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**CLARK COUNTY**  
WASHINGTON

## **N E W S   R E L E A S E**

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### **County kicks off growth plan update due to state by 2016**

Vancouver, WA – Clark County Community Planning has started the process of updating the local Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, as required by state law. The new planning period is from 2016 to 2035.

Work so far includes preliminary review of the existing plan in cooperation with local cities and the town of Yacolt. Planning staff also is preparing to request key decisions from the Board of County Commissioners to guide the process to completion by June 30, 2016.

To proceed, county staff needs board approval for:

- A proposed public participation plan.
- A population projection for 2016-2035.
- A proposed scope of work.

“The intent is to ensure the county and its cities have enough land included in urban growth areas to accommodate 20 years of population and employment growth,” said Community Planning Director Oliver Orjiako.

He said growth-plan counties must choose a population forecast from a range issued by the Washington State Office of Financial Management. The most recent population projections for Clark County are between approximately 460,000 and 681,000 by 2035.

At present, the county is planning for a population of approximately 584,000 by 2024, increasing from about 430,000 today.

Anyone interested in the update can watch for related news and announcements until the process concludes. Email bulletins are available by request for those who contact [commplanning@clark.wa.gov](mailto:commplanning@clark.wa.gov)

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# Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2016 Update

## Public Participation Plan & Preliminary Scoping Schedule

### Purpose

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to conduct outreach to ensure “early and continuous public participation” in developing and amending comprehensive plans and development regulations (RCW 36.70A.140). The GMA also requires that local programs clearly identify schedules and procedures for public participation in the periodic update process (RCW 36.70.A.130(2)(a)).

To ensure compliance, the Washington State Department of Commerce recommends local governments begin the periodic update process by adopting a public participation plan. It would clearly identify the scope of the proposed update, when legislative action is expected, and how the public can participate or comment. Community Planning believes this recommendation is sound, and strongly encourages the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to adopt a formal public participation plan.

### Goals

1. Ensure broad participation by identifying key interest groups, soliciting input from the public, and ensuring no single group or interest dominates the process.
2. Maintain effective communication and coordination with municipalities and service providers.
3. Provide equal opportunity for participation throughout the county; east (Camas and Washougal), south (Vancouver), northwest (Ridgefield and La Center) and north (Battle Ground and Yacolt).
4. Accommodate budgetary and staffing constraints by ensuring resources are focused on elements of the update process likely to be of greatest interest to the public.
5. Distribute information and post notices efficiently.
6. Notify the public of all meetings, hearings, workshops and legislative actions.

### Scope of Work

To organize the complex process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, Community Planning has divided essential elements into two phases. During Phase I, the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations will be reviewed for compliance with state law. This process will identify areas of the plan that must be amended. Phase II will be where issues identified in Phase I are addressed. The preliminary scope of work and update schedule are general rather than specific because it is extremely difficult to know the full extent of the required work until Phase I is complete. As a preliminary step, the board and Planning Commission must establish a scope of work for the update. To assist, Community Planning has classified work associated with the update as mandatory or strongly recommended. This will accommodate budgetary and staffing constraints. A summary is provided below.

**Table 1 – Summary of Potential Work Items**

GMA Requirements	Mandatory	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consideration of GMA amendments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban growth areas and population projections <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Critical areas regulations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mineral resource lands <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal consistency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development regulation consistency
Required by Clark County Code or Comprehensive Plan	Mandatory	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other development regulation amendments
Important Planning Considerations	Strongly Recommended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fully develop benchmark and monitoring system to guide future planning work <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reorganization and rewrite of Comprehensive Plan to improve readability and usefulness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Previously uncompleted annual review docket/work program items.

**Phase I**

Phase I will begin with a thorough review of GMA requirements and compilation of amendments since the 2007 update. The department will review the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to determine whether revisions will be required to ensure consistency with GMA amendments.

The county also will need to analyze its Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to ensure they are sized to accommodate 20 years of population and employment growth (based on an adopted OFM range). If, during this analysis, the county determines a UGA is either too small or too large, corrective actions will be identified. They could include altering the size of urban growth areas, changing the allowed uses and densities, or a combination of actions. Any proposed changes must be fully consistent with and supported by adopted Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs) and capital facilities plans.

