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County plans for growth

Late requests by Ridgefield, La Center, council add to already complex process

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RIDGEFIELD — On a sprawling piece of land just north of Ridgefield city limits, Mayor Ron Onslow envisions replacing hay and open space with single-family homes and playgrounds.

Last month, the city applied to incorporate a 107-acre property into the city's urban growth boundary to support the vision city officials have for the developing community.

Pointing out details such as pocket parks, basketball courts and grassy areas for children to play, Onslow says the city is doing more

Public Meeting

■ **What:** Clark County councilors' workshop on additional alternative analysis as part of the environmental review for the state-mandated Comprehensive Growth

Management Plan update.

■ **When:** 9 a.m. today.

■ **Where:** Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver.

than building homes — it's building communities.

"We're working to put in neighborhoods," Onslow said.

The request, however, represents another puzzle piece in an already complex process that Clark County has been embroiled in since

the summer of 2013 as it updates its 20-year comprehensive growth management plan. The plan acts as a guideline for future land use in response to job and population growth — and the clock is ticking to complete the plan, said Community Planning Director

Oliver Orijako.

A final proposal by the county must be submitted to the state by June 30, 2016, and the county still has to complete a draft environmental impact statement and collect public comments.

A city can only apply to incorporate land from the county during updates to the county's growth management plan. Though the county called for cities to submit their requests by July 31 of last year, Ridgefield submitted its request past that deadline, prompt-

Ridgefield applies for growth boundary expansion

The city of Ridgefield has applied to have 18 parcels of land incorporated in its urban growth boundaries as a part of updates to the county's comprehensive plan. The Clark County councilors decided early this month to consider the application, despite Ridgefield applying for the expansion after the county's deadline.



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SOURCE: City of Ridgefield

The Columbian

Ridgefield

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ing the county to extend the application deadline for cities to March 3.

Ridgefield City Manager Steve Stuart, a former Clark County commissioner, said he fears leaving the land as is could box the city in and slow development. If homes are built on the plot, which is currently broken up into 5-acre parcels, they could prevent additional development on the property, he said.

"Any future urban development for jobs and housing will be stilled," Stuart said, adding that the city projects that its population could swell from 6,000 to more than 20,000 within the next 20 years.

In response to the new March deadline, La Center submitted another application to add 17 acres to its urban growth boundary so it can add a school to the La Center School District.

Though the additional deadline for cities doesn't prevent the council from submitting its plan on time, it's just one more thing for county staff to deal with on an already enormous to-do list.

The process was further slowed last month when the council asked that a fourth alternative to the plan be developed, looking at various options for distribution of population and development in Clark County.

Washington state only requires counties to provide three alternatives and Clark County staff were ready to issue a draft environmental impact statement earlier this month, Orijako said. The request for an additional plan, however, delayed the process.

"Folks may think you have 15 months, but it takes a whole lot of time to get things done," Orijako said.

The county council will host a workshop at 9 a.m. today to discuss the fourth alternative. The meeting is open to the public, though there's no public comment period.