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**Subject**
Public Hearing 2025-2045 Comprehensive Plan Update

**Date of Hearing**
Thu, 10/01/2026

**Comment**
I respectfully submit these comments regarding the Clark County Comprehensive Plan and the use of Olympia and Tacoma as models for future growth, as indicated on the Clark County Planning Department website.
Clark County should not adopt Olympia or Tacoma as primary planning models. Both communities have positive attributes, but they also demonstrate the consequences of allowing housing demand, transportation capacity, public infrastructure, and community amenities to fall out of balance. Clark County should learn from those outcomes—not repeat them.
Olympia and Tacoma are cautionary examples
Olympia's own data show the difficulty of maintaining affordability during rapid growth. Approximately one-third of Olympia households are housing cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Between 2018 and late 2022, the median home price reportedly increased from $325,000 to $495,000—a 65 percent increase—while average rent for a two-bedroom apartment rose from about $1,100 to $1,600 per month. Those figures should concern Clark County residents. Growth without enough attainable housing makes it increasingly difficult for working families, seniors, public employees, tradespeople, and young households to remain in the community. It can also force residents to live farther from jobs, schools, services, and recreation, increasing commute lengths and traffic congestion.
Olympia's anticipated growth, along with its ongoing need to address traffic, automobile

dependence, parking, and transportation alternatives, demonstrates an important planning lesson: adding density and housing units does not automatically create affordability, mobility, or a higher quality of life.

High-density housing does not equal affordable housing. Density may increase the number of units allowed, but it does not guarantee rents or home prices that local residents can afford. New multifamily housing can remain expensive because of land costs, construction costs, financing, utility requirements, permitting, parking, and market conditions. Clark County should distinguish between zoning capacity, units built, market-rate units, income-restricted affordable units, and homes that are genuinely attainable for local households.

Tacoma presents similar concerns. The city has faced rapid growth, housing pressure, and significant congestion on major highway and arterial routes. When housing, transportation, and public facilities do not keep pace with growth, the results are predictable: rising rents, displacement pressure, longer commutes, overcrowding, and increased costs for taxpayers, businesses, freight movement, transit, and emergency response.

Clark County needs its own model

Clark County is not Olympia or Tacoma. It has its own mix of rural lands, agricultural resources, forests, rivers, industrial areas, growing communities, freight corridors, and cross-river travel demands.

The County should not rely on a "build first and catch up later" model. Catching up later often means higher construction costs, greater congestion, disrupted neighborhoods, and reduced quality of life for existing residents.

A successful Comprehensive Plan should recognize that quality of life requires more than housing-unit counts and utility capacity. It also requires safe roads, reliable transportation, attainable housing, parks, hiking and walking trails, bicycle connections, playgrounds, sports fields, green space, and access to Clark County's natural areas.

Clark County's natural setting is a major community asset. As growth occurs, the County should expand—not reduce—access to parks, open space, trail systems, and outdoor recreation.. These amenities support health, family life, neighborhood connections, and the character that makes Clark County a desirable place to live.

The Comprehensive Plan should

• Require transportation and utility improvements to be identified, costed, scheduled, and funded before substantial growth is approved.
• Evaluate cumulative traffic impacts on regional roads, interchanges, freight routes, transit, schools, and emergency response.
• Require transparent capital-facilities plans that clearly distinguish funded projects from unfunded proposals.
• Ensure new development pays a fair share of the infrastructure and public amenities it requires.
• Measure housing success by actual affordability for local households—not simply by density, zoning capacity, or the number of units approved.
• Preserve a range of attainable housing choices, including family-sized homes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, smaller-lot homes, and appropriately located multifamily housing.
• Maintain adequate parks, trails, schools, public safety, utilities, and transportation capacity as population grows.
• Establish measurable standards for park acreage, trail access, open space, and recreation facilities.
• Require annual public reporting on whether transportation, housing affordability, parks, trails, utilities, and public services are keeping pace with approved development.

Conclusion

Clark County has an opportunity to plan responsibly before transportation corridors, public

facilities, parks, trails, and neighborhoods are overwhelmed by poorly coordinated growth. The County should pursue growth with accountability: growth that follows funded infrastructure, protects mobility and freight access, provides housing residents can actually afford, expands parks and trails, and improves—not diminishes—the quality of life Clark County residents expect.



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