CLARK COUNTY LAND-USE PLANNING

How small is big enough?

Landowners who want to subdivide confront planners hoping to attract industry

KATLIN ILLEGIBLE

Alternative 4's impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New lots</th>
<th>8,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional population in unincorporated Clark County</td>
<td>21,280</td>
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<th>OF THOSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will be under the age of 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will be under the age of 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will be over the age of 65</td>
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Community planners say that could lead immediately to 8,000 new rural, agricultural, and forest lots in unincorporated areas, with potential for more than 11,000 in the future if landowners subdivide their properties as far as allowed.

Alternative 4's core is a cultural battle between rural residents and urban developers that Clark County Citizens United representatives say they've been fighting for more than two decades. The group said the county failed to accommodate rural landowners with local implementation of the state Growth Management Act in 1994 and has continued to do so since then.

The group, which claims to represent the interests of 6,000 rural landowners, has held nothing back, speaking out at council meetings, saying land was "stolen" from them in 1994 and even threatening to sue the county in response to earlier drafts of the plan update.

LAND USE, Page A2
Drought

From Page A1

convinced that they are right on all counts, it was a mix of truth and what the ad maker hopes to be true. The hope-to-be-true part

That Gov. Jerry Brown in his drought-ravaged state was asking city residents “to think about how we can reduce water they use.” Nope, it’s actually a bit more

But the more altruistic — and accurate — part of the ad, aired by the California Farm Water Coalition, was to educate those who show up and water their lawns with abandon about the toll the drought already has taken on the vast and now stunningly dry Central Valley.

“In farm country, where hundreds of thousands of acres have already been shut down because of the drought, some have lost their jobs,” the narrator said. “For those who can afford it, they can still feed their families anywhere, the local feed banks are struggling to keep up with demands.”

The ad noted that dealing with the drought is nothing for farmers to waste years of scarcity and sky-reaching crop prices, having a separate report campaign, “Food Grows Where Water Flows” pointed out that almost 42 percent of irrigated farmland saw their water supply cut off due to drought.

One line was both abundantly true and — given California’s fracted politics — almost laughably optimistic given the context of this drought together.

Since Brown announced his drought state of emergency on April Fool’s Day, some have argued that it didn’t propose nearly enough to help farmers and put a damper on the housing market.

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Alternative 4 could change the minimum parcel size of agricultural lots, such as those at Northwest 23rd Street and North Ridgefield. These lots, currently zoned Agriculture-20 (minimum 20 acres), could be designated as Agriculture-10.

Lottery

Results for Sunday, April 12

Washington Daily Game: 6-6-5
Washington Match: 4-7-13-22

Issue 124 April 13, 2015

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PUBLIC MEETING

What: Clark County Council. Public hearing to discuss what alternatives it might consider.
When: 10 a.m., Tuesday
Where: Public Service Center, 10th floor hearing room, 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver

Information: to see the comprehensive growth management plan update and all public meetings, visit www.clark.wa.gov/planning.

Land use

From Page A1

But it seems to have found its champion: Councilor David Maclver.

In a bold move that county staff and the state have taken a call for a statewide ban on Alternative 4 early this year, after county staff already developed the state-required three alternatives, no one wanted to talk about it.

“CCU President Susan Ramanns said: ‘I can’t tell you how much fun that was.’

Though he’s had help from the county assessor’s office and mapping staff in the Geographic Information Services office, Maclver executed and developed the plan himself, according to county planning staff.

Alternative 4 proposes to correct the massive mismatch between the actual rural land and the inappropriate zoning map that was imposed on a group of the residents more recently on his Facebook page.

As elected official, I put myself in their shoes, I want to see if the plan would work for them and fewer able to do.

And the real “we all in this together” component, price points go up for everyone everywhere.

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activists, farmers and Clark County's top city officials — say Alternative 4 could kill the potential for job growth, strengthen the home value base, raise taxes and create thousands of "McManisons" across the county.

According to the county Growth Management Act if it moves forward with Alternative 4 by creating sprawl.

So-called sprawl was the question, the Growth Management Act was made in the first place," said Southeast Basineck, president of Friends of Clark County.

Matt Ojennus, senior planner for the State Department of Commerce, said he couldn't comment specifically on Clark County's plan. He said, however, that new lots come with a need for sufficient water, roads, schools and public services to accommodate those new household.

It creates a whole bunch of issues," Ojennus said. Those opposed to the plan also have questions why Madore developed it in the first place. Madore is not a land-use expert by trade and has no background in urban planning.

It's too soon to say whether Alternative 4 is beneficial or harmful for Clark County, and it will take environmental analysts to determine its long-range impacts and challenges, community planner Gary Eueker said.

