



BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



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May 18, 2016

Board of County Councilors & Planning
Commission
c/o Oliver Orjiako
Clark County Community Planning
PO Box 9810
Vancouver WA 98666

Clark County Community Planning
Attn 2016 Comp Plan Record
PO Box 9810
Vancouver WA 98666-9810

Re **Response to Cities Population Letter**
Our File No 52268-73966

Dear Councilors and Commission Members

On behalf of the Building Industry Association of Clark County ("BIA") we are writing this letter in response to the letter that was submitted by staff planners for the various Clark County cities. We were surprised to see the City Seals for the various jurisdictions on the top of the letter, because these issues were not agenda items for city councils in those cities. We have subsequently learned that the letter was written and signed without the authorization of the elected officials of the various cities. The staff planners asked the Clark County Board not to consider current United States Census Data, and made a series of policy arguments regarding the GMA process, purportedly on behalf of their respective cities.

It appears that the staff planners are primarily concerned that the U.S. Census population data was significantly higher than projected, for the second year in a row. For the second year in a row, we have submitted that data to the county. This was done in an effort to make the county's projections and process as accurate as possible. The U.S. Census Bureau is specifically tasked by the federal government with estimating and counting population. Unlike the OFM, which bases estimates on factors such as "building permits" the U.S. Census Bureau focuses on actual population.

As the planners correctly point out, population forecasts drive the amount of land that must be provided for growth, which in turn greatly influences the amount and general type of development that occurs, and the services that must be provided. As such, for Clark County's short and long term future, accurate projections are of paramount importance.

Although the planners are critical of us submitting the new census estimates, and call it a single point of data, we believe that the opposite is true. This is because the census data demonstrates that contrary

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to predictions that the Great Recession had caused a shift in human behavior, the two years of census data demonstrate that people are behaving exactly as they have behaved after every prior recession since the Great Depression. During periods of economic turmoil, people put off moving, purchasing homes, and having children. Those trends have recently reversed.

As part of his coverage on the increased birthrates, Neil Shaw wrote in the Wall Street Journal, on July 17, 2015: "Demographers have forecast a recovery in births as the economy picks up and more young people have families. However, until now there had been no clear sign of an upturn, raising concerns the recession may have led some women to simply forgo children—which happened in the Great Depression when fertility rates fell. Kenneth Johnson, a University of New Hampshire demographer, has estimated 2.3 million more babies would have been born if America's prerecession trends had continued. That creates the potential for a "baby bounce" as Americans who had put off having children play catch-up." The data reported in July of 2015 demonstrates that the national birthrate is once again on the rise.

Because we are coming out of the longest recession since the Great Depression, and because based on historical trends, there will be a "baby boom" the importance of having sufficient land to accommodate the growing families, is even more important. And, while the planners make the case that there is sufficient land in the short term, Clark County's recent experience getting transportation dollars illustrates why land needs to be in early not late.

Because the OFM looks at five years of historical data in making its projections, the impact of the Great Recession will continue to result in underestimating population growth for the next four years.

Due to the state's backlog of transportation infrastructure projects, it can be more than a decade before the state's share of transportation funds are available for necessary infrastructure projects. This is the case with 179th. The state's share of the transportation dollars are expected to be available in approximately five years. This means that approximately fifteen years will have passed since the land was identified for urbanization. It is already more than 10 years since some of this land was designated for urban development, yet the infrastructure is still not in place. If nothing else, we believe that the county's own experience illustrates the need to bring in land well in advance of the expected build-out date. Transportation infrastructure dollars are scarce, and the state is not able to be nimble, or quickly respond to market demand. Even when the econometrics work, and there is demand, like there is currently in Clark County, without federal and state dollars, these projects are not feasible. And, if the requests have not been made the funds will not be delayed for many years.

While the staff planners advocate keeping population projections artificially low, so that capital projects are not required, that sort of advocacy directly contravenes the purpose of the GMA, in the first place. The GMA is to insure sufficient land for housing, and sufficient transportation infrastructure, with

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can only be accomplished through accurate projections. Artificially lowering projections so that infrastructure need not be planned or built, is a terrible choice for Clark County.

The staff planners write, "at the urban edge where new UGA expansions triggered by a higher population forecast would occur, these standards require virtually all new residential development to be in the form of single family lots, almost all at least 10,000 or 20,000 square feet or larger in size, which are unaffordable to the majority of local citizens."

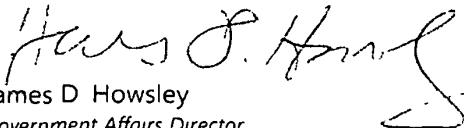
This ignores the principle of supply and demand. When demand outstrips supply, such as in Clark County, there is a rapid escalation in home prices and rents. When supply is greater than demand, such as Detroit, prices are artificially low. When large houses are constructed on the edge, their buyer typically vacates smaller homes closer to the city center, which provides a more affordable option in the market. By adding supply, the cost of housing is moderated for everyone.

In this process we have submitted US Census Bureau data from 1960 to the present, and updated that data as new population estimates became available. That data shows consistent strong population growth for Clark County, which OFM and the staff planners prefer not to acknowledge.

We urge the county not to be swayed by the staff planners' personal preference for slower growth, and to understand that those are not the preferences of the cities they purport to represent.

Very truly yours,

BIA of Clark County


James D. Howsley
Government Affairs Director
jamie.howsley@pathfinderpublicaffairs.com

Schroader, Kathy

From: Wisner, Sonja
Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2016 1:39 PM
To: Albrecht, Gary, Alvarez, Jose, Anderson, Colete, Euler, Gordon, Hermen, Matt, Kamp, Jacqueline, Lebowsky, Laurie, Lumbantobing, Sharon, Orjako, Oliver, Schroader, Kathy, Wisner, Sonja, Bill Wright, Eileen Quiring, John Blom-Hasson, Karl Johnson, Richard Bender, Ron Barca-Boeing, Ron Barca-MSN, Steve Morasch (stevem@landerholm.com)
Cc: Tilton, Rebecca
Subject: FW: Comp Plan Submission - Letter from BIA
Attachments: LTR from BIA re Response to Cities Population Letter pdf

Fyi and for the record

From: Lisa McKee [<mailto:lisa.mckee@jordanramis.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 4:15 PM
To: Orjako, Oliver; Cnty 2016 Comp Plan
Subject: Comp Plan Submission - Letter from BIA

Hello,

Attached is a letter from Jamie Howsley on behalf of the Building Industry Association of Clark County

If you have any trouble opening the attachment please let me know

Thank you

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