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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON



CP16#0518

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Councilors
FROM: Peter Silliman, Policy Analyst
DATE: February 12, 2015
SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Alternative 4

The proposed alternative for the comprehensive plan update will include designation of 1528 parcels and 6537 acres of resource land as rural.

In the 1993 Farm Focus Group report, the AG Delineation Methodology section the document states that:

“To qualify as a core, an area had to have a minimum of one forty-acre or two adjacent twenty-acre parcels with a predominance of prime or unique soils. To complete the core, all adjacent undeveloped parcels with a predominance of prime and unique soils were added, and all adjacent developed parcels down to 10 acres with predominance of prime and unique soils were added.” 1993 AG and Forest Focus Reports.pdf

The 1993 Farm Focus Group was using DCD’s designation guidelines. This designation criteria has been refined by the Washington Department of Commerce and is currently found under WAC 365-190-050 Clark County’s definition of resource land is not being legally challenged.

The County has de-designated AG land as part of UGA expansions in Comprehensive plan updates since 1994. Although other counties have, Clark County has not revised its AG parcel map on a countywide basis.

These parcels do not meet the County’s established definition of an AG parcel. As shown, the County designated parcels less than 10 acres that were undeveloped while excluding parcels that were developed under 10 acres.

The proposed parcels were legally divided prior to the 1994 comprehensive plan. They met the definition of Resource land at that time. They were a divided but undeveloped parcel adjacent to a core of larger AG parcels. Since that time, these parcels have been developed. That has changed their status and primary use. Clark County should update its map to reflect that.

It is important to note that we are not proposing to change the definition of a resource parcel. Clark County's definition of resource lands is has been the same since 1994.

This selection process started with a map that identified all parcels less than 9.5 acres currently in a resource designation. Small groups of these developed parcels adjacent to existing rural designated land were added. Larger groups of developed parcels were added regardless of adjacent designations. Cluster developments were excluded.

Undeveloped parcels among the developed parcels were included in this proposal to eliminate scattered designations. Individual or small groups of parcels that were developed and less than 10 acres were excluded to eliminate scatter as well. In that way this proposal recognizes parcels as rural where practical.

Additional criteria the County is required to consider in their evaluating these land's resource designation include the current tax status. Enrolment in current use for AG or Forest use would be an indicator of their actual use. 10% of the AG parcels and 8% of these FR parcels are in a current use program. That number is consistent with rural use of the land. 43% of all resource designated lands are in current use. For resource parcels over 10 acres the number jumps to 71%.

Predominant parcel size is also a consideration as seen in the Farm Focus Groups evaluation criteria and the WAC. The proposed parcels average 4.2 acres in size in AG and 4.35 acres in FR. 81% of the proposed parcels are already developed.

Changing to a rural designation does not diminish the rural land owner's ability to use their land for agricultural use or to participate in a current use program.

These lands have already been parceled to their current state and recognizing that by designating them as rural land will not promote additional parcelization.

A full evaluation will show that these parcels do not fit the criteria for resource lands and that their primary use and appropriate designation is Rural.

Selecting this alternative will allow for the evaluation of these parcels based upon all of the required criteria for de-designation.

Examples of that comprehensive analysis can be found in the Draft SEIS or the Land Analysis done for the City of Ridgefield's UGA expansion.