"What we need to do is go through the environmental process," Eueker said. "You're going to have that many more potential wells, septic systems, traffic on the roadway. We have to show how we're going to pay for that."

Land banks

At two open houses in the past month, landowners flooded Ridgefield and Hazardville high schools to see what Alternative 4 meant for their land. It's an indication, Rabenhausen said, that residents have long people have wanted answers.

Clark County Citizens lot plans can do all the same things on their land as conforming lots in terms of adding buildings, renovating homes or selling their property.

The problems come when those lots suddenly become illegal, county assessor Peter Van Nortwick said. Take, for example, a 20-acre lot split in half by a creek. North of the creek is one school district. South of the creek is another. For tax purposes, a landowner could sell a piece of the property to simplify taxes, but doing so with a non-conforming lot will make it illegal.

The owner of an illegal lot loses the ability to sell the lot or build or renovate anything on that land, Van Nortwick said. When that happens, landowners often don't find out that they're inadvertently created an illegal lot until applying for a building permit.

"People are out there sitting on illegal lots that they don't even know about," Van Nortwick said. "Noose on future"

There are, however, advantages to the county of requiring large lots, particularly for industrial development and long-term commercial job growth.

With the continuing decline of the paper products industry, employment in Camas has shifted away from the 32-year-old paper mill. Meanwhile, the city's economic base has grown in recent years, shifting to new commercial development and attracting a number of tech sector employers.

Having large lots available played a key role in that process, City Manager Pete Capell said. But Alternative 4 could suffocate Camas' potential for industrial and commercial development in the long run, he said.

"When you've got one- or two-acre parcels that have been built on, it's very difficult then to aggregate them to be able to create the urban development that's going to be needed in the future," Capell said. "Potentially, 10 or 20 years from now, it could really limit what we're able to do in the future."

Capell, who's in charge of planning the county's former public works director, said the alternative plan puts the county in jeopardy of losing significant state funding.

"We're asking whether it would meet the intent of the GMA, and it would probably get appealed or reconsidered," he said. "It has delayed the process, and it wasn't well received, especially because it really wasn't done by planning professionals."

La Center officials said they believe the greatest impact of Alternative 4 would be felt in their city. The focus for La Center's future commercial and industrial growth is less than 60 acres of land on the northeast corner of the Interstate 5 interchange at Exit 16. That's Eric Eisenmann, a longtime land-use planning consultant working with the city.

"I don't really want to put a noose around the city's long-term future," Eisenmann said. "It takes away a lot of planning, that's exactly what happens."

La Center is in a unique position.

No other Clark County city has lost so much land to court decisions in recent years. Making matters worse, the city has developed a plan to address Alternative 4 and a plan to address Alternative 4 and a plan to address Alternative 4 and a plan to address Alternative 4.

"No other jurisdiction has a federal reservation that just got dropped on their interchange," Eisenmann said in reference to the new Cowitz Tribe land. "And that takes away jobs for the city. It takes away tax base. It's OK that it's happening, but we're just trying to get made whole.

Mayor Jim Irish has worked on diversifying La Center's economy for more than a decade, and a deal to compete with a massive Cowitz Tribe casino-resort just west of the city. Officials anticipate the tribe could begin building the resort in the next few years, leaving the future of a nothing to support the impression that it needed to be handled," Irish said. In Battle Ground, Community Development Director Erin Eredman said the Alternative 4 plan was thrust upon the city at the last minute with little explanation of the overall impact, and it could limit plans for new industrial complexes the city has in mind for the future.

"Our concern is how much more parcelization is this going to allow for, especially around our urban area," Eredman said. "And what's going to be the impact on traffic and school? I feel like a lot of those questions haven't been answered."

Next steps

Eueker, with the community planning staff, said that those planning to come to Tuesday's hearing would be wise to bring pajamas. Eueker expects a full house at the meeting.

The most likely outcome is that the council will vote to push Alternative 4 into environmental review and approve an additional $41,000 contract with ESA, an environmental analysis group based in Seattle. That's on top of a $100,000 contract for the firm for analysis of Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 of the growth plan, which county staff finished several months ago.

Meanwhile, the council could throw Alternative 4 out altogether, Eueker said. It also could recommend alternative plans to council, which Eueker said community planning will resist. Ultimately, however, the decision rests in the hands of the council. After ESA's reviews come back, likely in late summer, the council will decide which pieces of the alternatives it will submit to the state, hearing public comments every step of the way.

County staffs are anxious to move on to the next steps, so a final growth plan update can be finalized, submitted and approved by the state by June 30, 2006.

"The clock is ticking in terms of us getting done," Eueker said.