Because plans and policies of other local governments and utility providers must be consistent with the adopted Countywide Planning Policies, this step will require high-level intergovernmental coordination. To address this need, the board and Community Planning have committed to working cooperatively with all involved parties as a forum for reviewing and, if need be, revising CWPPs.

**Phase II**

Once the initial review and analysis are complete (Phase I), the Washington State Department of Commerce recommends local governments adopt an ordinance or resolution stating a review has been completed and identifying elements of the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations that will be updated. This step will result in a report documenting changes in Clark County since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, areas of the plan or development regulations that must be updated or amended, and amendments or changes, which although not mandatory, the board and Planning Commission have chosen to consider.

Phase II essentially will be a stage where issues identified in Phase I are addressed through plan or code revisions. Until Phase I is complete, Community Planning cannot identify a detailed scope of work for Phase II. However, the department has prepared a general outline of tasks to complete in conjunction with the periodic update. The outline has been incorporated into the attached "Public Participation Plan & Preliminary Scope of Work." A more detailed scope of work will be prepared for Phase II at the completion of Phase I.

## **Public Participation Program Structure**

To best use Clark County's limited planning resources, this plan identifies both *essential* public participation strategies that *will* be employed as well as *optional* strategies which *could* be employed if resources are available. The estimated completion dates for each step are indeed estimates. In some cases, final action may occur before or after the target date because of constrained resources, need for additional intergovernmental collaboration, or unforeseen circumstances.

## **Techniques and Strategies**

The public participation methods employed by Clark County may include:

**Public workshops and open houses** – Informal gatherings to solicit public feedback on Clark County's planning efforts. Workshops and/or listening posts may involve presentations by staff, question and answer sessions and interactive activities.

**Public hearings** – A formal public process conducted before the Board of County Commissioners or Planning Commission.

**Clark County website** – The online site where relevant documents, schedules announcements, notices of meetings, hearings and public involvement opportunities will be posted.

**City/County coordination meetings** – Community Planning will coordinate with the cities of Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver and Washougal and the town of Yacolt on countywide planning issues that affect each jurisdiction. Clark County will coordinate meetings to discuss issues and seek consensus with each municipality before taking final action. In addition, Clark County will work directly with other municipal service providers affected by the plan.

**Technical advisory groups** – Community Planning may use technical advisory groups to solicit guidance on complex technical issues requiring a high level of intergovernmental coordination. The groups will include members who have specific knowledge of or interest in specialized technical topics. Technical advisory groups may have members from business and interest groups, trade organizations, service providers, municipalities and county departments.

**Email list** – Community Planning will maintain a list of individuals and groups who have expressed an interest in the Comprehensive Plan update. The list will be used to disseminate announcements and notices.

**Issue papers** – They will provide focused guidance and document the evolution of the update process. Before final adoption, Community Planning will compile the issue papers into a single background report and post issue papers and the report on the department's website.

**News releases** – Clark County will prepare news releases and distribute them to the regional media, neighborhood associations and other local information providers throughout the update process.

