

3.7 SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

This section presents social and economic information on the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, as well as Clark and Cowlitz counties. A socioeconomics report was prepared for the Proposed Project by E.D. Hovee & Company, LLC (2006a) and is included as DEIS Vol. II, **Appendix S**. Socioeconomic characteristics including population, housing, and employment are summarized below to establish the baseline conditions. The baseline socioeconomic conditions were analyzed at two levels: 1) the regional (or secondary) area including Clark County and Cowlitz County, and 2) the primary area consisting of the cities of Woodland, Ridgefield, and La Center as well as associated unincorporated areas in the primary zip codes 98764 (Woodland), 98642 (Ridgefield), and 98629 (La Center). **Figure 3.7-1** shows the primary area in relation to the La Center Interchange and Ridgefield Interchange Sites. The primary and secondary areas were chosen based on proximity to the alternative project sites. Jurisdictions closest to the alternative project sites (i.e. within the primary study area) are likely to experience fiscal and business district effects. The secondary study area represents an area where effects would be dispersed over a greater geographical area and less discernable to a single jurisdiction. While the alternative project sites are located in unincorporated Clark County, economic and social effects would take place in the general area that includes Cowlitz County and the incorporated cities of La Center, Ridgefield, and Woodland, which surround the sites.

3.7.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe has approximately 3,544 members of which 2,255 (64%) reside in Washington, 374 (11%) reside in Oregon, and 915 (26%) reside in other states. Approximately 572 Tribal members live in Clark County and the neighboring counties of Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum, Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, and Columbia, and 360 of those members are between the ages of 18 and 65 (workforce members). Within Washington the largest populations of Tribal members are found in Thurston County (351 or 10% of Tribal members) and Pierce County (509 or 14% of Tribal members). Approximately 95 Tribal members (3%) live in Clark County and 276 Tribal members (7.8%) in Cowlitz County (Cowlitz Indian Tribe, 2006). Of the total Tribal members, 2,349 are between the ages of 18 and 65. There are no Federal or Tribal labor force statistics available for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe as it was recently recognized in 2002, and the last census was completed in 2000 prior to recognition. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has gathered data on Indian households in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Lewis and Pierce counties; this data includes the members of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe as well as other tribal members in the counties. The median income for the general population in these five counties is \$41,641. HUD's Fiscal Year 2005 Estimate Response Form indicates that:

Figure 3.7-1

- 346 Indian households earn less than 30% of the median family income (i.e., less than \$12,492);
- 422 Indian households earn between 30% and 50% of the median family income (i.e., between \$12,492 and \$20,821);
- 535 Indian households earn between 50% and 80% of the median family income (i.e., between \$20,821 and \$33,313);
- there are 240 overcrowded Indian households (more than one person per room or without kitchen or plumbing); and
- 427 Indian households have housing expenses that are greater than 50% of their income. HUD categorizes these costs as “severe.”

Additionally, recent research conducted by the Taylor Policy Group, Inc. found that “Indian incomes per person are less than 60% of statewide averages” (Taylor, 2006). The Tribe has received hundreds of inquiries from Tribal members about employment opportunities that will be generated by the proposed gaming development (Cowlitz Indian Tribe, 2005b). Those outside of commuting distance most likely to move into the region are Tribal members who are employed part-time or unemployed, and are dissatisfied with their current housing situation; approximately 91 Cowlitz members meet this criteria (Roe, 2004). Approximately 285 families have requested Tribal housing assistance (Cowlitz Indian Tribe, 2005b). In sum, members of the Cowlitz Tribe and other Indian tribes in the area are suffering from a significant lack of adequate employment opportunities as evidenced by the income levels and substandard housing conditions reported by HUD, and by the number of Tribal members seeking Tribal employment opportunities and housing assistance.

