

From: [Cnty 2025 Comp Plan](#)
To: [Tim Trohimovich](#)
Cc: [Cnty 2025 Comp Plan](#); [Oliver Orjiako](#); [Jose Alvarez](#)
Subject: FW: Comments on the preferred alternative for the County Council public hearing April 27, 2026
Date: Friday, April 24, 2026 8:05:46 AM
Attachments: [Outlook-qw52xda5](#)
[Outlook-eqkixsbk.png](#)
[2026-04-23 FW Comments on Preferred Alt Comp Plan Update County Council.pdf](#)
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[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

Good day, Tim,

Thank you very much for providing Futurewise's feedback related to the April 27th Council Hearing to select the Preferred Alternative. I am forwarding to members of Community Planning Staff for their awareness.

These comments will be added to the Comprehensive Plan Index of Record.

Best regards,



Jeff Delapena
Program Assistant
COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4558



From: Tim Trohimovich <Tim@futurewise.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 4:56 PM
To: Cnty 2025 Comp Plan <comp.plan@clark.wa.gov>; Jeffrey Delapena <Jeffrey.Delapena@clark.wa.gov>; Rebecca Messinger <Rebecca.Messinger@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Wil Fuentes <Wil.Fuentes@clark.wa.gov>; Matt Little <Matt.Little@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: Comments on the preferred alternative for the County Council public hearing April 27, 2026

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Dear County Councilors and Staff:

Enclosed please find Futurewise's comments on the preferred alternative for the County Council public hearing on April 27, 2026, on the Clark County Comprehensive Plan Update. Thank you for considering our comments.

If you require anything else please let me know.

Tim Trohimovich, AICP (he/him)
Director of Planning & Law



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April 23, 2026

The Honorable Sue Marshall, Council Chair
Clark County Council
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666-5000

Dear Council Chair Marshall and Councilors Yung, Belkot, Fuentes, and Little:

Subject: Comments on the preferred alternative for the County Council public hearing on April 27, 2026, on the Clark County Comprehensive Plan Update

Sent via email: comp.plan@clark.wa.gov; jeffrey.delapena@clark.wa.gov; rebecca.messinger@clark.wa.gov; glen.yung@clark.wa.gov; michelle.belkot@clark.wa.gov; wil.fuentes@clark.wa.gov; matt.little@clark.wa.gov; sue.marshall@clark.wa.gov;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preferred alternative for the Clark County comprehensive plan update. Futurewise works throughout Washington State to support land-use policies that encourage healthy, equitable, and opportunity-rich communities, and that protect our most valuable farmlands, forests, and water resources. Futurewise has members and supporters across Washington State including Clark County.

Summary of the Recommendations

Futurewise has the following recommendations for the preferred alternative:

- The preferred alternative must accommodate the selected population and employment projections within the existing urban growth areas (UGAs). Please see page 2 of this letter for more information.
- The UGAs must not be expanded onto agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance and the comprehensive plan should designate the “Agricultural Land Base” lands that meet the criteria for agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. Please see page 3 of this letter for more information.
- The preferred alternative must comply with the Growth Management Act requirements to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas pollution. Please see page 4 of this letter for more information.

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- A transfer of development rights program cannot be used as an excuse to expand UGAs or dedesignate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. Please see page 5 of this letter for more information.

Detailed Recommendations for the Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative must accommodate the selected population and employment projections within the existing urban growth areas (UGAs).

Futurewise recommends that the preferred alternative should accommodate the selected population and employment projections within the existing urban growth areas and not convert natural resource lands to other uses. This alternative should also accommodate the required affordable housing targets within the existing urban growth areas.

A comparison of the total 2023-2045 housing unit needs in the *2025 Population, Housing and Employment Allocation – Issue Paper 5* with the “2023 VBLM Capacity” shows that existing capacity can accommodate or is within a few housing units of accommodating the planned housing growth.¹ And the cities and unincorporated urban growth areas will likely need to increase their capacity for low-rise multifamily and mid-rise multifamily dwellings to meet the affordable housing requirements which will increase the housing capacity in the cities and unincorporated urban growth areas.² Further, Vancouver, Camas, and Washougal were required to adopt their new middle housing zoning by December 31, 2025, further increasing their housing capacity.³ So, there is no need to expand the county’s urban growth areas. Without a need to expand the urban growth areas,

¹ Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update Planning for growth 2025 – 2045 *2025 Population, Housing and Employment Allocation – Issue Paper 5* prepared by Community Planning p. 5; Clark County 2025 Allocation based on VBLM and HAPT Method A p. *1 last accessed on April 23, 2026, at: https://clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/2024-02/Allocation%20Housing_Method%20A.pdf and at link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “Allocation Housing_Method A.pdf.”

