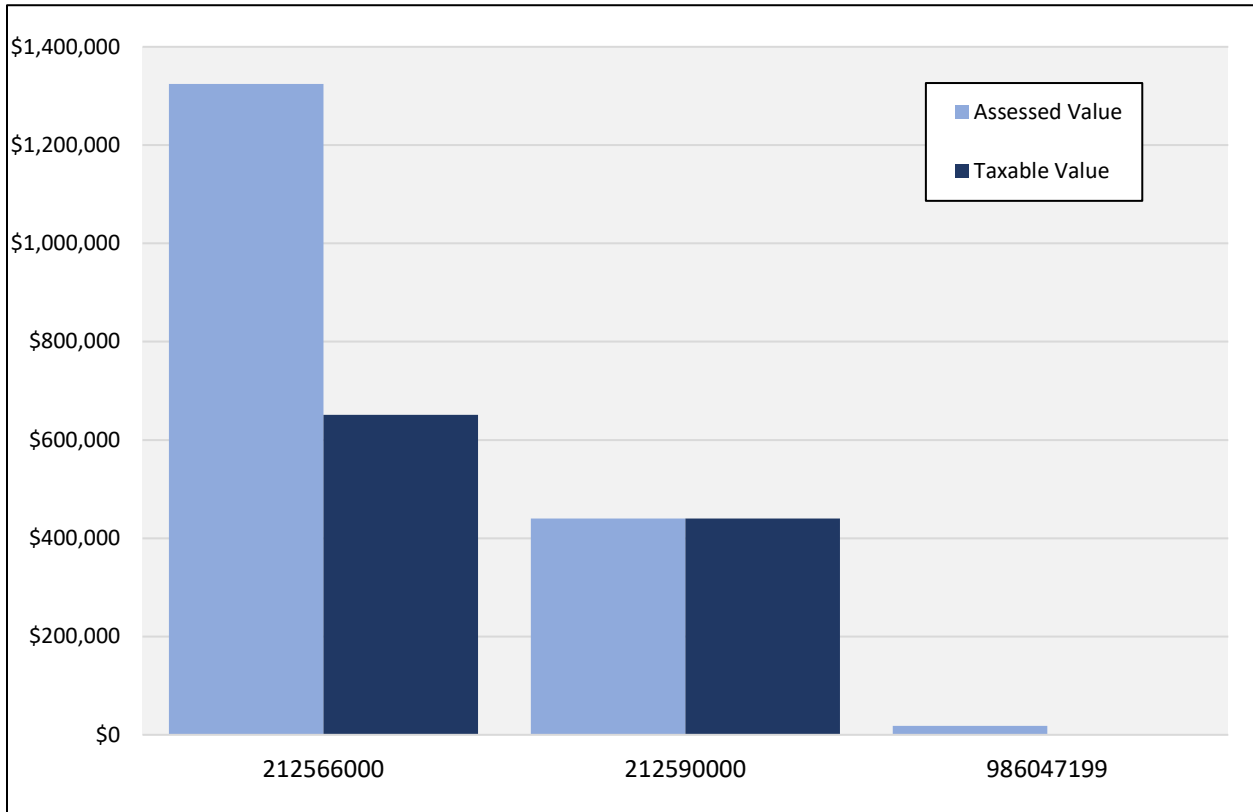
The subject property is in the Ridgefield School District, about four miles west of Union Ridge Elementary School. However, the district is set to begin construction on a new elementary school on the large lot directly south of the subject property, if voters approve the construction cost. The property is just over three miles from Ridgefield High School and View Ridge Middle School.

TAX STATUS

Two of the three parcels that make up the subject property are designated under the Current Use program as agricultural lands, so they are taxed at a reduced value from their assessed market value. The graph below illustrates the difference between the assessed value and the taxable value under this program.