TRIBAL ATTITUDES, EXPECTATIONS, LIFESTYLE AND CULTURE

Both the Tribal Government and individual Tribal members participate in area political and social activities. In general, the Tribe and its members anticipate increased participation in, and benefit from, the regional economy, with a continuation of the long tradition of comfortable co-existence and cooperation with their non-Indian neighbors. In addition to the anticipated economic benefits, the Tribe also expects that the planned development of a cultural center on the project site will help to solidify and preserve Tribal cultural identity and practices that have suffered from the dispersal of the Tribe’s members over the last 150 years.

3.7.2 SETTING – LA CENTER INTERCHANGE AND RIDGEFIELD INTERCHANGE SITES

POPULATION

Regional Population

As shown in **Table 3.7-1**, the 2004 population of the region is estimated to be about 478,600 (approximately 75% of the regional population resides in Clark County). Within Clark County, the

TABLE 3.7-1
REGIONAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

Location	Population			
	1990	2000	2004	2023*
Regional	320,172	438,186	478,600	650,150
Primary Area	17,761	28,663	34,517	NA
La Center	451	1,654	1,990	3,440
Ridgefield	1,297	2,147	2,195	11,477
Woodland	2,500	3,780	4,140	7,959

NOTES:

*Forecasts for La Center and Ridgefield are for 2006 UGAs rather than city boundaries (as are current and past population counts). Data not available at zip code level for primary area.

Source: E.D. Hovee, 2006a.

largest populations reside in unincorporated areas and the City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver has more than double the population of the next largest city within Clark County. Within Cowlitz County the largest populations reside in unincorporated areas or the City of Longview. Longview has more than double the population of the next largest city within Cowlitz County. The regional, annual growth rate from 2004-2023 is expected to be 1.6%. The largest population increase in both the regional and primary areas is within the 45-60 year old age cohort, which reflects the national trend of aging of the Baby Boomers (E.D. Hovee, 2006a).

Primary Area Population

The primary area, as of 2004, contains approximately 34,517 residents or 7% of the regional study area. Of these, 75% live in rural, unincorporated areas. Growth in unincorporated areas is greater than within the cities. The City of Woodland is located in both Clark County and Cowlitz County, although over 95% of the Woodland population resides in Cowlitz County. The population of Woodland residing in Clark County is decreasing, while the population of the same city in Cowlitz County is increasing. The total population of Woodland grew from 2,500 people in 1990 to 3,780 people in 2000, an increase of 51%. During the same period, La Center's population increased by 267% from 451 people in 1990 to 1,654 in 2000. Ridgefield's population increased by 66% from 1,297 people in 1990 to 2,147 people in 2000. From April 1, 2004, it is estimated that Woodland has grown 9.5%, La Center has grown 20%, and Ridgefield has grown 2% over the year 2000 (WOFM, 2004). The 2023 projected population for Woodland is 7,959 people, for La Center 3,440 people (not including the recently expanded UGA), and for Ridgefield 11,477 people (E.D. Hovee, 2006a). Projected annual growth rates from 2004-2023 are 2.9% for La Center (not including the Urban Growth Area (UGA) expansion approved in September 2007), 9.1% for Ridgefield, and 3.5% for Woodland (E.D. Hovee, 2006a). The 2007 Comprehensive Growth Management Plan for Clark County includes higher projected population estimates based on the adoption of recently expanded

UGAs within Clark County. It is likely that the expanded UGAs will subsume a portion of growth originally anticipated within the unincorporated areas resulting in increased growth projections for incorporated areas and reduced growth projections for the unincorporated areas within the primary area.

RACE

Within the primary study area approximately 94% of the residents can be classified as white, and 1% are Asian (including Asian Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, or other), 1% are American Indian or Alaskan; Hispanic or Latinos of any race represent 4% of the total population. Approximately 4% of the population is composed of other ethnicities or a combination of two or more ethnicities. Within the secondary study area whites constitute 89% of the population, 1% are black or African American, 1% are American Indian, 3% are Asian or Pacific Islander; Hispanics constitute 5% of the population, and Others and two or more races constitute the remaining 5% of the population.