² Washington States Department of Commerce, Local Government Division Growth Management Services, *Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element: Updating your housing element to address new requirements* p. 36 (Aug. 2023, updated Jan. 2026) last accessed on April 23, 2026, at: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth-management/housing-planning/housing-guidance/> and at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “1220_Book2_Housing Element Update_230823_Final_updated_260112.docx.”

³ Washing State Department of Commerce Middle Housing Update Deadlines last accessed on April 23, 2026, at: <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/bv7go3x1h176hwy2lgm8chraykr8ki50> and at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “Middle Housing Update Deadlines by Year - Updated May 2025.pdf.”

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Clark County lacks the legal authority to expand the urban growth areas (UGAs).⁴ As the Washington State Supreme Court wrote “we hold a county’s UGA designation cannot exceed the amount of land necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected by [the Washington State Office of Financial Management] OFM, plus a reasonable land market supply factor.”⁵

The UGAs must not be expanded onto agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance and the comprehensive plan should designate the “Agricultural Land Base” lands that meet the criteria for agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

The Clark County Agricultural Lands Study documents “that 98 percent of the 101,844-acre Agricultural Land Base (99,900 acres) is classified as having Prime or Statewide Importance soils. A nearly identical share, 96 percent (31,400 acres), is found within the existing 32,589-acre Agricultural Designations. This near-universal prevalence indicates that from a soil-capability perspective, the vast majority of lands identified in the study area are physically well-suited for agricultural production.”⁶ The other factors also show that these lands qualify as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.⁷ The preferred alternative should retain the existing agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance designation and add the “Agricultural Land Base” that meet the criteria for agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance to the designated agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance in the comprehensive plan.

The 519 acres that Ridgefield and La Center are requesting to pave over forever are prime agricultural lands and farmlands of statewide importance and meet the other criteria for agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.⁸ Consequently, these lands cannot be legally dedesignated under WAC 365-190-040(10)(c). Since the lands cannot be dedesignated legally, they cannot be legally

⁴ *Thurston Cnty. v. W. Washington Growth Mgmt. Hearings Bd.*, 164 Wn.2d 329, 351 – 52, 190 P.3d 38, 48 – 49 (2008).

⁵ *Thurston Cnty. v. W. Washington Growth Mgmt. Hearings Bd.*, 164 Wn.2d 329, 352, 190 P.3d 38, 49 (2008).

⁶ EConorthwest, *Clark County Agricultural Lands Study* pp. 62 – 63 (Clark County Planning & Development Department: Nov. 2025) last accessed on April 23, 2026, at: <https://clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-11/final-agricultural-lands-study-technical-report-2025.11.04-1.pdf> and at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “final-agricultural-lands-study-technical-report-2025.11.04-1.pdf.”

⁷ *Id.* pp. 66 – 73.

⁸ *Id.* pp. 62 – 73.

added to the UGAs unless the land added has been protected for agricultural use through the adoption of a purchase or transfer of its development rights.⁹

In the past Clark County was able to dedesignate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance that continued to meet the criteria and have them annexed before the Growth Management Hearings Board and the courts found that these dedesignations violated the Growth Management Act. That is no longer possible because dedesignations and urban growth area expansions do not take effect until after the Growth Management Hearings Board appeals are resolved.¹⁰ So, dedesignations that violate state law are now a waste of time and money as they will be appealed and overturned and cannot be annexed during the appeal period.¹¹

The preferred alternative must comply with the Growth Management Act requirements to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas pollution.

The preferred alternative must comply with the requirements to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in RCW 36.70A.070(1) and RCW 36.70A.070(9)(c) and (d)(i)(B). The most effective way to reduce per capita VMT is to focus growth into existing cities and towns because they allow shorter automobile trips and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use thereby reducing per capita VMT.¹²

The preferred alternative must also comply with RCW 36.70A.070(9)(c) and (d)(i)(A) which require the Clark County Comprehensive Plan to include a greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement that will “[r]esult in reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions generated by transportation and land use within the jurisdiction ...” Like per capita VMT, the most effective way to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions generated by transportation and land use is to focus growth into existing cities and towns. A peer-reviewed scientific paper has documented that to meet the necessary reductions in greenhouse gas pollution

⁹ RCW 36.70A.060(5).

