

# Introduction

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*"Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul, the blueprints of your ultimate achievements." - Napoleon Hill*

## Clark County, Washington

Clark County is rich in local lore and tied to the earliest settlements in the Pacific Northwest. Chinook Indian villages dotted the banks of the Columbia River when the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived in 1806. By 1825, Ft. Vancouver one of the oldest settlements in Washington, was established by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Clark County had its beginning as the District of Vancouver established by the Oregon Provisional Government on June 27, 1844. The district encompassed all of what is now the state of Washington. In 1845, the provisional government changed "district" to "county" and in 1849 changed "Vancouver" to "Clarke" in honor of the explorer William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Many years later, the Washington State Legislature corrected the county's name to "Clark" removing the "e" on the end. In 1849, the Hudson's Bay Company transferred its headquarters to Ft. Victoria in British Columbia and abandoned Ft. Vancouver. In that same year, the Vancouver barracks became the largest military installation west of the Mississippi River.

## Settlement

When the Donation Land Claim Act passed Congress on September 27, 1850, it brought a rush of settlers from all over the country in pursuit of a better future. The "Great Migration" on the Oregon Trail occurred in 1852. Today Clark County is comprised of eight municipalities surrounded by a rural landscape.

1. **Battle Ground** (incorporated 1951) lies in the heart of the agricultural belt and is the home of the oldest dairy plant.
2. **Camas** (incorporated 1906) is situated on the bank of the Columbia River and charts its origin to the 1883 paper mill. Camas is the second largest city in the county.
3. **La Center** (incorporated 1909) sits on the east fork of the Lewis River and was known as a business and navigation center for river commerce.
4. **Ridgefield** (incorporated 1909) is located on the bank of the Columbia River and was an important trading center.
5. **Vancouver** (incorporated 1857) is located on the bank of the Columbia River and flourished as a waterfront town. Vancouver is the fourth largest city in the state and the second largest city in the Portland Metropolitan Area.
6. **Washougal** (incorporated 1908) is at the gateway to the Columbian River Gorge. It was a terminus for Columbia River riverboat traffic and home to a woolen mill established in 1908.

7. **Woodland** (incorporated 1906) flourished as a waterfront town situated at the junction between the Columbia and Lewis rivers. Woodland straddles both Cowlitz and Clark Counties.
8. Town of **Yacolt** (incorporated 1908) is situated north of the east fork of the Lewis River and was a major logging hub that connected to the cross county railroad.

On April 1, 2015, the state Office of Financial Management ranked Clark County as the fifth largest county in the state with a population of 448,500 and is known for the Washington State University – Vancouver branch campus and technology business clusters.

### **Geography and climate**

Located in southwest Washington State, Clark County is approximately 70 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It is physically compact, measuring approximately 25 miles across in either direction encompassing 656 square miles. The Columbia River forms the western and southern boundaries of the county with over 40 miles of river frontage. The Columbia is the only fresh-water harbor for ocean-going commerce on the entire west coast of North America. While the Columbia River forms the county’s southern and western boundaries, the Lewis River forms the northern perimeter and the Cascade Mountain range the eastern border.

Clark County lies within a geographic basin created by the Cascade and Pacific Coast mountain ranges. The climate in the county is influenced by this geography which produces mild wet winters and moderately dry summers. Annual rainfall averages 41.3 inches a year with about 70 percent of the annual precipitation between the months of November and March. The average high temperature in July is 79.9°F and the average low temperature in January is 33.7°F. The marine influence of the Pacific Ocean contributes much to the temperate climate.

### **Comprehensive planning**

Clark County, as with any rapidly urbanizing area, is constantly adapting to meet the need of its residents. A brief summary of planning history is below:

- 1935 Clark County established the first county planning department and planning commission.
- 1961 Clark County adopts first *Comprehensive Plan* (1961 Plan) on April 27, 1961 with the corresponding map on October 2, 1961. In 1959, the state legislature approved a new statute (Chapter 36.70 Revised Code of Washington), which applied specifically to county, regional and joint planning programs. [Commissioner’s Journal book 25929 and 16235 respectively]
- 1979 Clark County adopts second *Comprehensive Plan* (1979 Plan) on May 10, 1979. The plan included a map that identified appropriate levels of development on all lands in Clark County. In rural areas, the plan designated and conserved forest, agricultural and mining land while setting varying levels of housing densities for rural residential areas. The 1979 Plan also identified areas appropriate for urban intensity housing, commercial and industrial development. Urban growth areas were adopted around each city along with adopted policies which limited the types of services permitted outside of urban areas. These policies were intended to help protect the rural character of rural lands and focus urban

development within urban areas. The plan also included chapters related to transportation planning (including adopting an arterial road plan as a part of the countywide plan map), identifying Heritage areas and creating policies on improving community appearance. [ORD. 1979-05-461]