The population of the State of Washington is predominantly non-minority. Approximately 81.8% of persons within the State are white; 3.2% of residents described themselves as Black or African American; 5.5% as Asian; and 0.4% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Other races, including American Indian and persons of two or more races, are approximately 9.1% of the population.

HOUSING

Regional Housing

Table 3.7-2 shows the number of housing units and vacancy rates for the region and specified areas within the region. There are currently about 172,654 housing units in Clark and Cowlitz counties of which approximately 6% are vacant. Vacancy rates for Cowlitz County are slightly higher than those for Clark County. There are approximately three times as many housing units available in Clark County compared to Cowlitz County. As of April 1, 2004, housing units are estimated at 192,576 (WOFM, 2004). In the region, 64% of units are owner-occupied and 31% are renter-occupied. In the secondary area most rental units are multi-family units with 41% consisting of five or more attached units.

Primary Area Housing

In 2000 it was estimated that there were 574 housing units in La Center, 794 units in Ridgefield, and 1,483 units in Woodland. Including unincorporated areas in the primary study area there are 10,659 units of which 78% are owner-occupied as opposed to rental units (E.D. Hovee, 2006a). Of owner-occupied homes, 79% are single-family homes, 17% are mobile homes, and the remaining 4% are single-family attached or multi-family homes. Vacancy rates are highest in Woodland at 9%, and lower in Ridgefield and La Center, with vacancy rates of 4% and 5% respectively. There are

approximately 1,800 rental units within the primary area. Rental units are primarily single-family units in Ridgefield, evenly divided between single- and multi-family units in La Center, and primarily multi-family units in Woodland. Housing values and rent in the primary area are higher than those in the secondary area. Within the primary area, La Center has the highest median housing value and Ridgefield has the highest median rent.

TABLE 3.7-2
REGIONAL HOUSING ESTIMATES 2000

Location	La Center	Ridgefield	Woodland	Primary Area	Region
Total Housing Units	574	794	1,483	10,659	172,654
Occupied	95%	96%	91%	95%	94%
Vacant	5%	4%	9%	5%	6%
Owner Occupied	81%	69%	56%	78%	64%
1, detached	87%	95%	78%	79%	86%
1, attached	0%	1%	3%	3%	2%
2 to 4	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
5 or more	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Mobile home	13%	4%	17%	18%	10%
Renter Occupied	14%	27%	35%	17%	31%
1, detached	36%	63%	25%	47%	31%
1, attached	12%	10%	5%	7%	5%
2 to 4	48%	20%	34%	17%	19%
5 or more	4%	3%	32%	12%	41%
Mobile home	0%	5%	5%	17%	4%
Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 1999					
Less than 10%	9%	10%	11%	15%	15%
10-29%	65%	60%	61%	56%	59%
30-49%	19%	22%	21%	20%	18%
50% or more	7%	8%	7%	9%	8%
Not Computed	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Median House Value	\$173,200	\$157,800	\$124,000	\$198,000	\$151,000
Median Rent	\$723	\$725	\$544	\$675	\$601

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; E.D. Hovee, 2006a.

From 2000 to 2005, a total of 1,811 units are recorded as having been built in the primary area with 33% located in incorporated city limits. **Table 3.7-3** shows the number of residential units constructed in the primary area from 2000-2005. While this included both owner- and renter-occupied units only two tax lots reported something other than a single unit development, which implies that multi-family unit development has been minimal since 2000 (E.D. Hovee, 2006a). The average median house value for the primary area was approximately \$236,000 in 2004 (includes 915 homes) compared to \$151,000 for the year 2000. The average rental per month in 2004 was \$913 in La Center, \$880 in Ridgefield, and \$570 in Woodland. Average rentals in La Center and Ridgefield

have increased by over \$150 per month since 2000. In Woodland, average rentals have increased by only \$25 per month since 2000. Rentals in La Center and Ridgefield are more expensive due to the fact that houses and townhomes make up a large percentage of the rental units; in Woodland, apartments are more common as rental units.

