

From: [Jeffrey Delapena](#)
To: [Angie Merrill](#)
Cc: [Rebecca Messinger](#); [Oliver Orjiako](#); [Jose Alvarez](#)
Subject: FW: Testimony for tonight's hearing
Date: Monday, April 27, 2026 2:55:00 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-srz2ov2i.png](#)
[Outlook-iii1ba14.png](#)
[CountyCouncil_PreferredAltHearing_Memov2_BGK_+MLS_revisions.docx](#)
[County_Land_Use_Alternative_Testimony.docx](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

Good day, Angie,

Thank you for submitting this testimony from the City of La Center for tonight's Public Hearing.

I am including members of Staff, including Rebecca Messinger who is the Clerk to the Council and will be staffing tonight's meeting.

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



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: Angie Merrill <amerrill@ci.lacenter.wa.us>
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2026 2:49 PM
To: Jeffrey Delapena <Jeffrey.Delapena@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: Testimony for tonight's hearing

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.

Hi Jeffery,

I will be presenting testimony this evening. I wanted to also give a written exhibit via email if possible. Please see the attached. If you are unable to take my exhibit, I will go ahead and bring it with me this evening. Thank you!

Angie Merrill

Community Development

Land Use Planner

210 E 4th Street La Center, WA 98629

360.263.3654

amerrill@ci.lacenter.wa.us



You can now apply for your land use application online!

To register for an account now please go to <https://support.cloudpermit.com/support/home/>



Good evening, Council. The City of La Center thanks you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening as you consider the selection of the preferred land use alternative for the 2045 comprehensive Plan.

Throughout the development of the comprehensive plan City Leaders and staff have repeatedly engaged the public and stakeholders to hear their vision for La Center. Through this outreach we have heard several consistent messages:

- Maintain the small-town charm and feel of downtown La Center.
- Focus growth near the I-5 Junction where there is adequate transportation and other infrastructure to support growth.
- Provide family wage jobs in the City to prevent becoming a “bedroom community”

With these goals, the City Council unanimously adopted a preferred alternative that closely mirrors the County’s alternative two. This alternative includes targeted re-zones to provide housing for all income levels, as well as targeted Urban Growth Area expansions primarily focused on job providing land around Interstate 5. Without these minor expansions to the City’s Urban Growth Area, the City will fall short of meeting the jobs allocated to La Center by nearly 600 jobs.

The areas proposed for expansion are already characterized by urban development and are directly adjacent to Interstate 5 and the Cowlitz Reservation. The City has established a close partnership with the Cowlitz Tribe and shares their vision for the exit 16 junction to be a center point of entertainment, recreation and commerce. The reality is that if these areas are not brought into the City, they will be developed by the Cowlitz at some point in the future.

The City encourages the Council to evaluate the areas proposed for expansion by applying all fourteen of the de-designation criteria included in the WAC and the Agricultural Lands Study. It is our belief that the criteria support the de-designation of these lands for urban growth. At the same time, the City understands and supports the need to preserve productive agricultural land within the County. The City of La Center is eager to continue to work with with the County and the other cities to develop a Transfer of Development Rights program to allow productive agricultural land to be preserved, while still allowing for needed growth of urban areas within the County.

The City of La Center has worked hard over the past 4 years to develop a preferred land use alternative that provides jobs for residents, a variety of housing types for all income levels, and maintains the small town charm that defines La Center. The City respectfully requests

that the County Council select Alternative 2 to proceed for further analyzation for the final EIS.



Public Works & Community Development
 Department
 210 E. 4th Street
 La Center, WA 98629

To: Clark County Council
From: City of La Center
Re: Clark County Council: Preferred Land Use Alternative
Date: April X, 2026

The Clark County Council (County Council) is currently evaluating land use alternatives for Clark County (County) and its cities, including the City of La Center (City), to formally select a preferred land use alternative for the final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which will be completed and published mid-2026.

To develop these alternatives for the City, staff conducted thorough community outreach (as further described below, held several workshops with the Planning Commission and City Council, and worked closely with affected property owners throughout the planning process. The City selected alternative mirrors the County’s Alternative 2, and is intended to preserve a small-town atmosphere, accommodate required growth, especially for jobs, and remain practical and contextualized to La Center’s existing infrastructure and financial limitations.

