

Public weighs in at county land-use forum

CREDC president says opinions more diverse than usual



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A forum addressing Clark County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update drew more than 80 people to the Vancouver Community Library on Monday.



Speakers at the packed forum, which was hosted by the Clark County Food System Council, addressed possible agricultural and economic impacts of the growth plan.

One of the speakers, Mike Bomar, president of the Columbia River Economic Development Council, said there has been a more diverse group of opinions voiced in response to the plan update than he's seen in 10 years of being involved in comprehensive planning.

This year's growth plan has come under scrutiny by a variety of local land-use advocacy groups and politicians, particularly after Clark County Councilor David Madore unveiled Alternative 4 to the plan earlier this year.

Alternative 1, which makes no changes to current zoning, and Alternative 3, which would bring new land into some of Clark County's small cities, would make the smallest environmental impacts and allow for the creation of about 7,000 new lots, according to the environmental report.

Alternatives 2 and 4 would lead to changes among Clark County's rural, agriculture and forest lands, allowing property owners to subdivide their property into smaller lots than allowed under current zoning laws. Those alternatives allow for the creation of about 8,200 new lots and 12,400 new lots, respectively.

Alternatives 2 and 4 could mean significant environmental impacts in rural Clark County, according to the impact statement.

Sue Marshall, owner and operator of Bours Corner Farm, said her "jaw dropped" when she saw Alternatives 2 and 4, which would eliminate 20-acre agriculture lots and decrease them to 10-acre or smaller lots. Alternative 4 allows for more sweeping changes countywide than Alternative 2.

"Alternative 4 is really the doozy," she said.

That runs the risk of making farming cost prohibitive, she said, and could change the character of rural Clark County.

Susan Rasmussen, president of Clark County Citizens United and vocal proponent of Alternative 4, disputed Marshall's claim, saying the alternative will actually improve the prospect of local farmers. The alternative will allow a farmer, for example, to sell a small number of acres after a poor harvest, ensuring they can remain in business.

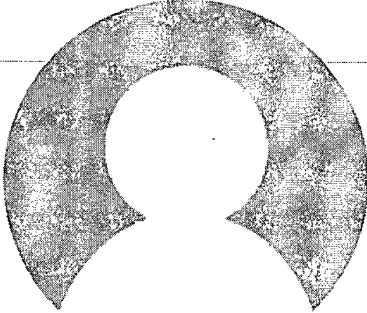
"It's about options for these farmers," she said.

Bomar, meanwhile, said he sympathizes with the struggles of rural landowners, but pointed to potential problems with Alternative 4. It becomes more difficult to attract potential employers seeking large lots to the area with the "increasingly limited size of industrial land," he said.

To read the full environmental statement or submit comments, visit clark.wa.gov/planning (<http://clark.wa.gov/planning/>). Comments also can be emailed to comp.plan@clark.wa.gov (<mailto:comp.plan@clark.wa.gov>) or mailed to Clark County Community Planning, Attn: 2016 Comp Plan Record, P.O. Box 9810, Vancouver, WA 98666-9810.

Comments must be submitted by 4 p.m. Sept. 17.

The next chance to hear about the comprehensive plan update is 6 p.m. Thursday, when the Clark County council and Planning Commission will hold a joint hearing to discuss the update. The hearing is at the Public Service Center at 1300 Franklin St. in Vancouver.



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