

Schroader, Kathy



From: Snodgrass, Bryan
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2016 3 20 PM
To: Cnty 2016 Comp Plan
Subject: City of Vancouver comment letter for Comprehensive Plan update
Attachments: 02 16 16 COV Prefalt ltr to BOCC fnl pdf



February 9, 2016

Chair Marc Boldt
Councilor Julie Olson
Councilor David Madore
Councilor Tom Mielke
Councilor Jeanne Stewart

SUBJECT: February 16, 2016 Board public hearing for reconsideration of the Preferred Alternative for the Clark County Comprehensive Plan update. The City of Vancouver recommends Alternative 3.

Honorable Chair Boldt and Councilors:

On behalf of the City of Vancouver we thank you for the opportunity to comment for the first time before the new full Board. We respectfully request you select the Clark County Planning Commission's recommendation of Alternative 3 as the Preferred Alternative. To allow for completion of the overall update by the June 30, 2016 statutory deadline, we recommend using the existing County DSEIS development assumptions to estimate impacts. Further, we recommend you reject Alternative 4 based on the County's own analyses which indicate that Alternative 4 is unprecedented in size and would result in significant negative impacts countywide, under even the most conservative development assumptions. No credible response has been provided as to how Alternative 4 (or 2) could be adopted by June 30, how it could survive a legal challenge once adopted, or how its impacts to cost, public safety, and rural character could be mitigated. Vancouver recommendations are based on the enclosed specifics, although we note that many of these concerns have been raised not just by cities, but also by numerous rural residents, County staff, the County Planning Commission, a former County Commissioner, and other parties:

Alternative 3 provides a solid basis for urban and rural growth

Vancouver is not proposing expanding its UGA in this update cycle, but supports the modest site specific expansions proposed by other cities. Alternative 3 reflects the Board's overall priority stated throughout this update of emphasizing job growth over population growth, but provides ample opportunity for both, as all of the cities have testified to previously. The employment forecast chosen was the very highest option provided by SW Employment Security Department economist Scott Bailey. The population forecast is 15,000 persons higher than the State Office of Financial Management projects as most likely to occur in Clark County, and would allow for 1.3% annual population growth over the 20-year planning period, similar to what the County has experienced since the end of the national recession. Because the 20-year forecast and land supplies must be updated at least every 8 years, in practice Alternative 3 could support annual growth rates approaching 3%.

Within the rural area, Alternative 3 would allow for economic development in rural centers, at the proposed Rural Industrial Land Bank, and through various employment options on rural and resource properties which have been expanded in recent years. Rural population growth could occur through new development on approximately 5,800 existing vacant and underutilized rural lots identified by County Assessor data, and/or the over 7,000 potential future rural lots identified in the DSEIS (p1-3). The data show that Alternative 3 is not a no or slow growth option for either the urban or rural area.

Alternatives 2 and 4 have major negative countywide impacts that have not been addressed

- Unprecedented Magnitude: Alternatives 2 and 4 would upzone 50 and 100 square miles of land respectively. The upzones would not just reflect existing development patterns, they would change them by allowing for creation of thousands of more new lots than currently possible (DSEIS p1-3). The upzones include not only property owners subject to 1994 downzones, but also numerous others who have purchased properties more recently and therefore not suffered financially, and those who may have segregated land without required land use review.
- Cannot be Completed on Time: Failure to adopt by the June 30 statutory deadline, would render the County ineligible for various grants, with negative implications for cities and citizens countywide. Moving forward with Alternatives 4 (or 2) as Preferred would require revisiting the DSEIS for further amendments, and would require producing a lengthy capital facilities plan to identify and fund the numerous infrastructure projects needed to serve these alternatives. Completing these tasks

would make it virtually impossible to meet the June 30 completion deadline. No general timeline or conceptual workplan has been offered indicating how this could be done.

- **Do not Comply with the Growth Management Act:** Unlike previous Plan updates, local attorneys representing both development and conservation interests have testified at length that Alternative 4 would substantively violate state laws for conservation of rural and agricultural and forest resource lands, resulting in potential grant ineligibility and state sanctions, at cost to local taxpayers countywide. No rebutting legal analysis has been provided.
- **Significant Cost, Public Safety, Environmental and Rural Character Impacts:** The County DSEIS found that both Alternatives 2 and 4 would require new infrastructure “throughout” the County, at potentially “prohibitive” cost, and would “change the character of the rural Clark County”. (p7-9, 7-11, 8-9, 8-10). These alternatives would also increase the risk of groundwater contamination and reduction of water supply (p3-14). The County Planning Commission twice and near unanimously recommended against these alternatives, noting in deliberation that allowing projected traffic increases on narrow rural roadways would be “unconscionable”. There has been no response or even preliminary discussion to our knowledge of how these costs and impacts to public safety and rural character could be addressed.
- **Impacts would occur even under most conservative development assumptions:** The Thorpe reports finding that most of the substitute rural development assumptions introduced by one Councilor last fall are fully or partially invalid is sound and well documented. Nonetheless, recent debate about individual assumptions obscures the fact that Alternative 4 would allow for creation of several thousands of new lots under any realistic scenario. Even if the Thorpe report is completely disregarded and all of the substitute rural development assumptions are used, Alternative 4 would still allow for creation of 6,140 to 6,638 new lots (2/16/16 County staff report and Exhibit 2 attachment). This is similar in magnitude to the 8,220 new lots that the DSEIS already found would be prohibitively expensive to serve and would change the rural character under Alternative 2. (p1-3)

Rural changes not required by June 30, 2016

If the Board wishes to consider various rural changes, it could do so any year, beginning in 2017. (RCW 36.70A.130(3) and (4) require revisiting Urban Growth Areas and urban densities every 8 years, but there is no such requirement in the GMA or to our knowledge in caselaw for the rural area.). Upzones as large in scope as Alternatives 2 or 4 would likely violate GMA substantive requirements for rural and resource land protection, but

considering more modest changes in a future year would at least allow for development of a more defensible analysis and record to consider changes.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to comment. As we have noted previously, the City of Vancouver supports having a dynamic rural area, and would normally not comment on rural proposals, but in this case we felt compelled to because of the magnitude of the projected countywide impacts

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad Eiken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chad Eiken, AICP, Director

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