TABLE 3.7-3
RESIDENTIAL UNIT DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY AREA 2000-2005

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total 2000-2005
New Housing Units in Primary Area	241	152	279	218	495	426	1,811
La Center	74	41	85	70	118	119	507
Ridgefield	67	40	102	64	295	289	857
Woodland	100	71	92	84	82	18*	447

NOTES: Includes both owner- and rental-occupied housing.

* As of December 2006, 2005 housing data for Woodland was incomplete

Source: E.D. Hovee, 2006a.

EMPLOYMENT

Regional Employment

Clark and Cowlitz counties had a labor force of approximately 227,930 people in 2004 (Workforce Explorer, 2005). The labor force is generally defined as employed workers and unemployed workers actively looking for work. The unemployment rate for Cowlitz County in 2004 was 8.8% compared to 7.8% for Clark County. The Washington rate of unemployment is 6.2%. The labor force of Clark County as of February 2005 is estimated at 196,900 people with an unemployment rate of 7.2%. The labor force for Cowlitz County as of February 2005 is estimated at 44,050 with an unemployment rate of 8.5% (Workforce Explorer, 2005). Regional labor force estimates for 2000 are shown in **Table 3.7-4**. A summary of employment by industry is provided in **Table 3.7-5**.

TABLE 3.7-4
REGIONAL LABOR FORCE ESTIMATES 2000

Location	Labor Force	Unemployment Rate
Region	217,807	6.2%
Primary Area	14,437	5.2%
La Center	844	5.5%
Ridgefield	1,020	4.5%
Woodland	1,840	8.8%
Washington	3,027,734	6.2%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; E.D. Hovee, 2006a.

In the region, approximately 28% of residents work outside of Washington, mostly in Oregon. Working outside of Washington is more common in Clark County (33% of residents) than in Cowlitz County (7% of residents). Correspondingly, average commutes are longer for Clark County. For the region, approximately 45% of residents had a commute to work of less than 20 minutes, 37% had a commute of 20-40 minutes, 14% had a commute of over 40 minutes and 4% worked at home (U.S. Census, 2000).

**TABLE 3.7-5
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY**

Industry	La Center	Ridgefield	Woodland	Primary Area	Secondary Area
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	24	25	47	498	3,186
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	91	45	102	843	14,452
Construction	74	107	118	1,547	16,627
Educational, health and social services	112	171	289	2,092	35,522
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	59	50	81	784	11,610
Information	30	8	32	273	5,319
Manufacturing	86	143	318	1,960	35,166
Other services (except public administration)	34	61	34	559	9,444
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	78	104	63	1,038	15,597
Public administration	30	32	68	620	7,660
Retail trade	84	107	297	1,656	24,901
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	73	90	150	1,259	15,026
Wholesale trade	23	31	79	479	9,001
Total	798	974	1,678	13,608	203,511

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; E.D. Hovee, 2006a.

Employment grew strongly in the early and mid 1990s in Clark County, due to jobs in the high-technology manufacturing industry including Hewlett-Packard and WaferTech as well as growth in the Portland area. Major employers for Clark County are listed in **Table 3.7-6**. The economic trends of the City of Portland and Clark County are closely linked. Approximately one-third of the Clark County labor force commutes to Portland every day and unemployment rates for Clark County have been more similar to Portland since 1990 than to the State of Washington (Washington State Employment Security, 2001). Employment generally slowed in the late 1990s as some high-tech employers transferred or closed business. Currently, the largest industries include manufacturing, retail, educational, health, and social services; together these industries account for 47% of employment.