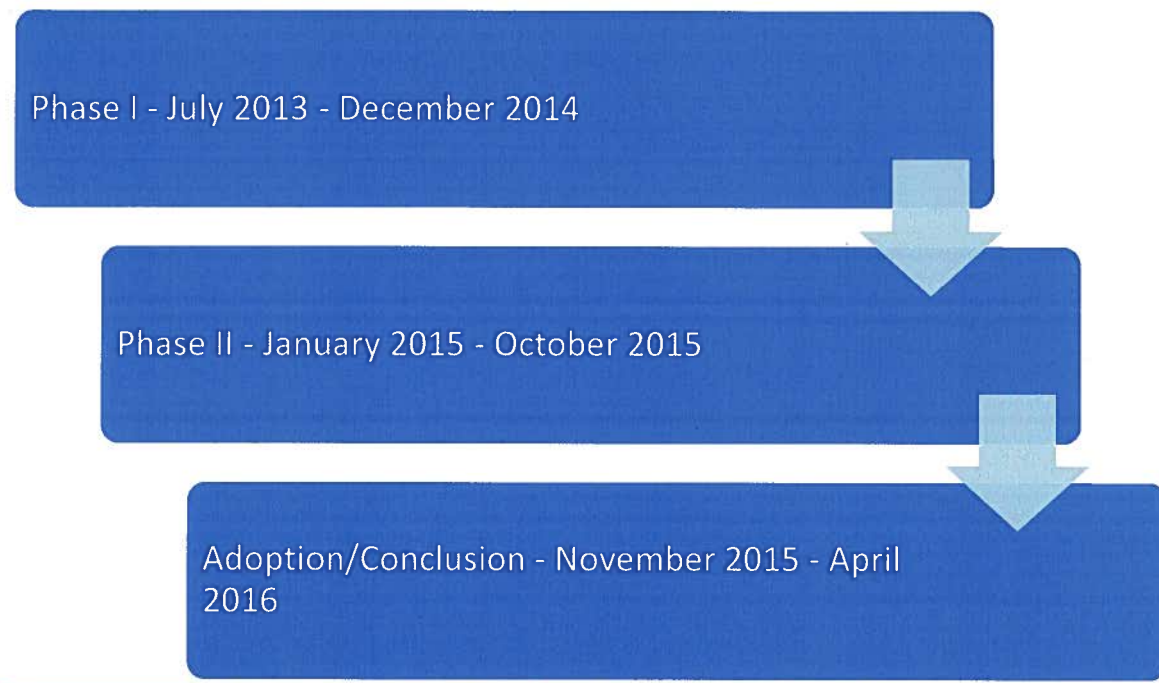
**Board of Commissioner work sessions** – Community Planning will schedule work sessions as needed to brief board members and other interested parties.

**Planning Commission work sessions** – Community Planning will schedule work sessions as needed to brief the Planning Commission and other interested parties.

**Notification and availability of information** - Clark County will ensure meetings, work sessions and hearings are publicized as required by state law or county code. Clark County will make every effort to post all relevant documents on the county website. In addition, a project file will be maintained for public review at Community Planning, Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., third floor, Vancouver.

### **Preliminary Schedule**

After a preliminary review of State requirements and technical guidance, Community Planning has identified the following specific steps for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.



### **Phase I**

1. Establish Preliminary Scope of Work and Public Participation Plan
  - a. *Essential public participation*: written plan, news release, website, work session, Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing
  - b. *Final action*: Resolution adopting the Public Participation Plan and Preliminary Scope of Work
2. Selection of 20-year population projection range
  - a. *Essential public participation*: Issue paper, city/county coordination meetings, website update, work session, county and municipality review, Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing, coordination with municipal service providers
  - b. *Final action*: Resolution adopting the selected population projection
3. Countywide Planning Policies
  - a. *Essential public participation*: Issue paper, city/county coordination meeting, website update, work session, county and municipality review, Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing, coordination with municipal service providers
  - b. *Final action*: Resolution adopting the revised Countywide Planning Policies
4. Regional growth trends and allocations
  - a. *Essential public participation*: Issue paper, website update, city/county coordination meeting,

- work sessions, coordination with municipal service providers
  - b. *Final action:* Resolution adopting allocation of population to each planning area and urban growth area.
5. **Buildable lands analysis**
    - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, website update, city/county coordination meeting, work session.
    - b. *Final action:* Buildable lands analysis report available to local planning jurisdictions and service providers. The Buildable lands analysis is due June 30, 2015.
  6. **Formal review of Comprehensive Plan and development regulations**
    - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, technical advisory group (for certain technical elements), website update, email list, news release, public meeting in each planning area, work session, Planning Commission hearing.
    - b. *Final action:* Adopted resolution stating a formal review has occurred and identifying pending changes or revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, and a detailed schedule and public participation plan for Phase II of the update.