FIGURE 6.2: ASSESSED VALUE AND TAXABLE VALUE OF SUBJECT PARCELS, 2024



SOURCE: Clark County Assessor, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

The basic definition of farm and agricultural land under Current Use is:

“any parcel of land or contiguous parcels of land that are 20 or more acres: (i) devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities, for commercial purposes; (ii) enrolled in the federal conservation reserve program or its successor administered by the United States Department of Agriculture; or (iii) other similar commercial activities as may be established by rule... ‘Commercial agricultural purposes’ means the use of land on a continuous and regular basis, prior to and subsequent to application for classification or reclassification that demonstrates that the owner or lessee is engaged in and intends to obtain through lawful means, a monetary profit from cash income by producing an agricultural product” (RCW Chapter 84.34 and 84.33).

While the parcels currently meet these requirements, if the parcels are sold for non-agricultural use, they will need to be withdrawn from the program. According to Clark County Assessor records, the parcels have been designated under Current Use since at least 2006, so removing them from the program would incur only back taxes and interest and no additional penalties. Upon withdrawal from Current Use, we estimate the additional back taxes plus interest to be around \$85,415.

PROXIMITY TO URBAN GROWTH AREAS

The subject property is adjacent to the Ridgefield Urban Growth Boundary. It is within one mile of six residential projects that were recently built or that are under construction, with a total of over 800 new homes. Additionally, there are multiple commercial and industrial developments within a mile of the subject property. It is also adjacent to a lot planned for a new elementary school. This demonstrates proximity to urban growth areas.



PARCEL SIZE

The largest parcel, which is the only one used for farming, is 38 acres. Less than half of the parcel (17 acres) is currently being farmed. The smaller parcel to the north of it is 6.44 acres, and the smallest parcel is 0.24 acres. These are significantly larger residential parcels in subdivisions around the site, which range from 0.06 to 0.17 acres. Industrial parcels slightly farther south range from 6 -40 acres; these are similar in size to the parcels within the subject property.

LAND USE PATTERNS & INTENSITY OF SURROUNDING LAND USE

To the east of the subject property are more blackberry farms. To the north and south is Current Use-designated agricultural land, including a few parcels that have been farmed in the past but do not appear to be farmed currently. Immediately to the west is a 90-lot subdivision, McCormick Creek, which was built in 2021. Farther to the west and south are commercial and industrial centers – many permitted and built within the last 5 years.

New residential development is taking place primarily to the west and south, inside the Ridgefield UGA. As those cities grow, new residential subdivisions will move towards the current UGA boundary and potentially even adjoin the subject property, as is the case with the McCormick Creek subdivision. Agricultural use of the subject property would stand in contrast to anticipated land use patterns of surrounding areas.

HISTORY OF PERMITS ISSUED NEARBY

Since 2017, six subdivision permits have been issued within one mile of the subject property. These have added 643 new homes to the area, not including 179 homes under construction. Nine commercial and industrial building permits, plus one permit for a new Clark College building and one for an elementary school, have been issued since 2017, leading to over 1,320,000 completed square feet of commercial and industrial space. There are still 380,000 square feet under construction, and 130,000 SF in permit review. Permits issued nearby indicate strongly that the subject property is characterized by urban growth.

FIGURE 6.2: RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 2017

#	Project Name	Address	Status	Permit Year	Units	
1	Greely Farms Ph. 3	S of Russet Pl	U.C.	2019	179	
2	Pioneer East	7143 S 11th St	Complete	2017	209	
3	McCormick Creek Ph. 2	N 10th Ave & N Fairhope Pl	Complete	2019	90	
4	Greely Farms Ph. 1 & 2	N 4th St & N Russet Pl	Complete	2019	185	
5	Urban Downs	S Goose Loop & S 88th Ave	Complete	2019	27	
6	The Crossing	441 S 69th Pl	Complete	2020	132	
Total Residential Units					822	
#	Project Name	Address	Type	Status	Permit Year	SF
7	Tri-Mountain Station	Pioneer St & S 65th Ave	Commercial	Permit Review	N/A	130,205
8	Union Ridge Town Center	Pioneer St & S 56th Pl	Commercial	U.C.	2023	255,850
9	Clark College	Pioneer ST & NE 259th St	Education	U.C.	2023	49,000
10	New Ridge Elementary	7025 N 10th St	Education	U.C.	2024	75,000
11	Grocery Outlet Distribution Ctr	7000 S 10th St	Industrial	Complete	2018	112,526
12	BedTech Ridgefield	7200 S 10th St	Industrial	Complete	2018	106,167
13	UNFI Dist. Ctr. Expansion	7909 S Union Ridge Pkwy	Industrial	Complete	2018	577,000
14	Keller Supply Company	1200 N 65th Ave	Commercial	Complete	2019	55,868
15	Child Logistics	7001 S Union Ridge Pkwy	Industrial	Complete	2021	468,810
Total SF					1,830,426	

