

Schroader, Kathy

From: Euler, Gordon
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2015 8:11 AM
To: Schroader, Kathy
Subject: FW: County comp plan - response to population request
Attachments: 07 15 15 Vanc ltr.pdf

Kathy:

For the index.

Gordy

From: Snodgrass, Bryan
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2015 4:58 PM
To: Euler, Gordon; Anderson, Colete; McCall, Marilee; Alvarez, Jose
Cc: Orjiako, Oliver; Towne, Sandra
Subject: County comp plan - response to population request

Gordy

Attached is a technical response to the 6/24 Howsley letter regarding re-opening the recent BOCC population decision. Please include in the record and forward to BOCC in advance of Wednesday worksession in case these issues come up. Thanks BRS





July 13, 2015

Oliver Orjiako, Clark County Community Planning Director

C/O Gordy Euler, Clark Community Planning

Subject: Population estimates used for County Comprehensive Plan update

Gordy:

In Oliver's absence, I am writing to you to provide some technical background for the record in response to a June 24 letter request to Oliver asking the Board to re-open the long term population forecast decision made by the Board this April, based on the fact that there are differing agency estimates of the current population in Clark County.

Accurate current population estimates are certainly key in developing sound future forecasts. However, after researching this issue, the letter request appears based on a misreading of the numbers that were actually used by the Board in its recent decision, and of the role of US Census data in the process.

Existing Population Estimate

OFM estimates existing population as of April 1, based on the actual number and type of all local residential building permits that have been issued since that last actual population count, in 2010 in this case. The June 24 letter correctly notes that the US Census bureau had a higher 2014 existing population estimate than OFM, but does not address the following:

- The Census Bureau existing population estimate is for three months later, July 1 vs April 1, so it is expected be larger than OFM
- The Census Bureau estimate in non-decennial years like 2014 is just that, an estimate, and not a count. It relies on a more speculative and nationalized estimation methodology than OFM— it uses national factors determined from the American Community Survey to add to the last known count in 2010.
- The last time OFM's methodology could be checked against an actual count, 2010, it was found to have *over-estimated* existing population on the ground in Clark County, not under-estimated it.
- The County Board's April decision in fact used a 2014 existing population estimate *higher* than the OFM reporting, 448,845 vs 442,800 persons, presumably to avoid undercounting growth that occurred in the last 9 months of 2014.

Future Population Forecast

In addition to incorporating a sound existing population estimate, we believe the Board's long term forecast adopted recently is fully reasonable from several vantage points that should be made clear in the record:

- The Board has already increased the population forecast once since the start of this update.
- The new forecast of 578,391 persons through 2035 is *not* only based on OFM. In fact it calls for 16,000 *more* people than OFM forecasts as most likely to occur in Clark County over the next 20 years.
- The new forecast is not a no-growth forecast or one that assumes no economic recovery. It provides for growth of approximately 130,000 new persons over the next 20 years, or an annual rate of 1.2% per year, almost exactly as fast Clark County population has grown annually since 2010 in a largely post-recession environment.
- The forecast is not the only Board decision made to ensure that population growth is adequately accommodated. Equally important are the development assumptions used to determine the amount of land needed, and in this case the Board decisions are not just reasonable, but have gone above and beyond in ensuring ample residential land supplies:
 - The Board has increased the market factor assumption requiring extra land to account for properties which are not environmentally constrained but may not be made available for development in the next 20 years. For redundancy the Board has also retain a second, residential not-to-develop factor based on a similar rationale.
 - The Board has also kept previous assumptions for housing densities and lot sizes, and for the amount of land to discount from existing land supplies because of environmental constraints and future infrastructure deductions, despite evidence in the recent Clark County Buildable Lands Report that these are more conservative than recent data and emerging trends indicate.

As has been noted before in testimony from all of the cities, increasing the population forecast undermines the Board's basic objectives stated at the outset of this process of increasing the ratio of jobs to housing in the community, and of making cities whole by not forcing unwanted UGA changes. The Board may revisit its 20-year growth forecast any year, and must do so every 10 years, effectively ensuring land supplies do not run out. If future growth is different than anticipated, UGAs can always be expanded, but cannot be easily contracted, and the ability to recover from the negative impacts of an oversized UGA – leapfrog growth that outstrips capital facilities and services, the need for stopgap measures such as Urban Holding-are considerably harder than the reverse.

Please include this in the record, and forward to the Board in advance of the July 15 worksession in the event population issues are considered at that time or in coming weeks. We look forward to the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on August 5, a schedule which of course would be thrown back, probably months, if underlying growth forecasts are reopened.

Thanks very much, and don't hesitate to contact me if there are technical questions regarding the above.

Sincerely,



Bryan Snodgrass

Principal Planner, Vancouver Community and Economic Development Department

Sources:

http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/april1/technical_information.asp

<http://www.census.gov/popest/methodology/2014-natstcopr-meth.pdf>

Mike Mohrman (Mike.Mohrman@ofm.wa.gov), Yi Zhao (yi.zhao@ofm.wa.gov)