## **Phase II**

1. **Urban Growth Area modifications**
  - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, technical advisory group/city/county coordination meeting, work session, website update, email list, news release, public meeting in each planning area where a UGA modification is proposed, coordination with municipal service providers
  - b. *Final action:* Decision on revised urban growth area boundaries, if any
2. **Draft Comprehensive Plan revisions**
  - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, technical advisory group (for certain technical elements), website update, email list, news release, public meeting in each planning area, work session
  - b. *Final action:* Completion of proposed Comprehensive Plan revisions
3. **SEPA analysis and public review period**
  - a. *Essential public participation:* Update website, email list, send notice to adopt to state agencies
  - b. *Final action:* SEPA Threshold Determination issued
4. **Draft development regulation revisions**
  - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, technical advisory group (for certain technical regulations), website update, email list, news release, public meeting in each planning area, work session
  - b. *Final action:* Completion of proposed development regulations revisions
5. **Final adoption**
  - a. *Essential public participation:* Issue paper, website update, email list, news release, work session, Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing
  - b. *Final action:* Formal adoption of 2016 Comprehensive Plan update

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# Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2016 Update

Planning for growth 2016 – 2035

Population and Jobs Projections – Issue Paper 2

## Purpose

This memorandum provides the Board of Clark County Commissioners (BOCC) the background information for a discussion with local cities and the Town of Yacolt on population and job planning assumptions for 2016 through 2035.

## Background

Clark County and its cities are required to periodically review and update their comprehensive plans and development regulations. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that counties and cities complete such a review at least every eight years (RCW 36.70A.130). Clark County adopted comprehensive plans in 1994, 2004, and 2007. The 2007 update covers the time period 2004-2024. At that time, 2014 was the deadline for completing the next update. However, due to the recent economic downturn, the State Legislature adopted a revised schedule extending the deadline for completion of Clark County's next update to June 30, 2016.

In "Issue Paper 1 - Comprehensive Plan Overview", Community Planning presented a summary of the county's Planning Assumptions, the 2013 vacant lands inventory and population and employment projections. This Issue Paper will focus on Population projections for the 2016-2035 planning horizon.

The intent of the 2016 update is to ensure that the county and its cities have enough land included in urban growth areas (UGAs) to accommodate 20 years of population and employment growth through 2035. Not only are the UGAs sized to accommodate a 20- year supply of housing, but also the full range of services that accompany urban development, including medical, public service, institutional, industrial, commercial, service, and retail uses. In addition, this growth must be supported by the necessary infrastructure and public services. In the existing plans, the county and its cities have identified the appropriate levels of service necessary to accommodate the increase in population and jobs. Any improvements needed to maintain these levels of service especially for "hard concurrency" items must be identified and programmed for funding concurrent with any increase in population.

## Population Allocation Considerations

Regulations adopted by the Washington State Department of Commerce are intended to guide local governments in making population allocation decisions. Specifically, WAC 365-196-310 identifies a number of factors applicable to allocating projected growth:

1. *Population projections available from the Washington State Office of Financial Management*
2. *Historical growth trends and factors that could alter those trends in the future*
3. *Provision of public facilities*
4. *Land supply limitations*
5. *Economic trends and employment*
6. *Projected need for residential, commercial, and industrial lands*



## 1. Population Projections

In determining the size of UGAs, counties are required to utilize the official population projections issued by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). These projections include three distinct ranges; low, medium, and high. The population projections are prepared for a 20- year time period with an incremental update every 5 years. . Given the recent economic downturn, changing demographics, and lower than anticipated growth rates, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) published new, lower growth projections for 2035. The most recent projections by OFM were released on May 31, 2012. The Clark County population projections for 2035 are:

HIGH	681,135
<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>562,207</b>
LOW	459,617

(Source: <http://ofm.wa.gov/pop/gma/>)

In accordance with RCW 43.62.035, the **medium** range represents OFM’s most likely estimate of a county’s population. The RCW says in part: “the middle range shall represent the office’s estimate of the most likely population projection for the county”. Within each county, population planning targets for cities, towns, and unincorporated areas are worked out among the affected local jurisdictions as part of the regional, city and county planning process. Clark County, its cities and town have adopted the Community Framework Plan (vision for growth) and Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP) to guide the development of the 20 -year plan.

