
Rural Lands Review

Board of County Commissioners/Clark County
Planning Commission Public Meeting
October 16, 2012



Oliver Orjiako, Director
Community Planning

Rural Lands Review

- Purpose:

To have a conversation with rural residents of Clark County about the future of rural Clark County



Rural Lands Review

Background

- Growth Management Act (GMA) adopted in 1990
- Clark County's first comprehensive plan under the GMA adopted in 1994
- Established urban growth boundaries and rural zoning
- Rural centers added in 1998; Fargher Lake in 2000
- Plan updates in 2004 and 2007: primary focus on accommodating growth in urban areas
- Board decided during the 2007 comp plan update that rural lands should be reviewed
- Rural Lands Review began in 2008



Rural Lands Review

- Legal context
 - GMA overview
 - Accommodation of growth
 - Rural character
 - Resource lands
 - Innovative zoning techniques
 - Plan and code revisions



Rural Lands Review

■ Board Rural Principles and Values

- Rural areas are where natural landscapes dominate over the built environment.
- Rural areas are where urban services are minimal or not provided.
- Clark County is to be positioned for present and future uses using fair, consistent and creative rural zoning.
- Encourage modern economic opportunities, including home businesses, compatible with surrounding uses by:
 - expanding uses in rural centers to enhance their economic viability and community identity; and
 - expanding recreational and tourism opportunities.
- Maintain and enhance farming and forestry while minimizing incompatibilities with adjacent uses by:
 - minimizing the conversion of productive farmland; and
 - encouraging locally-grown food.
- Identify real Urban Reserve areas that are poised to become urban areas when growth boundaries are expanded.
- Maintain breaks/green spaces – natural borders.
- Balance tax base among school districts, where appropriate.
- Re-affirm the right to farm/log ordinance.
- Rural areas are where fish and wildlife habitat are valued.



Rural Lands Review

■ Phase 1 (2008)

➤ Rural Lands Task Force

➤ Rural Character (defined in the GMA)

- ✓ where the natural landscape predominates over the built environment;
- ✓ where there is small acreage farming and forestry;
- ✓ where provisions have been made to protect the land for future generations;
- ✓ where there are modern economic opportunities to live and work in the rural area, particularly in and around Rural Centers;
- ✓ where fish and wildlife habitats are valued;
- ✓ where mining is a land use;
- ✓ where urban services are not generally provided; and
- ✓ where natural surface water and recharge areas are protected.



Rural Lands Review

■ Phase 2 (2009-11)

- Rural Lands Task Force
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee (APAC) Report
- Task Force recommendations addressed through 'Retooling Our Code'
 - ✓ Kennels
 - ✓ Stables
 - ✓ Mixed Use in Rural Centers
 - ✓ Changes to residential uses in Rural Centers
 - ✓ Temporary employee housing
 - ✓ Agriculture stands and markets
 - ✓ Master planning for energy parks
 - ✓ Wineries with tasting rooms/events



Rural Lands Review

- Phase 3 (2011-present)
 - Task Force recommendations that go beyond code changes
 - Rural Lands Study
 - ✓ Clustering on resource (ag and forest) lands
 - ✓ Minimum parcel sizes for resource lands
 - ✓ Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
 - ✓ Agricultural production districts/rural reserve
 - ✓ Current use taxation program
 - BERK & Associates hired as consultants



Rural Lands Review

- Why do a Rural Lands Study?
 - To increase options and flexibility for land owners
 - To add policies and programs to do so
- What are the possibilities?
 - Should densities in rural areas change?
 - Should densities in rural centers change?
 - Should the county be looking for ways to save productive farmland by encouraging farming? How?



Rural Lands Review

■ Key findings:

- Fewer large and mid-size farms
- More farms, smaller acreage per farm
- Ag is in transition for large-scale commodity farming into more intensive value-added, urban-oriented farming
- Small farms and enterprises are increasing in rural areas
- Timber production has declined, but there is still production in the county
- The county has the highest participation in the state in the current use program



Rural Lands Review

- Key findings:

- Less than 20% of lots in the Ag-20 zone are 20 acres or more
- Farming occurs on Rural land as much as Ag land
- More interest and emphasis on local food production
- The county has the highest unemployment rate in the state



Rural Lands Review

- Board-directed short-term work items (2013-14)
 - Homesteading
 - Clustering on resource lands
 - Rural planned unit developments (PUD)
 - Minimum parcel sizes
 - Rural centers
- Board-directed longer-term work items (2013-16)
 - Transfer of development rights (TDR)
 - Rural reserve/ag production districts
 - Current use taxation program