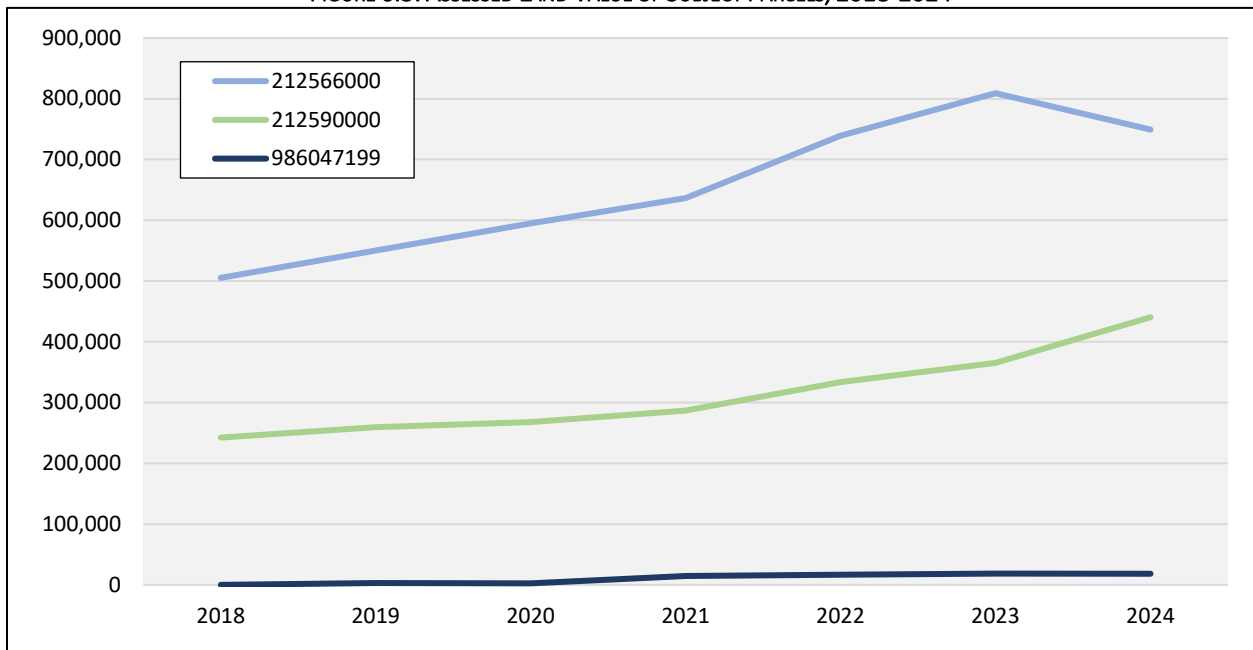
SOURCE: CoStar, Ridgefield Planning Department, Google Earth, local media, JOHNSON ECONOMICS



LAND VALUES UNDER ALTERNATIVE USES

Under the Current Use program, the largest parcel has a taxable value of \$651,474, about half its assessed market value. This includes the value of a home and several other buildings assessed at \$575,192, which is most of that taxable value. The other Current Use parcel has a taxable value of \$115. These values would be maintained if the parcels continued their current agricultural use. At fair market value, the land in the Current Use parcels is assessed at \$749,049 and \$18,241 respectively. The second largest parcel, which is not under Current Use, is valued at \$440,411. The assessed prices reflect residential development values and are much higher than what a farmer would reasonably pay to use the land for agricultural production. Assessed land values have also increased significantly over the last few years. The graph below shows the assessed value over time for each parcel. From 2018 to 2024, assessed values increased by 50-100%.

