

From: [Jeffrey Delapena](#)
To: "Mark Lopez"
Cc: [Oliver Orjiako](#); [Jose Alvarez](#); [Rebecca Messinger](#)
Subject: RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – CLARK COUNTY COUNCIL
Date: Friday, January 16, 2026 8:05:00 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

Good day, Mark,

Thank you for providing this feedback related to last night's continuation of the Joint Hearing to select the Preferred Land Use Alternative for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.

I am forwarding to additional members of Staff. Your comments will be brought to the attention of the Council and Planning Commission. This will also be added to the Index of Record.

Best,



Jeff Delapena
Program Assistant
COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4558



NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE: This e-mail account is public domain. Any correspondence from or to this e-mail account may be a public record. Accordingly, this email, in whole or in part may be subject to disclosure pursuant to RCW 42.56, regardless of any claim of confidentiality or privilege asserted by an external party.

From: Mark Lopez <mark@gatherandfeastfarm.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 15, 2026 8:41 PM
To: Jeffrey Delapena <Jeffrey.Delapena@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – CLARK COUNTY COUNCIL

You don't often get email from mark@gatherandfeastfarm.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of Clark County. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

PUBLIC COMMENT – CLARK COUNTY COUNCIL

Speaker: Mark Lopez – Farmer, Land Steward, Small Business Owner

- I'm here as a farmer.
Not a lobbyist. Not a developer.
A working farmer trying to keep land in food — not pavement.

THE DECISION IN FRONT OF YOU IS SIMPLE

- Alternative 1
Preserves 100% of existing agricultural land
Aligns with state law
Honors the Ag Study
Protects future food security

THE DATA IS NOT AMBIGUOUS

- An independent Ag Study found:
 - 96% of Clark County's designated ag land is Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance
 - These are some of the best soils in the state
 - 98% of additional rural soils ALSO qualify and should be protected

This land is not “marginal.”
It is productive.
It is

LET'S START WITH THE ECONOMICS

Clark County already produces nearly \$60 million a year in agriculture.
And that's with farmland disappearing.

We have almost 2,000 mostly small farms — real family operations.

Tourism already brings in over \$740 million a year and supports nearly 7,700 jobs.

In similar Pacific Northwest counties, agritourism provides up to half of a farm's revenue and supports permanent, local jobs.

That means farmland is not an economic drag.
It's an underused engine.

Protecting it isn't sentimental.
It's smart growth.

NOW HERE'S THE DATA THIS COUNCIL CANNOT IGNORE

In 2021, investors purchased over 40% of all homes sold in Clark County.
That's nearly one out of every two homes — not bought by families.

In fast-growing areas like Ridgefield and Salmon Creek,
that number jumped to nearly 67%.

Two out of every three homes went to outside investors —
mostly out-of-county and out-of-state LLCs and corporations.

This trend accelerated after 2018 as investors chased:

- Cheaper land
- Fewer regulations
- Higher returns
- Proximity to Portland

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR FARMLAND

When housing becomes a speculative asset, farmland becomes the next target.

Outside investors don't need:

- Local food systems
- Long-term soil health
- Community resilience

They need yield.

They don't vote here.
They don't farm here.
And they don't stay when the land is gone.

SAY THIS SLOWLY

If two-thirds of our homes are already being bought by outside investors — why would we voluntarily hand them our farmland next?

That's not growth.
That's extraction.

THERE IS A SMARTER PATH

Owner-occupied ADUs are one of the fastest, lowest-cost housing tools we have.

They:

- Deliver housing in months, not years
- Use existing land and infrastructure
- Reduce pressure to expand UGAs
- Provide naturally affordable housing
- Support teachers, nurses, tradespeople, farm workers
- Help seniors age in place and keep families close
- Stabilize neighborhoods with less speculation
- Cost the public far less than sprawl

This is how you add housing without sacrificing farmland.

BRINGING IT HOME

If we:

- Protect farmland
- Enable agritourism through tools like AG Overlay districts
- Support owner-occupied ADUs

We don't just save farms —
we build an industry, create jobs, strengthen food security, and keep wealth local.

CLOSING (PAUSE AFTER THIS)

Make it easier for people to house people —
or we'll keep paving the land that feeds us.

MY ASK IS DIRECT

- Choose Alternative 1.
- Do NOT de-designate a single acre of agricultural land.

Cheers!

Mark Lopez
CFO *Chef/Farmer/Owner*
Gather and Feast Farm