¹⁰ RCW 36.70A.067.

¹¹ RCW 36.70A.067.

¹² Arthur C. Nelson, *Compact Development Reduces VMT: Evidence and Application for Planners—Comment on “Does Compact Development Make People Drive Less?”*, 83 JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION 36 pp. 36 – 38 (2017), DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2016.1246378 enclosed at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “Compact Development Reduces VMT Evidence and Application for Planners Comment on Does Compact Development Make People Drive Less.pdf.” The Journal of the American Planning Association is peer-reviewed. Journal of the American Planning Association Instructions for authors webpage enclosed at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “JAPA Instructions for Authors June 2017.pdf.”

higher residential densities are needed.¹³ Nationally, densities must increase on average by 19 percent.¹⁴ The paper concluded this can be achieved by a “mix of small apartment buildings and modest single-family homes”¹⁵ This will help achieve the GMA requirements to protect the environment and reduce per capita VMT.¹⁶ They will also increase housing capacity and housing affordability.

A transfer of development rights program cannot be used as an excuse to expand urban growth areas or dedesignate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

A transfer of development rights program cannot be used as an excuse to expand urban growth areas or dedesignate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.¹⁷ The GMA requires transfer of development rights programs to protect agricultural lands.¹⁸ Interlocal agreements between the County and a city or cities also cannot be used as an excuse to expand urban growth areas or dedesignate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. That is

¹³ Benjamin Goldstein, Dimitrios Gounaridis, and Joshua P. Newell, *The carbon footprint of household energy use in the United States* 117 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (PNAS) 19122, 19122 (Aug. 11, 2020) last accessed on April 23, 2026, at: <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/32/19122> and enclosed at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “goldstein-et-al-2020-the-carbon-footprint-of-household-energy-use-in-the-united-states.pdf.” PNAS is a peer-reviewed journal. PNAS Author Center last accessed on Jan. 5, 2025, at: <https://www.pnas.org/author-center> and enclosed at the link on the last page of this letter with the filename: “Instructions for Authors - PNAS.pdf.”

¹⁴ Benjamin Goldstein, Dimitrios Gounaridis, and Joshua P. Newell, *The carbon footprint of household energy use in the United States* 117 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (PNAS) 19122, 19128 (Aug. 11, 2020).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ RCW 36.70A.020(10), (14); RCW 36.70A.070(1), (5), (9).

¹⁷ *Orton Farms, LLC, et al. v. Pierce County*, Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board (CPSGMHB) Case No. 04-3-0007c, Final Decision and Order (Aug. 2, 2004) at pp. 36 - 37, 2004 WL 3275228 pp. *28 - 29 (footnote omitted); *Friends of Agriculture v. Grant County*, Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board (EWGMHB) Case 05-1-0010, Final Decision and Order (March 14, 2006) at p. *10, 2006 WL 1370957 p. *7 quoting from *Orton Farms; Town of Friday Harbor, Fred R. Klein, John M. Campbell, Lynn Bahrych, et al. v. San Juan County*, Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board (WWGMHB) Case No. 00-2-0062c, Order on Compliance and Invalidity Re: Resource Lands Redesignation (March 28, 2002), p. *5, 2002 WL 599680 p. *3 (March 28, 2002) (“we will start with the presumption of validity that would attach to any de-designation of resource lands, examine the record to ensure that it contains sufficient analysis that the appropriate GMA criteria (conservation imperative) was applied, and make our determination based upon the presumption of validity and the record under the clearly erroneous standard.”)

¹⁸ RCW 36.70A.060(5).

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because interlocal agreements must comply with state law.¹⁹ Further, interlocal agreements cannot override state law.²⁰

That transfer of development rights programs cannot justify urban growth area expansions is particularly true where there is no need to expand the urban growth areas as was documented above.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you require additional information, please contact me at telephone 206-343-0681 or email: tim@futurewise.org.

Very Truly Yours,



Tim Trohimovich, WSBA No. 22367
Director of Planning & Law

Enclosures at this link:

<https://futurewiseorg.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/IgAIkOZVzGs9QYtZ5F3NHbVpAfX-lUuvva5bsIfPoIDLFgA?e=polZdq>

¹⁹ *Exendine v. City of Sammamish*, 127 Wn. App. 574, 585 fn. 21, 113 P.3d 494, 499 (2005), as amended on denial of reconsideration (May 31, 2005), publication ordered (June 6, 2005).

²⁰ *Id.*