FIGURE 6.3: ASSESSED LAND VALUE OF SUBJECT PARCELS, 2018-2024



SOURCE: Clark County Assessor, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

PROXIMITY OF MARKETS

The subject property currently produces blackberries, though a variety of berries have been grown over the last 20-40 years. These were sold to Willamette Valley Fruit Company in Salem, Oregon. Ridgefield and Salem are about 70 miles apart. Prior to 2019, there were a few years in which clover, wheat, and fescue grass were grown, but the market proximity for these is not known.

CROP PRODUCTIVITY

The farm currently produces blackberries. Blackberry productivity tables were discontinued by the USDA in 2018, so the following are rough estimates only. Average berry yield per acre in 2017 was about 6,400 pounds, and the average grower price is 77 cents per pound. According to Brett Jones, 6,400 pounds per acre is about the maximum yield at the subject property, in the areas with the highest quality soils. Seventeen acres of berries at this yield and price would result in maximum revenue of about \$83,800. This figure only includes sales and does not take into account any costs.

While yield and price estimates have remained about the same since 2017, the costs of growing blackberries have increased substantially, as stated by Brett Jones. These increased costs include inflation on labor cost and labor insurance, farm insurance, fuel, chemicals, equipment maintenance cost, and depreciation, all dependent on farm



and weather conditions as well as market supply and demand, according to Gerald Jones. Labor costs are particularly high for berries compared to hay (detailed below) as the plants need quite a bit of maintenance and the berries require more careful handling. The small scale of this farming operation implies high per-unit equipment and transaction costs.

We consider hay to be another possible option for farming at the subject property. In Washington State, the average hay crop in 2022 yielded 3.1 to 5.2 tons per acre. County level data is not available, but a 2015 report to de-designate a property in Clark County estimated a yield of 2.0 tons per acre, so we estimate that actual productivity is at the lower end of the state average. The USDA Washington-Oregon Hay Report for early July 2024 estimates sale prices of \$250-300 per ton for good to premium quality hays. From these we estimate maximum hay crop revenue to be \$1,300-1,560 per acre. If we assume exclusive hay production, selling all that is produced, and that there are about 30 acres usable for farming, maximum revenue is \$39,000 to \$46,800 yearly. The costs of growing hay include labor, equipment, and fertilizer as well as transaction costs, though these costs are lower than they are for blackberry production.

The most significant cost associated with farming the subject properties, however, is the cost of buying or renting the land. The assessed market value of the subject property is almost \$1.8 million. While there are no comparable farm sales in the area, it is very unlikely that a farmer would pay that much for a small-scale farming operation.

Prior to 2018, the subject property was one of many properties farmed commercially by one farmer. Since then, Gerald Jones, the current owner of the subject property, has rented the 17 acres of berry crop to Brett Jones. Brett Jones disclosed to us that the berry crop has not been profitable. At best, he has made 20% of the revenue in profit (about \$17,000 from our estimates), though in many other years, he broke even or incurred a loss. Additionally, the berry picking equipment available at the subject property has deteriorated in recent years, according to Gerald Jones. With these current market conditions, there is no profit margin available to purchase new equipment for berries or for hay. Alone, the area designated for agricultural use is small and not viable for commercial farming. As it is not economically feasible to conduct agricultural operations on the subject property, it does not have long-term commercial significance for agriculture.