This document outlines the baseline capacity, allocations, assumptions, and adjustments made by the City using County data, local conditions, and ongoing land use changes. These efforts have provided informed decision-making and community support for Alternative 2 as its preferred option in the County’s draft EIS.

Baseline Assumptions

Per the County’s latest run of the Vacant Buildable Lands Model (VBLM) for Alternative 2, the vacant and underutilized lands in the City’s UGA has the capacity to accommodate 2,381 housing units, 5,713 people, and 2,238 jobs. The County adopted the following 2045 allocations for the City: **2,123 housing units, 3,884 people, and 2,142 jobs**. Table 1 shows the existing La Center UGA capacity surplus or deficit to accommodate the 2045 allocations provided by the County. Please note La Center’s housing and employment capacity has been adjusted to exclude land attained in Tribal Trust by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and to accommodate the Downtown and Timmen Landing Subarea plans that were adopted in June 2025. Table 1 further shows there is an existing overall housing surplus of 258 units, an employment surplus of 96 jobs, and a population surplus of 1,829 people.

Table 1: La Center Capacity and 2045 Allocations

	Capacity	Allocation	Surplus/Deficit
Housing (units)	2,381	2,123	+258
Employment (jobs)	2,238	2,142	+96
Population	5,713	3,884	+1,829

Housing Capacity for Income Segments

The City has an overall surplus of housing units, however, per new GMA mandates for the Comprehensive Plan Housing element, jurisdictions must accommodate housing needs by income band segments. The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) created the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), which Clark County has relied on to allocate housing units by income bands. Table 2 shows the housing allocation in the City for each income segment by Area Median Income (AMI) using the HAPT as adopted by the County.

The City assessed its existing capacity to accommodate each income band with the assumption that all income needs less than 80 percent AMI would be accommodated by the City’s medium density residential zones (Medium Density Residential-16 [MDR-16], Residential Professional [RP], and Junction Plan [JP] zones) and the implementation of the adopted Downtown and Timmen Landing Subarea plans, which introduces Downtown Mixed Use (DMX) and High Density Residential (HDR) zones. Each zone has an assumed capacity at a shared percentage of housing developed to accommodate less than 80 percent AMI housing. These assumptions are based upon historic City permitting, current development regulations, and market trends. As shown in Table 2, the City readjusted its capacity numbers using this methodology. The readjusted capacity to accommodate housing needs less than 80 percent AMI is a 169 unit surplus and a 90-unit surplus for housing needs greater than 80 percent AMI.

Table 2: La Center Readjusted Housing Capacity

Area Median Income (AMI)	Allocation (units)	Zone Category Serving Needs	Aggregate Housing Needs (units)	Total Capacity (units)	Capacity Surplus/Deficit w/ ADUs (units)
0 – 30% PSH*	124	Medium Density & ADUs	1,050	1,218	+168
0 – 30% Non-PSH	211				
30 – 50%	311				
50 – 80%	404				
80 – 100%	234	Low Density	1,073	1,163	+90
100 – 120%	172				
>120%	667				
Total	2,123			2,382	+258

*PSH – permanent supportive housing.

Public Engagement

During the Comprehensive Plan review and update, which includes the land use alternatives process, the City provided information to and requested feedback from agencies, local organizations, and residents who could be affected by or were interested in proposed changes. The City also put together a plan in response to the community’s interest in expanding the downtown for more mixed use, residential, civic improvements and locally based commercial and employment opportunities, while expanding local and regional employment and mixed use opportunities at the I-5 junction with La Center Road. The City aimed to facilitate engagement with citizens and all relevant stakeholders by asking those involved to identify preferred and non-preferred areas for growth to help shape preliminary land use

concepts. Public participation and communication are important components of the Comprehensive Plan update, as well as the selection and implementation of the preferred land use alternative.

