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Colete Anderson, Community Planning  
Clark County  
1300 Franklin St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Vancouver, WA 98660

Dear Colleagues,

The City of La Center appreciates the opportunity to comment on the work session agenda of the Clark County Council and Planning Commission on February 15<sup>th</sup>. We have reviewed the materials on the Grid:

[https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018\\_Q1/021518WSJointPC\\_Council.pdf](https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018_Q1/021518WSJointPC_Council.pdf)

and [https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018\\_Q1/021518WS\\_Handout.pdf](https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018_Q1/021518WS_Handout.pdf)

The County's potential work program appears very ambitious and daunting; there are so many pressing issues to address and resolve.

La Center staff and consultants carefully reviewed the Clark County Community Framework Plan (Plan) a foundation document which underpins local Growth Management Act (GMA) compliance.<sup>1</sup> In our opinion, updating the Plan will require serious thought, extensive public outreach and a significant commitment of local staff and resources. We believe there are more pressing concerns for the County and other Clark County cities. La Center is dedicating our limited resources to implementing our GMA plan.

If, however, the County initiates a review and update of the Community Framework Plan the City of La Center recommends the scope of this endeavor be very narrow. Naturally, we would participate in an update of the Framework Plan if there is a limited project scope. We suggest that there are at least two pressing issues your staff has identified which affect the cities and the County alike.

Issues of specific interest to La Center that are elements of the Community Framework Plan and County Comprehensive Plan include:

<sup>1</sup> Community Framework Plan, Clark County, May 1993, Ord. 1993-05-41;

[https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018\\_Q1/021518WS\\_CurrentWorkplan.pdf](https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/the-grid/2018/2018_Q1/021518WS_CurrentWorkplan.pdf)



- Economic Development: The city is interested in identifying strategic action items to help implement Plan polices which “Encourage industrial uses in major urban centers, small towns and community centers.” (Plan 10.2.1) La Center is the northern gateway in the Discovery Corridor. In addition, the new ilani Resort and Casino is a major economic attractor in Clark County and the Plan should consider the potential for enhancing recreation and entertainment/economic development opportunities in North Clark County.
- Urban Reserves and Urban Growth. The GMA requires local governments to both protect Resource Lands (Agriculture, Forest and Mineral) and accommodate the forecasted population growth. In Clark County, the UGAs of smaller cities abut Resource Land leaving some cities with few options to expand UGAs.

In La Center’s case, the County recognized that a modest 56 acre UGA expansion into Industrial Reserve land at the La Center I-5 Interchange that was zoned AG-20 was essential to help create employment opportunities in north Clark County. (Plan 1.3 and 1.4) Yet, once again, La Center and the Clark County are engaged in expensive long-term legal battles as a result of this UGA expansion and annexation.

The current system of measured UGA expansion followed by lawsuits is untenable. We fully endorse an effort to re-look at Resource Lands to:

- Study, quantify, and forecast the actual long-term commercial viability of agriculture in Clark County. We should prioritize our expectations for agriculture in Clark County and sub-areas within the County.
- Adopt Framework or Comprehensive Plan policies that support these targeted agricultural opportunities.
- Determine which lands are viable for long-term commercial agricultural significance. The statute requires a County-wide or an Area-wide analysis. Some counties employ modern mapping tools to assess not only local soils but also look at local elevation, moisture, wind patterns, and temperature to determine why some sub-areas have potential for commercially significant agriculture and some sub-areas do not.
- Identify and prioritize areas for eventual conversion from Resource Land into job producing lands. Make Urban Reserve meaningful. This would allow cities to develop and rely upon realistic goals for future growth and UGA expansion.
- Establish policies and programs to transfer development rights from potential AG lands to AG land holding areas which are necessary to support our vision for long-term commercial agricultural significance.

The County and cities need to find a better way to plan for and effectuate the long term growth of urban areas as well as the protection of Resource Lands. The current system is not working.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. The City of La Center continues to value the support Clark County planning staff provides our community as well as your department’s collaborative spirit.

Sincerely,



Greg Thornton, Mayor