- 1980 Countywide zoning was applied that helped implement the newly adopted comprehensive plan. [ORD. 1980-06-80]
- 1990 The state legislature adopted the Growth Management Act (GMA) as Chapter 36.70A. RCW.
- 1993 *Community Framework Plan* adopted on May 26, 1993. [ORD. 1993-05-41]
- 1994 *Clark County 20-year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan 1994-2014* (1994 Plan) resulted in a total of 41,229 acres or 64.42 square miles of urban growth areas. [ORD. 1994-12-47 and 1994-12-53] The 1994 Plan was remanded by the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board for inconsistency between population projections and capital facilities planning. The 1994 Plan also faced 67 appellants. To comply with the hearings board findings and subsequent appeals the county revisited the 35,000 acre Agri-Forest designation and Rural Centers. [ORD. 1998-07-19] The remaining 3,500 acre review of non-resource designation was resolved in 2003. [ORD. 2003-09-12]
- 2004 *Clark County 20-year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan 2004-2024* (2004 Plan) resulted in 6,124 acres or 9.57 square miles of urban growth areas added. There were 14 appellants that challenged the 2004 Plan. The *Community Framework Plan* was amended and incorporated into the 2004 Plan. [ORD. 2004-09-02]
- 2007 Revision of 2004 Plan (2007 Plan) added 12,023 acres to urban growth areas. Appeals challenged the 2007 Plan, arguing the county had erroneously moved 4,351 acres from agricultural designation to a non-resource designation and included those lands within urban growth areas. As a result of the appeals process, 1,500 acres of rezoned land was ruled invalid and those lands were removed from urban growth areas and again designated as agricultural lands. [ORD. 2007-09-13], [ORD. 2009-12-15], [ORD. 2014-07-03]
- 2016 *Clark County 20-year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan 2015-2035* (2016 Plan) focusing on land for jobs. [ORD. 2016-XX-XX]

## **Growth management**

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA). The GMA requires that counties and cities with state oversight plan and control where and how much growth occurs. The comprehensive plans developed by communities under this mandate will guide land use decisions in the future. Comprehensive plans must respond to the requirements of the GMA and all subsequent amendments.

The GMA established thirteen planning goals to guide the creation and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations in the counties and cities that are required to or choose to plan

under the Act. The fourteenth goal was added in 2003. These goals provided the basis for the policies in the *Community Framework Plan*.

The GMA has been amended numerous times since its original adoption. A list summarizing the amendments made by the legislature and other related statutes are included in Volume 3. All applicable Revised Code of Washington (RCW) changes are included in the 2016 Plan.

**Figure 1 | Growth Management Act Goals**

1. <b>Urban Growth.</b> Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.	6. <b>Property Rights.</b> Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.	10. <b>Environment.</b> Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality and the availability of water.
2. <b>Reduce Sprawl.</b> Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.	7. <b>Permits.</b> Applications for both state and local permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.	11. <b>Citizen Participation and Coordination.</b> Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
3. <b>Transportation.</b> Encourage efficient, multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.	8. <b>Natural Resource Industries.</b> Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.	12. <b>Public Facilities and Services.</b> Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimums.
4. <b>Housing.</b> Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.	9. <b>Open Space and Recreation.</b> Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water and develop parks.	13. <b>Historic Preservation.</b> Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
5. <b>Economic Development.</b> Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services and public facilities.		14. <b>Shorelines of the State.</b> The goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 are added as the 14th goal.

## Community Framework Plan

The *Community Framework Plan* was adopted in 1993; amended in 2000, 2001 and 2004. The extensive citizen participation process to develop the *Community Framework Plan* resulted in the expression of a wide variety of options regarding appropriate population densities, property rights,

provision of public facilities and services and whether all urban development should occur within cities. This visioning document provides guidance to local jurisdictions on regional land use and service issues. The 2016 Plan is consistent with the concepts put forward in the *Community Framework Plan*.

## Countywide Planning Policies

The GMA, under RCW 36.70A.210, requires counties and cities to collaboratively develop Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP) to govern the development of comprehensive plans. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 365-196-305 defines “the primary purpose of CWPP is to ensure consistency between comprehensive plans of counties and cities sharing a common border or related regional issues. Another purpose of the CWPP is to facilitate the transformation of local governance in the urban growth areas, typically through annexation to or incorporation of a city, so that urban governmental services are primarily provided by cities and rural and regional services are provided by counties.” In response to this requirement, CWPP were adopted in 1994; amended in 2004, 2007 and 2016; and are provided in each relevant element.