The City engaged the community and stakeholders in selecting a preferred land use alternative through two public open houses with up to 40 participants at each, meetings with the Planning Commission and City Council, and outreach at city events. Public open houses allowed residents to provide direct input on the Comprehensive Plan update and land use options. (See the following list of dates of open houses and tabling events held throughout the community.)

Additionally, the City maintains a regularly updated webpage with an open comment form for ongoing feedback throughout the process. The City also performed outreach through newspaper posts and mailings in advance of open houses and key City Council (CC) meetings supported public involvement throughout the planning process.

A series of Planning Commission and City Council workshops, to review different land use scenarios to bridge the community's vision and values with future growth. After extensive review and discussion, the City Council came to a consensus on a preferred land use alternative, which is reflected in Alternative 2 in the County EIS.

Related Planning Projects

The City also completed date-driven methods for refining the land use alternatives, including:

- A Housing Inventory and Needs Assessment and Strategy (June 2024), which recommended strategies for meeting 2045 housing needs;
- Adopted Capital Facilities plans, including;
 - Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan final (July 2024)
 - General Sewer Plan final (December 2024)
 - Transportation System Plan final (mid 2026); and
- Agency Coordination, between January 2024 and December 2025, the City collaborated with key service providers (e.g., schools, utilities, emergency services) to identify growth opportunities and constraints.

Preferred Alternative

Alternative 2 emphasizes strategic rezoning within the existing City Urban Growth Area (UGA) to support the projected affordable housing allocation for the year 2045, focusing on households earning less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). In addition, this alternative seeks to enhance local jobs and workforce opportunities through expansion of the City's UGA in the vicinity of Interstate 5, where urban development has occurred and continues to expand. The plan emphasizes placing the majority of affordable housing in La Center within or near proposed job expansion areas, ensuring that workforce housing is conveniently located close to employment centers and essential services.

Each intervention area, whether through rezoning, annexation, or expansion, is detailed below. The City has made refinements to Alternative 2 to accommodate newly acquired Cowlitz Tribal Land Trust within the La Center UGA (see figure below), adoption of specific subarea plans, and community feedback

regarding the proposed alternatives. As a result, minor mapping amendments are proposed for Alternative 2—refer to the attached documentation for details.

Figure 1: Cowlitz-owned Properties at La Center Junction¹



¹Five total properties in the La Center Junction that is owned by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. The two largest properties north of NW La Center Road were recently acquired, which are within the La Center UGA.

It is important to note that recent efforts to rezone properties in east La Center encountered opposition from both the community and the City Council due to the constrained and limited transportation network that serves the east portion of the City. This has resulted in the City staff further refining its preferred land use alternative.

Area 1: Downtown East

- One property to be rezoned from Low Density Residential (LDR) 7.5 to MDR-16.

Area 2: Downtown Northwest

- Four properties to be rezoned from LDR 7.5 to MDR-16.

Area 3: Northwest Annexation

- Two properties to be annexed with LDR 7.5 zoning.
 - o Please add these two properties to the preferred land use alternative (Alternative 2).

Area 4: North Junction Expansion

- 3 properties proposed for expansion with JP zoning.
 - o Please update these properties with the zoning assumptions for the preferred land use alternative (Alternative 2).
- 1 property proposed for expansion with UP zoning (CPU substation).

- Please add this property to the preferred land use alternative (Alternative 2) to avoid a 'donut hole' effect, or a non-UGA property surrounded by UGA. As this is an electrical substation facility, it should not be counted as having any capacity for jobs or housing.

Area 5: Southwest Junction Expansion

- 6 properties (west of I-5) proposed for expansion with Light Industrial (IL) zoning.
- 1 property (east of I-5) proposed for expansion with JP zoning.
 - Please update these properties with the zoning assumptions for the preferred land use alternative (Alternative 2).

Conclusion

In closing, the City of La Center has developed and refined a preferred land use alternative to address future housing and employment needs, guided by extensive community input and data analysis. The preferred alternative (Alternative 2) balances growth with local vision and infrastructure realities. The City of La Center respectfully requests that the County Council select Alternative to proceed for further analyzation for the final EIS.

Attachments

Attachment A: City of La Center 2045 Preferred Land Use Alternative

Attachment A: City of La Center Preferred Land Use Alternative