VII. THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN CLARK COUNTY

The Washington GMA specifies that a countywide analysis must be conducted in order for cities and counties to de-designate natural resource lands (including agricultural lands) within the county. This Comprehensive Plan is required by the Washington GMA to be updated by the end of 2025, after its last update in 2016. In lieu of this full countywide analysis, we include a summary of the state of agriculture and urban development in Clark County.

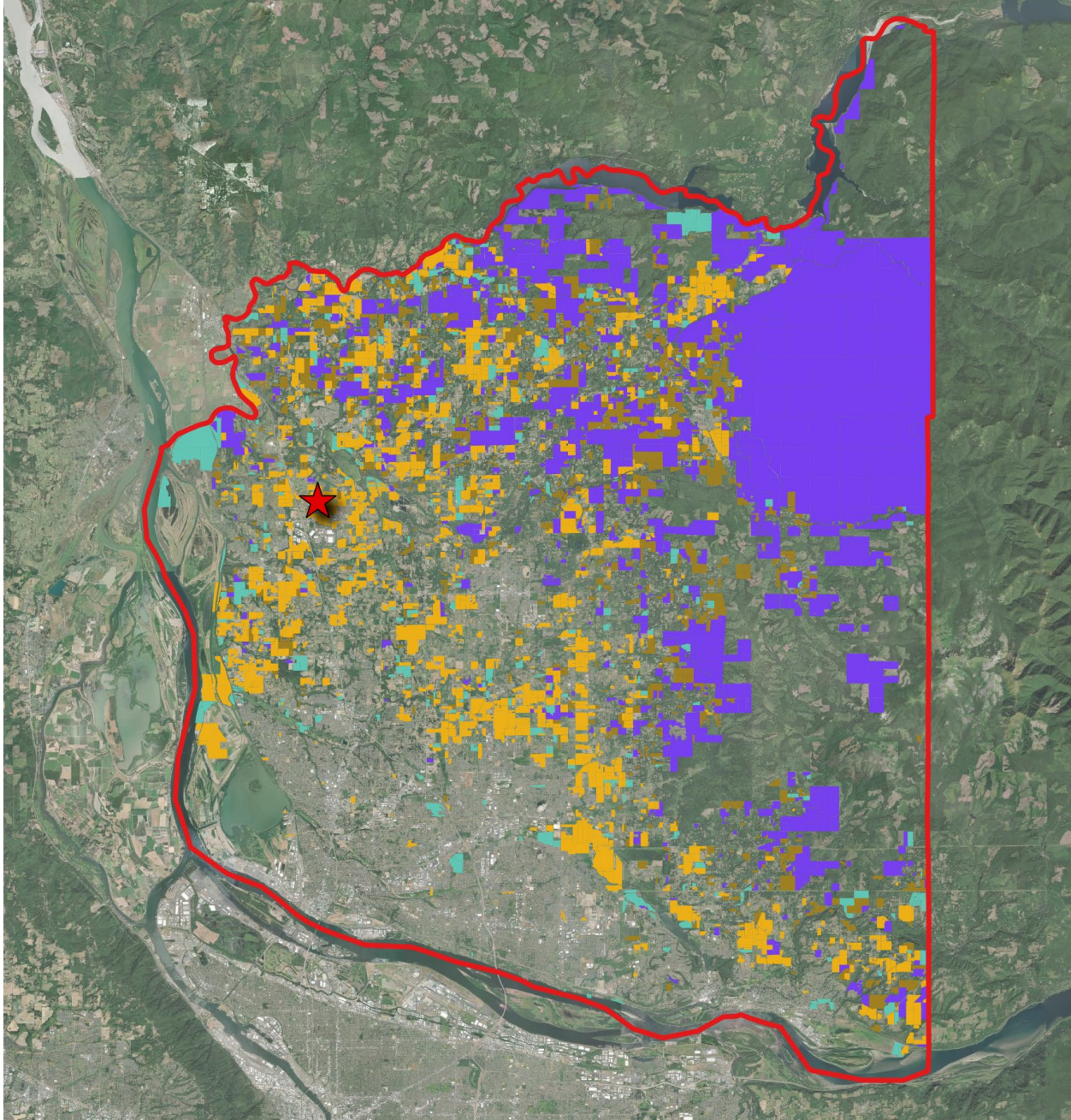
As of 2022, there were just over 1,900 farms in Clark County, according to the USDA. This includes 56,000 total acres, down 38% from 2017, when there were over 90,000 acres of land in farms. However, the number of farms in the county only decreased by 3%, suggesting that either a few large farms have ceased operations or that many farms have decreased in size.