## Comprehensive Plan organization and use

The 2016 Plan is designed to reflect the uniqueness of Clark County and seeks to preserve those qualities. The 2016 Plan has been written to recognize and reinforce the positive characteristics which make Clark County a special place. The 2016 Plan builds upon the efforts undertaken during the process of developing the *Community Framework Plan*, 1994 Plan, 2004 Plan and 2007 Plan.

The organization of the 2016 Plan is described in the following outline. It is presumed that city policies are consistent with the county's plan. The major components of the 2016 Plan are as follows:

### Introduction

### Community Framework Plan

**Chapter 1: The Land Use Element** describes the way in which the Plan will allocate land for different purposes and will permit or encourage development at differing densities.

**Chapter 2: The Housing Element** describes housing needs and the direction the county and its cities will take to influence the type, location and affordability of housing throughout the county. The issues addressed include fair share housing, infill, accessory units and special needs housing.

**Chapter 3: The Rural and Natural Resource Element** describes the designation and proposed level of development for rural and natural resource lands in the county.

**Chapter 4: The Environmental Element** describes specific environmental goals and requirements as the basis for development regulations and general goals for land use planning and parks acquisition. Additionally, the element describes critical areas including wetlands, water recharge areas and wildlife habitat that are to be protected throughout the county.

**Chapter 5: The Transportation Element** describes the way in which key transportation components, including roadways, transit, freight, aviation and bicycle and pedestrian movement have been planned and integrated into other elements of the 20-Year Plan to further environmental, economic and other goals and policies. It highlights policies on various modes of

transportation, identifies concurrency issues and includes capital facilities planning for transportation.

**Chapter 6: The Capital Facilities and Utilities Element** describes the investment in public infrastructure needed to support the land use, housing, transportation and economic development elements. Emphasis is on water, sewer and storm drainage, with fire protection, law enforcement, schools, libraries, government buildings and other facility needs also being discussed.

**Chapter 7: The Parks and Open Space Element** describes the direction and strategies to provide for parks and open space in the county. This element is linked to the land use plan and the proposed densities to guide the acquisition and development of parks. Plans for urban (active) parks, regional parks, open spaces and trails are discussed.

**Chapter 8: The Historic Preservation Element** describes directions and strategies to recognize and finance protection of historical and archaeological sites in the county.

**Chapter 9: The Economic Development Element** describes the policy direction and implementation strategies to provide for increased employment opportunities and higher family wages in the county. This element is linked to the land use and transportation elements as an integral part of the Plan.

**Chapter 10: The School Element** describes the policy direction and goals to provide full consideration to the importance of school facilities and encourage the development of sustainable learning environments.

**Chapter 11: The Community Design Element** describes policies and strategies to provide for design standards and the framework for consistent development in the county. Like historical and critical areas, community design is an element that can assist the community in achieving its potential. This element is included in order to encourage better designed development in the future.

**Chapter 12: The Annexation Element** describes the intent of designating areas within the urban growth boundary and provides for the annexation of the county's urban areas to cities.

**Chapter 13: The Shoreline Element** contains Clark County's Shoreline Master Program Goals and Policies. These goals and policies are implemented by Chapter 40.460 of the Clark County Code. These goals and policies, along with Chapter 40.460 and the Official Shoreline Map are adopted as the Clark County Shoreline Master Program.

**Chapter 14: The Procedures for Planning Element** describes how the plan is to be used and processes for amending and updating the plan.

### Public participation

The GMA requires the county and cities to conduct outreach to ensure early and continuous public participation in developing and amending comprehensive plans and development regulations in RCW 36.70A.140. The GMA also requires that local programs clearly identify schedules and procedures for public participation in the periodic update process in RCW 36.70A.130 (2)(a). The county developed the *Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2016 Update Public Participation Plan and Preliminary Scoping Schedule* to satisfy these requirements [RES. 2014-01-10].

## Integration with other plans

The 2016 Plan serves as an umbrella plan to ensure that the following plans are compatible and advance the goals described in the *Community Framework Plan*:

- Highway 99 Subarea Plan, December 16, 2008
- Agriculture Preservation Strategies Report, March 2009
- Mill Creek Subarea Plan, June 23, 2009
- Clark County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, December 2010
- Clark County Economic Development Plan Final Edition, September 2011
- Shoreline Master Program, November 2011; amended December 2014
- Coordinated Water System Plan, January 2012
- Aging Readiness Plan, February 12, 2012
- Growing Healthier Planning for a Healthier Clark County Report, June 5, 2012
- Clark County Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan, March 2014
- Clark County Community Development Block Grant Program and Home Investment Partnerships Program Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan 2015-2019, July 2015
- Clark County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, September 2015