Schools take on poverty

By KAITLIN GILLESPIE
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It’s crunch time for Clark County’s Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update.

With a little more than a year before the county has to send its final update to the State Department of Commerce, the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan alternatives still need to be completed, and the project needs to go to the public for comment and be analyzed for environmental impact.

But what does any of that actually mean? Why should you care?

The Columbian got Community Planning Director Oliver Orjiako to answer some of the questions you may have had about the GMP but were too afraid to ask.

So what is a Comprehensive Growth Management Plan?

The plan is a set of policies, development regulations and maps developed designed to accommodate and guide growth over a 20-year period, Orjiako said. That’s broad, but the umbrella of this project is massive. It’s the guideline for how the county and cities could plan on the availability and infrastructure.

With environmental review due in 2016, the project needs to be completed by the end of 2015.

The Columbian’s earlier story on the GMP can be found on page A6.

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Plan

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will handle an increasing population and job growth over the next 20 years.

According to the Office of Financial Management, which projects population increase, Clark County could have 562,207 people by 2035. At the 2010 U.S. Census, our population was 425,363 — so that would be a 32 percent increase in 25 years.

But why does the county need to develop a plan for growth?

There’s the legal answer, then there’s the practical answer. We’ll start with the legal answer.

The Growth Management Act, enacted by the state Legislature in 1990, requires that cities and counties with larger populations or higher growth rates develop comprehensive plans, Orjiako said. Counties and cities work together to predict how much their populations will grow. The GMA requires the county to review its growth area at least every eight years.

Here’s the practical answer, and the reason you should care: You know all those services you use? Roads, schools, libraries, police, fire? That’s why. As more people are born or move to Clark County, that creates a higher demand for those services, so the county and cities will build new pol-

Public Meeting

What: Board of County Councilors’ work session on the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

When: 9 a.m. Wednesday

Where: Clark County Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver.

Information: www.columbian.com/planning

at a council work session on Wednesday.

But wait, what about Alternative 4?

Alternative 4 rezones 6,500 acres of agricultural and forest land to rural land to reflect current development on those lands, said Peter Silliman, an assistant/policy analyst for the Board of County Councilors. Silliman developed Alternative 4, but he’s not a member of the planning staff.

If adopted, the plan will put parcels that are currently not in compliance back into compliance, said Clark County Citizens United, a group that represents rural landowners’ interests, requested Alternative 4. Now the group says it doesn’t do enough to rezone parcels that Executive Secretary Carol Levinan says were unlawfully taken from landowners in 1994, back when the county first adopted a comprehensive growth plan.

Their opposition group, Friends of Clark County, doesn’t like the plan either, saying it creates too much “spot zoning” — small parcels way out in the middle of nowhere that can strain resources — rather than efficient development, said President Sydney Reischbeck.

A final draft of the alternative is supposed to be presented at a Board of County Councilors work session Wednesday.

It’s worth noting that in January, the board directed Silliman to draft Alternative 4 and told planning staff to stop working on the comprehensive plan.

That means drafting an Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act has been delayed, Orjiako said.

Silliman was the subject of controversy last year when he was appointed to his position with the board, according to Columbian archives. Silliman is a former placement who led the campaign against the Home Rule Char-

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And if the county doesn’t meet that deadline?

“It’s possible there could be sanctions placed on the county, such as the inability to apply for state and federal grants,” Orjiako said. “Without an adopted capital facilities plan — a required part of a comprehensive plan — jurisdictions cannot collect impact fees to fund various infrastructure improvements.”

Clark County will host another work session at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the sixth floor hearing room at the Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver. Open houses are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. March 25 at Ridgefield High School and 5:30 p.m. April 1 at Hockinson High School. A hearing on the plan is tentatively scheduled for 10 a.m. April 14 at the Public Service Center hearing room.

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