



Public gets peek at growth plan

Councilor Madore's Alternative 4 gets most attention, with vocal supporters and detractors

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A crowd of Clark County residents flooded the auditorium of Ridgefield High School on Wednesday for the first of two open houses on the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update.

The event was the first organized opportunity the public has had to view the alternatives and ask planning staff questions about the update, which is still in the beginning phases of a months-long process.

Alternative 4, however, was the controversial star of the evening, with most landowners milling around its six maps. Alternative 4, written and developed by county Councilor David Madore, will recognize existing parcels on rural, agriculture and forest lands.

The changes, according to the maps, will make most lots smaller

— from Rural 20 and 10 acres to Rural 5, 2.5 and 1 acres, for example — to bring them more in line with the makeup of lots in Clark County prior to the implementation of the 1994 Growth Management Act.

“The foundation for Alternative 4 is to recognize reality,” Madore said at the open house.

Some rural property owners have praised the plan, saying it will restore their ability to develop their properties. Those opposed, however, say it will promote inefficient growth and strangle small cities' ability to expand.

Mark Jeffries, who currently lives on an Agriculture 20 lot in unincorporated Clark County, could see his property converted into Agriculture 5 under Alternative 4. That will enable him to divide his property into smaller parcels and sell them, he said.

The change could improve his

land's value and potentially lead to further development and more tax revenue for the county, Jeffries said.

“It's a win-win for everyone,” he said.

Jim Malinowski, a member of Clark County Citizens United, called Alternative 4 a good start to improving property rights for rural land owners. Members of Clark County Citizens United have been long urging the council to recognize existing non-conforming lots in Clark County.

“At least it's an alternative that isn't status quo,” Malinowski said.

Ridgefield Mayor Ron Onslow, however, said he fears shrinking the large rural and agriculture lots surrounding the city could prevent development in the area. If the city ever annexes those properties into its urban growth boundaries, Onslow said, he'd rather see them used for large, industrial develop-

ments rather than single-family homes on sprawling lots.

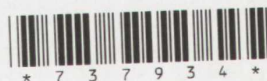
“We can't grow at all without large acre pieces,” Onslow said. “We can't grow in a good way if it's all 5 acres.”

Representatives from Friends of Clark County, an organization dedicated to promoting sustainable land use and growth, were also at the meeting. The organization is opposed to Alternative 4, saying it will create too many sprawling developments, straining public resources.

“It still looks like suburban sprawl to me,” group president Sydney Reisbeck said. “I think the cities in general will find it invasive on their sphere of influence.”

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 were also on display at the meeting, though those maps have been available to the public for several months.

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Alternative 4 was first released Friday.

Alternative 1, the “do-nothing” alternative, features no changes, according to the county. Alternative 2 adjusts some parcel sizes and changes some land uses in rural areas. Alternative 3 brings additional land into the Battle Ground, La Center, Ridgefield and Washougal urban growth boundaries.

On April 14, the council

will likely vote whether or not to move forward and allow planning staff and contractors to complete environmental analysis on the alternatives. The staff must submit a preferred alternative, which will likely feature a variety of components from all four alternatives, to the Department of Commerce by the end of April 2016.

“All my worry now is can we get it done in time?” community planner Gordy Euler said.

There will be another open house at Hockinson High School at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.