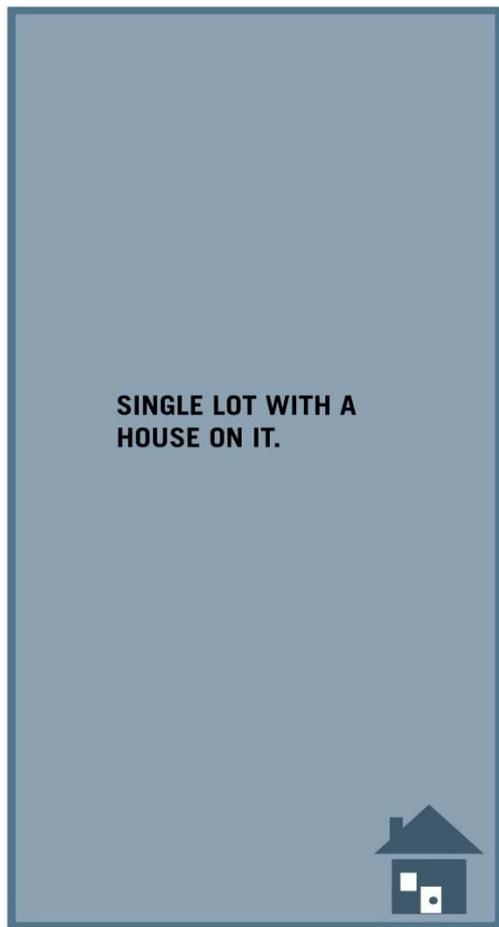


Homesteading

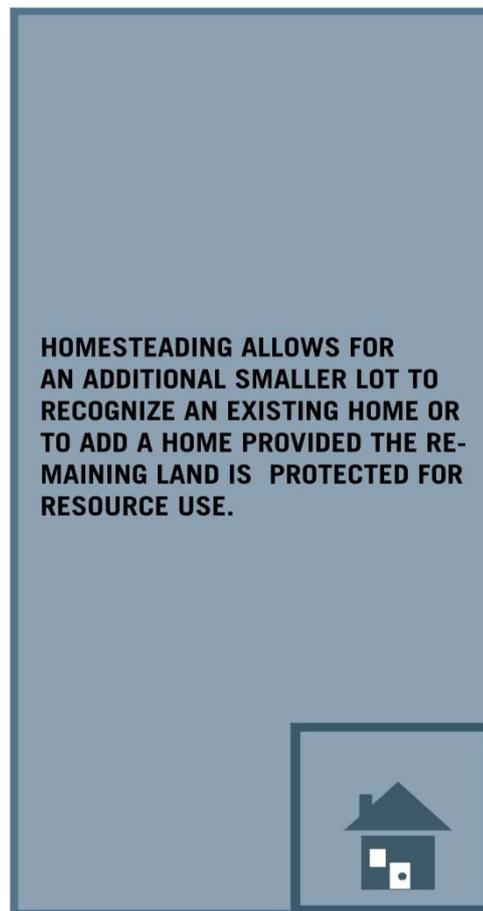
- What is it?
 - Allow a home site on resource land lot, less than the minimum lot size of the zone
 - Remainder stays in resource use
- Pros/Cons
 - Supports property owner and heirs
 - May help with financing
 - Maintains overall density of zone
 - Adds flexibility while retaining resource use