On average, farms in Clark County are primarily small in size and scale: almost 70% of farms make less than \$5,000 in sales, and almost 90% of farms are smaller than 50 acres. Average farm-related income increased 132% from 2017 to 2022, but average net cash farm income is still negative at -\$230. The most produced crops in Clark County, by acreage, are hay (13,500 acres), Christmas trees (910 acres) and berries (855 acres).

Natural resource lands in Clark County are designated under the Current Use program, as described earlier in this report. About 36% of the county's land by area is classified under this program. Of the total land in Current Use, 25% is agricultural land (yellow), and the rest is open space (teal), designated forest land (purple), or timber land (brown). The subject property makes up about 0.1% of the total agricultural land area in Clark County.



FIGURE 7.1: CLARK COUNTY LAND UNDER CURRENT USE, 2024



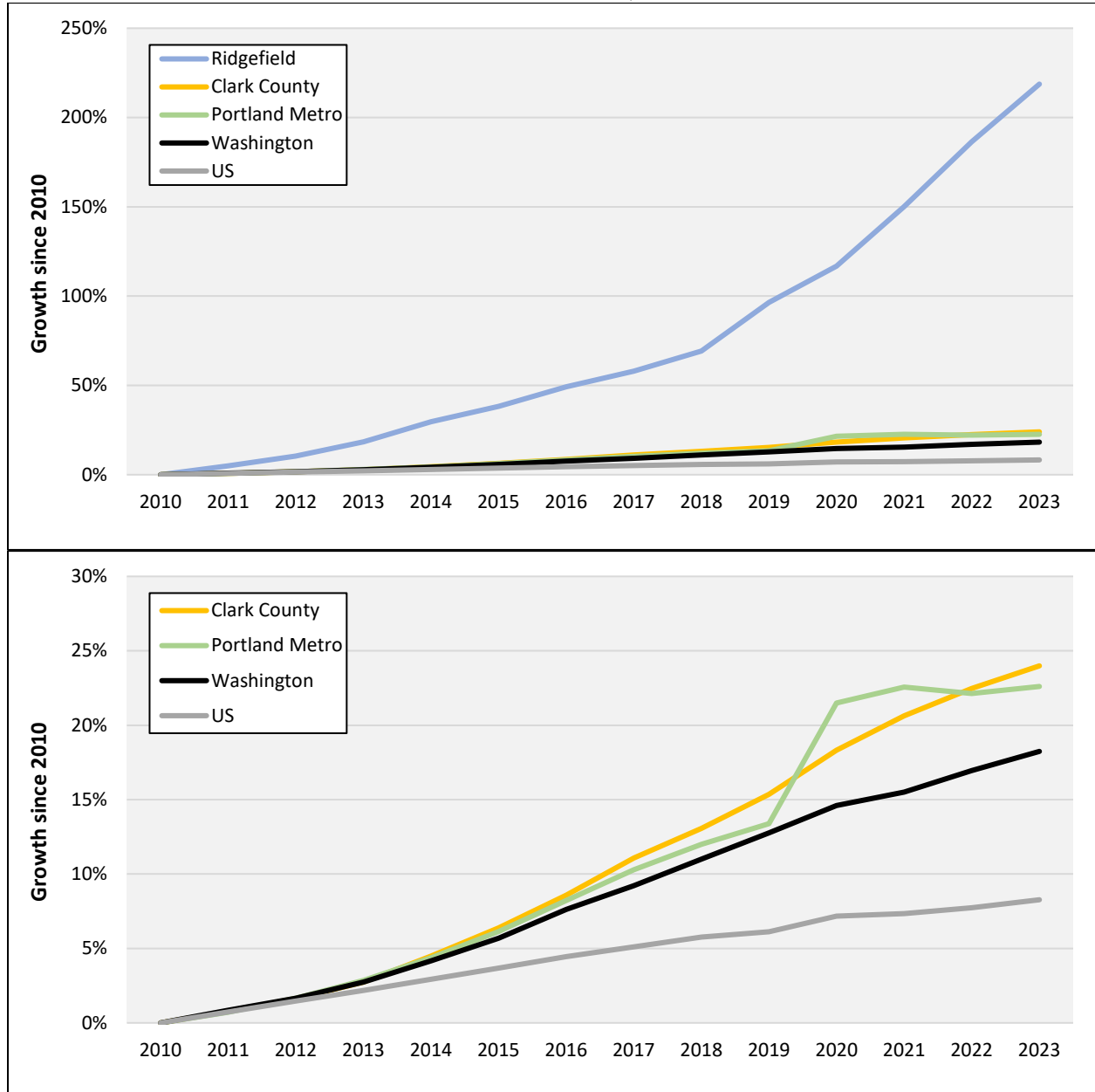
SOURCE: Clark County, JOHNSON ECONOMICS



POPULATION & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The county has seen population growth of almost 25% since 2010, which is equivalent to just over 100,000 people. Over that same period, Ridgefield saw a 219% increase in population, or just over 10,000 people. This is exceptionally fast compared to larger geographies, illustrated in the graphs below.

FIGURE 7.2: POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 2010, GEOGRAPHIC COMPARISON



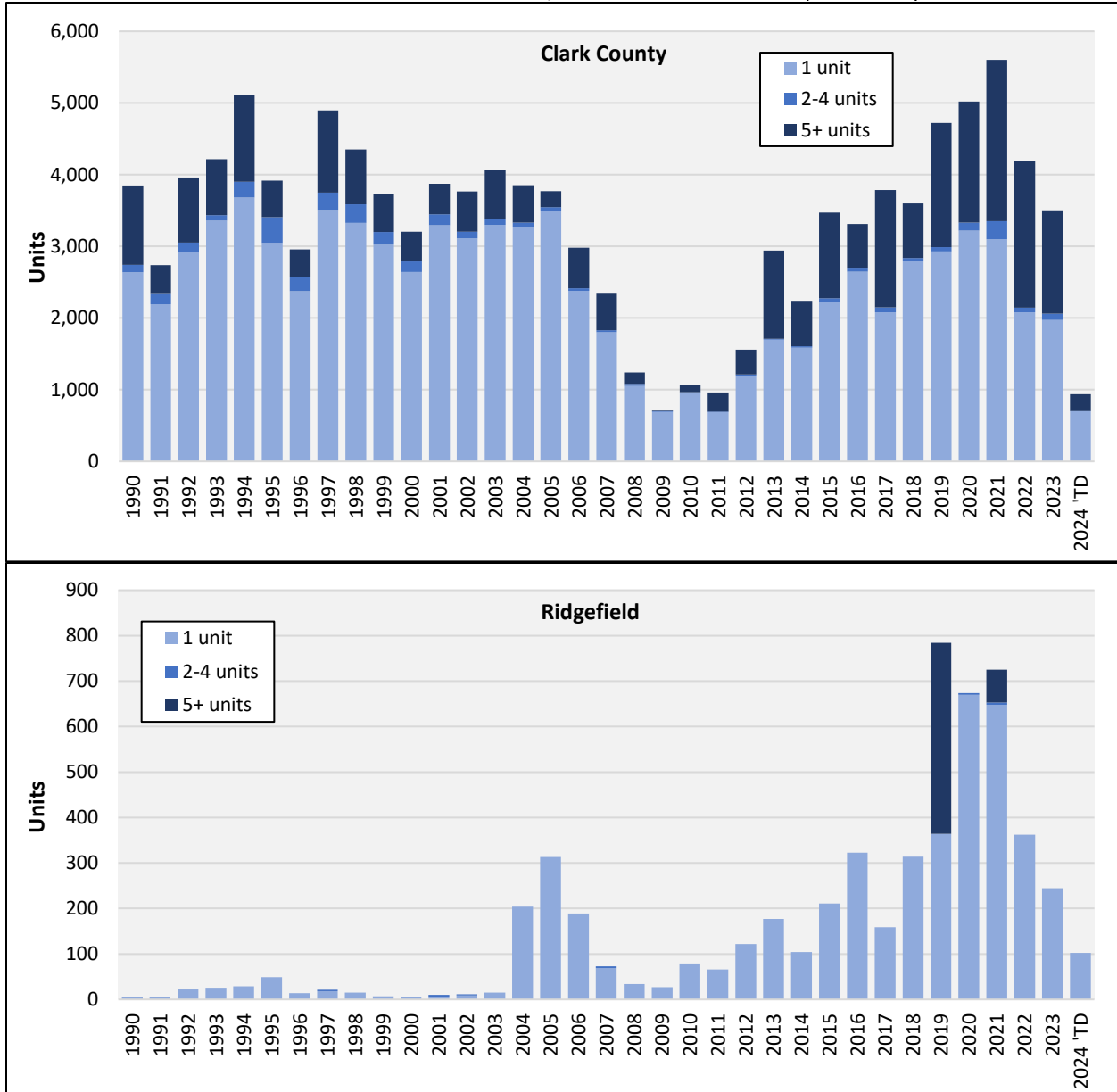
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Portland State University, WA Office of Financial Management, JOHNSON ECONOMICS

