



CP 16 # 0071

# County will plan for projection of new jobs

## Decision could affect preparations for land development choices

By TYLER GRAF  
Columbian staff writer

In the next two decades, Clark County could add as many as 91,200 new jobs, according to an employment forecast presented Tuesday as part of the county's process for creating a 20-year comprehensive plan.

Developers and business advocates at a Clark County Board of Commissioners hearing pushed for the highest of four employment projections presented. The hearing was a step for commissioners in estimating how many new jobs the county could gain, and thus what the county should do to accommodate such growth.

The four scenarios presented at the meeting showed the county adding between 25,700 and 91,200 net new jobs by 2035.

Planning for job growth is not required under the state's Growth Management Act, but the county says it helps in identifying land that could be used for job growth.

Developers asked commissioners to commit to boosting employment numbers by adopting the forecast that predicts 91,200 new jobs in the next two decades.

"A lot more work is needed to make these jobs a reality," said Mike Bomar, president of the Columbia River Economic Development Council. He requested that commissioners don't tie developers' hands.

Others echoed those remarks, including James Howsley, a land-

use attorney with Jordan Ramis PC in Vancouver and a member of the Building Industry Association of Clark County. He said Clark County could attract businesses that can't move to Portland and its Oregon suburbs because of land-use restrictions.

Commissioners plan to pick one of the four employment projections on April 22.

The four scenarios presented also related to other economic indicators, including the number of inter-county commuters. Under the most aggressive scenario — the one developers supported — there would be fewer net trips between counties, including over the Interstate 5 Bridge.

The aggressive employment forecast figures are feasible, said Scott Bailey, regional economist for the state Employment Security department. He said the county's jobs-to-housing ratio would have to improve to make them work, however, and that can happen only if the county adds more land for development.

That ratio — which represents how many people both work and live in Clark County — has improved in recent years, he said.

The addition of 91,200 new jobs would require adding 5,700 net acres for development, according to the county.

In January, commissioners approved a 20-year population projection that anticipated the county would have 562,207 people by 2035. The county estimated its population in 2013 at 435,000.

TYLER GRAF: /360-735-4517;  
tyler.graf@columbian.com

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