RURAL CENTER

Rural Centers are distinguished by small lot development with a definite edge, surrounded by a rural landscape of generally open land used for agriculture, forestry, large lot residential development, recreation and environmental protection purposes. These centers are often at the crossroads where historical development has allowed for both smaller lots and commercial uses within these nodes of development. Within these centers rural residential development is based on historical patterns. Commercial activities located at crossroads provide rural residents with an opportunity to meet many of their daily needs without going into one of the cities.

Within the Rural Centers, the following land uses have been identified: residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, parks and open space. The commercial and industrial designations are similar to past comprehensive plan maps with some additional commercial areas designated. The commercial and industrial activities within these centers should support opportunity for job growth, tax base to support schools, rural and resource needs and not draw people from the urban area.

Commercial uses to be encouraged in Rural Centers include post offices, veterinary clinics, day care, schools, small medical practices, shopping services and housing opportunities compatible with surrounding roads and utilities. These, in turn, reinforce the center's rural character and distinct sense of community. The Rural Centers of Clark County are as follows: Brush Prairie, Meadow Glade, Hockinson, Dollars Corner, Farger Lake, Amboy and Chelatchie Prairie.

POLICIES

Countywide Planning Policy 1.1.14: Rural Centers are outside of urban growth areas centers and urban reserve areas and provide public facilities (e.g., fire stations, post offices, schools) and commercial facilities to support rural lifestyles. Rural centers have residential densities consistent with the surrounding rural minimum lot sizes and do not have a full range of urban levels of services.

Rural Lands Policy 3.1.1: Clark County shall maintain and protect the character of rural lands defined as those lands outside of urban growth areas by promoting:

- Large lot residential development compatible with adjacent farming, forestry and mining and not needing urban facilities and services;
- Non-residential development in Rural Centers;
- Economic development activities consistent with the preservation of rural character;
- Agriculture, forestry and mining activities;
- Regional parks, trails and open space;
- Environmental quality, particularly as evidenced by the health of wildlife and fisheries (especially salmon and trout), aquifers used for potable water, surface water bodies and natural drainage systems; and
• Historic character and resources including archaeological and cultural sites important to the local community.

3.2.5 If schools and related facilities need to be sited in rural areas, preference shall be to locate first in Rural Centers and then, as a last resort, in areas designated as Rural. 

**Rural Area Goal: Maintain the character of the designated Rural Centers within the surrounding rural area.**

3.3.1 Rural Centers as designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are distinct areas that:
• provide a focus for the surrounding rural area that is appropriate in character and scale in the rural environment;
• provide appropriate commercial developments to serve adjoining rural areas;
• provide services to tourists and other visitors recreating in the area; and,
• provide an opportunity to develop facilities that can function as a community center in those areas where an incorporated town no longer serves that role for the surrounding area.

3.3.2 Rural Centers:
• are generally characterized by smaller lot patterns;
• have residential development and small-scale business that provides convenience shopping and services to nearby residents;
• have access to arterial roadways; and,
• are surrounded by rural landscapes of generally open land used for agriculture, forestry, large lot residential, recreational and environmental protection purposes.

Rural Centers identified on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are: Amboy, Brush Prairie, Chelatchie Prairie, Dollars Corner, Fargher Lake, Hockinson and Meadow Glade.

3.3.3 Rural Centers shall have a residential density of between one unit per acre and one unit per five acres (RC-1, RC-2.5 and R-5) based on the historical pattern in the area. In no case shall density exceed one unit per acre.

3.3.4 Rural commercial development should support the needs of rural residents and natural resources activities rather than urban area uses. Appropriate uses for Rural Centers include:
• resource-based industrial development consistent with rural character and levels of service;
• commercial uses supporting resource uses, such as packing, first state processing and processing which provides value added to the resource products may occur in resource areas; and,
• post offices, veterinary clinics, day care, small medical practices and schools that provide employment, shopping services and housing opportunities within Rural Centers. The scale should be compatible with surrounding roads and utilities, which reinforce the rural character and distinct sense of community.

3.3.5 If schools and related facilities need to be sited in rural areas, preference shall be to locate first in Rural Centers and then, as a last resort, in areas designated as Rural.

3.3.6 Rural Center designation criteria are as follows:
• an area proposed as a Rural Center had to have existed as of July 1, 1990, identifiable by pre-existing small lot development patterns, natural features as boundaries and access to arterials;
• proponents of a new Rural Center shall submit to the county a petition signed by at least 60 percent of the property owners of the land within the boundaries of the proposed new Rural Center;
• an expansion of an existing Rural Center shall be considered and evaluated by the county through the annual review process under CCC40.560 and pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d).
• a new Rural Center shall be considered and evaluated by the county through the docket process under CCC40.560 and pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d).

Capital Facilities Policy 6.3.3: New and existing development in the rural area outside of rural centers shall use individual on-site septic disposal systems, unless public sewer is available. New or existing development within designated rural centers may use community septic systems.

Capital Facilities Policy 6.10.13: Mobile services such as police, fire and other services should locate facilities within the urban area. Precinct or substation facilities may be located in the rural area where necessary to serve rural population, but are encouraged to locate in rural centers or areas of concentrated development. The level-of-service provided must be rural in nature only.