Choosing an appropriate population projection range is extremely important. Selecting a range that is too high or too low can lead to serious challenges. For example, because UGAs are sized in accordance with the adopted population range, choosing a range that underestimates the rate of population growth can lead to UGAs that are too small, a shortage of developable land and artificially inflated housing and land prices. Alternatively, selecting a range that overestimates the rate of population growth can require costly and unnecessary infrastructure upgrades. Because the GMA requires local governments to develop detailed funding plans for urban services, selecting a range that is too high can result in premature or unnecessary and wasteful infrastructure spending.

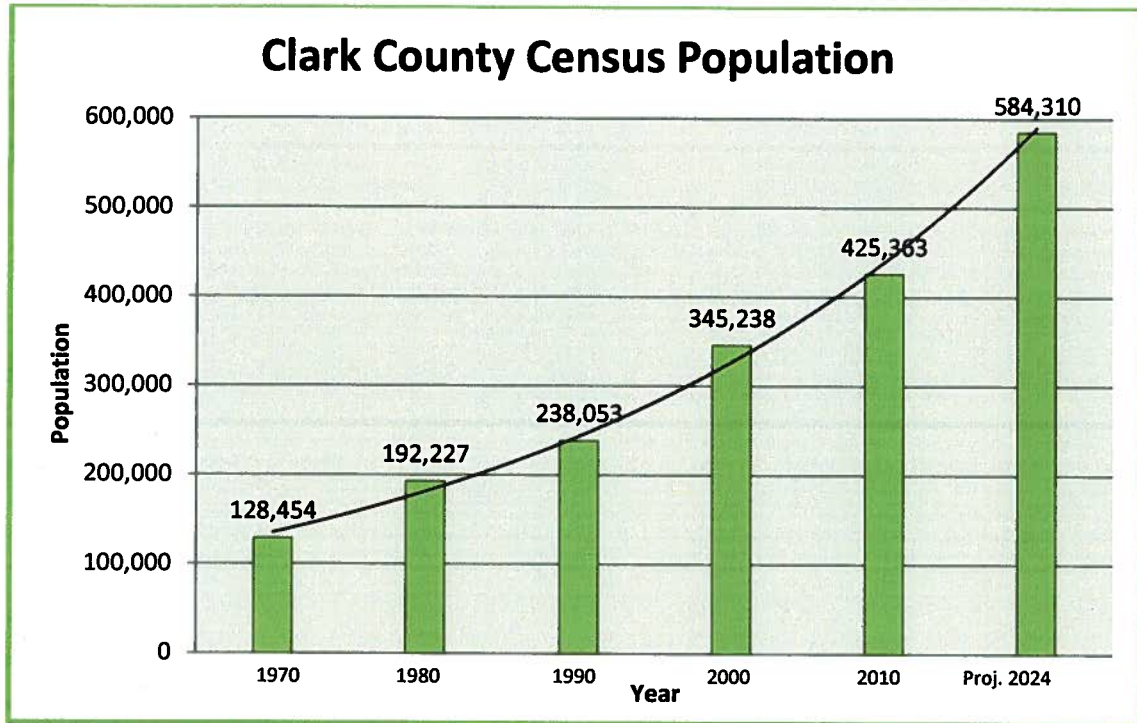
## 2. Employment Projections

The GMA does not require local jurisdictions to plan for any particular number of jobs. Identifying lands for jobs, however, is an important consideration in sizing of UGAs. The county has historically used a “jobs to population” ratio that is informed by U.S. census data and state employment information from the Washington Employment Security Department. The 2007 comprehensive plan assumption is 1:1.39 for future growth.

## 3. Historical Growth Trends

Clark County has historically experienced healthy population increases. We typically rank as the first or second fastest growing county in the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area. In the last decade alone, the county’s population has increased by 23 percent. The following shows the county’s census population from 1970 through 2010 and the adopted population projection for 2024.





The 20 year Comprehensive Plan (2007-2024) established a population projection of 584,310 by 2024, which was about midway between the OFM medium and high projections.