Homesteading Example

BEFORE

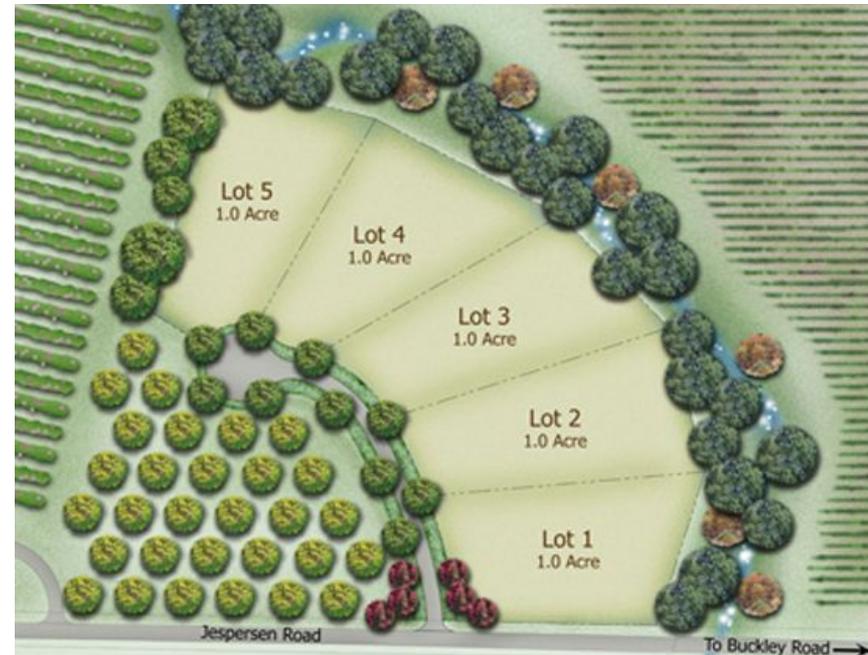


AFTER



Clustering

- What is it?
 - Allows smaller parcels and homesites to be developed in a smaller area on lesser-productive lands while preserving remainder in resource use
 - Addresses more lots than homesteading
- Allowed now on Rural lands (zoned R-5, R-10 and R-20)



Clustering

■ Pros/Cons

- Could allow agricultural/forestry landowners to sell unproductive land to support their farms/forest plots, provide for their heirs, or support their retirement
- Could reduce development costs
- Would protect the remaining lot for resource use
- Would increase densities in resource areas
 - Increased conflicts from incompatible uses?
 - Could be offset by a TDR program
- Needs to be sensitive to rural character

Minimum Parcel Sizes

- What is it?
 - Given the changes in agriculture and forestry in the county, does it make sense to allow smaller lot sizes for agriculture or forestry lands?
 - Could create new zone (for example, Ag-10)
 - Could allow averaging of lot sizes

Minimum Parcel Sizes

■ Pros/Cons

- Could allow more ownership options
- Siting criteria along with clustering could help protect resource use
- Matches current parcel size mix and trends in farm sizes
- Could add residential uses in resource areas, with right-to-farm conflicts

Rural Planned Unit Development (PUD)

- What is it?
 - A way to master-plan a site to protect sensitive lands, increase density and allow for additional uses
 - Similar to clustering



Rural Planned Unit Development (PUD)

- Pros/Cons
 - Could give more housing variety in rural/resource areas
 - Typically, a PUD is treated like a rezone
 - Would require an applicant to demonstrate or provide a public benefit
 - Potential to limit the development footprint



Rural Lands Review

- Short-term work items (2013-14)
 - Homesteading
 - Clustering on resource lands
 - Rural planned unit developments (PUD)
 - Minimum parcel sizes
- Review of the comp plan to see what is there now with regard to these four items
- First step: What language can be added that would support these ideas?



Rural Lands Review

■ Short-term work items

Proposal to add comp plan language in the Rural and Natural Resource Element (Chapter 3), as follows:

- Policy 3.1.4: Support and encourage uses within rural lands which sustain and are compatible with the rural character and level of public facilities and services, such as:
 - Small-scale forest and farm management;
 - Large-lot residential development;
 - Cluster development that locates the development in a smaller footprint and retains the balance in a resource or open space use;
 - Open space, parks, trails/recreation;
 - Mining; and
 - Home businesses.



Rural Lands Review

■ Short-term work items

Proposal to add comp plan language in the Rural and Natural Resource Element (Chapter 3), as follows:

- Policy 3.2.9: Rural Centers shall have a density of between one unit per acre and one unit per five acres based on the historic lot pattern in the area. ~~In no case shall density exceed one unit per acre.~~ However, where feasible, innovative zoning techniques are encouraged that respect the character of the rural center and allow for additional development, such as:
 - Rural planned unit developments offering small-scale cottage housing in exchange for public benefits; and
 - Rural cluster development that locates the development in a smaller footprint and retains the balance in a resource or open space use.



Rural Lands Review

- Are these possibilities the county should consider?
- What other things should the county consider with regard to rural lands?



Rural Lands Review



Rural Lands Review

- **Thank You for your attendance!**
 - Please be sure to sign in
 - Information:
www.clark.wa.gov/planning/land_use/rural_lands
- Gordy Euler, gordon.euler@clark.wa.gov
(360) 397-2280 x4968