The increasing population in the county indicates a need for more housing, especially in fast-growing areas such as Ridgefield. Recent housing construction in Clark County has roughly been on par with the 1990s, when the county experienced a suburban boom. However, the share of multifamily units has increased considerably, while single-family construction is below the 1990s level.



The pattern is different in Ridgefield, which saw little development until the early 2000s. At that point, it began to reflect the larger county trend, though residential development is mostly in single-family homes. The city has seen a few larger multifamily projects since 2018, reflecting its increased density.

FIGURE 5.15: RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS, CLARK COUNTY & RIDGEFIELD (1990-2024)



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Johnson Economics

As Ridgefield continues to develop, and as the city’s population continues to grow at rates significantly above Portland and the broader metro area, more land will be needed for residential and commercial use. The city will not be able to plan for large new subdivisions or commercial centers without de-designating some of its agricultural land.



VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, it is our opinion that the subject property does not meet the criteria of agricultural land as laid out in the Washington Growth Management Act. It is therefore recommended for de-designation:

- The property has characteristics conducive to urban growth. It is adjacent to the Ridgefield UGB and in proximity to multiple new subdivisions and commercial/industrial sites. Parcels nearby that were previously designated as agricultural land are now selling as commercial or industrial land. Ridgefield is a fast-growing city characterized by a lack of residential and commercial land; its population has grown by over 200% since 2010. The GMA requirement for designation as agricultural land is that “the land is not already characterized by urban growth;” the property fails to meet this requirement.
- While the property is currently being farmed, meeting the second GMA requirement of “the land is used or capable of being used for agricultural production,” farming has been greatly reduced in recent years. Only about 35% of the land area designated for agriculture is used for growing crops. Several agricultural parcels around the subject site have also slowed or ceased farming altogether in recent years.
- The property no longer has “long-term commercial significance for agriculture,” which is the third requirement in the GMA. The market value of this land for residential or commercial use is far higher than its assessed value for agricultural use. The values of these parcels reflect residential development values and are much higher than what a farmer would reasonably pay to use the land for farming. Additionally, the current berry crop does not turn a profit due to high equipment and labor costs for a relatively small farm area. Continuing farming at the subject property would require new investments in equipment, which would not be financially feasible.