#### 4. Provision of Public Facilities

As noted earlier a full range of services must accompany urban development. Each jurisdiction and service provider prepares a 20 year Capital Facility Plan (CFPs) based on the population forecasted. The facility plans include the necessary improvements projected to be needed and identifies funding sources. Since the adoption of the 2007 plan, Clark County was hard hit during the recession. Revenue forecasts are down and population projections are lower than anticipated. All jurisdictions and service providers have reviewed their CFPs.

The BOCC has had numerous discussions on how best to service the unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area. Acting in the capacity of a city relative the size of Vancouver, the county provides urban services such as transportation, stormwater treatment, law enforcement, and parks.

- a. **Transportation:** The Board has determined that the preservation of our road system is the first priority. Safety, intersection improvements to satisfy concurrency and jobs; focused improvements are the next priorities.
- b. **Stormwater:** The county will continue to meet its obligations under the NPDES permit issued by the Washington Department of Ecology under the mandates of the Federal Clean Water Act.
- c. **Law enforcement:** Demand for law enforcement services is directly related to the population (number of households) and the amount of developed commercial/industrial acreage for the area. Most of the growth in the county has occurred in the unincorporated, largely urban sections of the county. This is not likely to change in the near term. As a result,

the Clark County Sheriff's Office has experienced the greatest increase in demand/need for services.

- d. Parks: The Board has determined that the county should operate and manage a separate park system rather than a joint system with the City of Vancouver. In doing so, the Board is committed to completion of the remaining parks, sports fields and trails identified in creation of the Greater Metropolitan Parks District.

## **5. Land Supply Limitations**

The county uses a Vacant and Buildable Lands Inventory model (VBLM) to verify that the urban growth boundaries include the land necessary to support the urban portion of the 20-year jobs and population projection. A percentage of population growth is allocated to rural areas. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan assumed that 10% of population would occur in the rural areas. The VBLM uses GIS based land analysis and data-driven assumptions to determine the capacity of urban lands to accommodate growth.

## **6. Economic Trends and Employment**

Clark County employment in manufacturing, distribution, and related sectors drives the market for industrial space. Though job gains are expected in the transportation/warehousing and wholesale trade sectors, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has forecast a loss of more than 1.5 million U.S. manufacturing jobs between 2006 and 2016. Some job losses are the natural result of automation as employers substitute capital for labor. Outsourcing of local jobs to other states and/or countries contributes to the loss of jobs, especially in manufacturing. But job losses, coupled with continued turmoil in financial markets, will not bode well for businesses making capital investments.

## **7. Residential, Industrial, and Commercial Needs**

To determine how much land is needed during an update to accommodate projected growth, the county must assess how much buildable land exists compared with projected needs. The Department of GIS recently completed running its annual vacant lands model. The 2013 results indicate urban growth areas contain the following vacant buildable lands:

- 8,037 net residential acres with a capacity of 147,742 residents.
- 3,109 net acres of commercial lands with employment capacity of 62,180, at 20 jobs per acre.
- 3,587 net acres of industrial land with an employment capacity of 32,283, at 9 jobs per acre.

Thus, employment capacity of vacant lands in all county urban growth areas is 94, 463. There are other potential jobs not captured by the vacant land model, such as jobs from redevelopment and public sector jobs. It is important to note that as a result of challenge of the 2007 plan and the appeals process, the rezoning of about 1,600 acres of agricultural land to industrial was ruled invalid. The county removed those lands from urban growth areas and reinstated the lands as agriculture. Of the total, about 1,500 acres had been zoned for employment lands.

## **Discussion Items**

Consider adopting OFM Medium population forecast of 562,207
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1. Matches the RTC regional forecasts.
2. In keeping with the current demographic trends, adjust if necessary at the 2016 update.
3. Reduces the burden on public services.
4. Streamlines the approach to comply with an unfunded mandate.
5. Maintains existing urban growth areas.
6. Targets rezones to allow for 22,103 fewer people and more jobs than in the other projections.
7. Prepares the county to be more self-reliant for the next growth curve.

### **Next Steps**

The Board needs to adopt a countywide population and jobs projections. Employment and household projections are based on the population projection. Once the countywide population and jobs projections are determined, the next step is to collaborate with the cities in setting the population and job planning assumptions (allocation) for each jurisdiction for approval by the Board.