TABLE 3.7-6
MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN CLARK COUNTY

Employer Name	Location	Industry
Southwest Washington Medical Center	Vancouver	Healthcare
Evergreen School District	Vancouver	Public Education
Vancouver School District	Vancouver	Public Education
Hewlett Packard	Vancouver	Inkjet Printers
Clark County	Vancouver	Government
Clark College	Vancouver	Public Education
Bonneville Power Administration	Vancouver	Public Utility
Battle Ground School District	Vancouver	Public Education
Safeway	Countywide	Retail
Georgia Pacific	Camas	Pulp and Paper
City of Vancouver	Vancouver	Government
WaferTech	Camas	Silicon Wafers

Source: Columbia River Economic Development Council, 2006.

Primary Area Employment

The labor force within the primary area makes up 7% of the regional labor force. Rural areas contain the largest labor force followed by Woodland, Ridgefield, and La Center. Within the cities, Woodland has an unemployment rate of 8.8%, Ridgefield 4.5%, and La Center 5.5%. While the gap has narrowed in recent years, Cowlitz County has had higher unemployment than Clark County since 1990, by an average of 3.5% each year. Within the primary area, approximately 30% of residents had a commute of less than 20 minutes, 43% had a commute of 20-40 minutes, 21% had a commute of over 40 minutes, and 6% worked at home (U.S. Census, 2000).

Major employers in the primary area include businesses within the Port of Ridgefield industrial park, and the four card rooms in La Center that have a total of approximately 700 employees. The card rooms are currently the largest employers in La Center. The Port of Ridgefield industrial park located along I-5 contains 11 businesses and almost 800 jobs. Businesses in the industrial park include Pacific Detroit Diesel, US Foods, Attbar, and Corwin Beverage Company (Port of Ridgefield, 2006).

INCOME

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median household income for Clark and Cowlitz counties was \$44,087 compared with \$45,776 for the State of Washington. Incomes for the primary area were higher than that of the region and the State. The median household income for the primary area was estimated at \$53,060 in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000).

PROPERTY TAX AND REVENUES

According to the Washington Department of Revenue (DOR), the total property tax revenue collection by Clark County in Fiscal Year 2003 was \$337,236,548 while tax collection in Cowlitz

County in Fiscal Year 2003 was \$77,431,547 (DOR, 2003). The La Center Interchange Site encompasses eight parcels with a tax value of \$903,340. The Ridgefield Interchange Site encompasses 19 parcels with a tax value of \$1,004,770 (Clark County, 2005c).

The four card rooms in La Center are projected to generate approximately \$3.3 million in gambling tax revenue for the City of La Center. According to the 2005 City Operating Budget, approximately \$823,000 (25%) is allocated to the General Fund and \$2.4 million (75%) is allocated to the Reserve Fund. The Reserve Fund is stipulated in the City Budget to fund future projects in the City's Capital Facilities Plan (E.D. Hovee, 2006a).

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Clark County Schools

Both the alternative project sites are located within the Ridgefield School District; however, the La Center Interchange Site is also in close proximity to the La Center School District. Both districts are part of Education Service District (ESD) 112. The Ridgefield School District consists of a high school, middle school, and two elementary schools. The closest schools in the Ridgefield School District to the La Center Interchange Site are located approximately 2.5 miles to the southwest. The closest school to the Ridgefield Interchange Site is Ridgefield High School approximately 2 miles to the southwest. A parochial high school is proposed on N 65th Avenue just northwest of the Ridgefield Interchange Site. Construction has not yet begun on this facility. The student-teacher ratio for Ridgefield was approximately 21 to 1 with 1,824 students enrolled in the District in the 2002-2003 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003).

The La Center School District consists of a high school, middle school, elementary school, and alternative learning center. The closest school in the La Center School District to the alternative project sites is located approximately 2 miles northeast of the La Center Interchange Site and 2.5 miles north of the Ridgefield Interchange Site. The District had a student-teacher ratio of approximately 20 to 1 with 1,334 students enrolled in the 2002-2003 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003).

Students in grades 11 and 12 have access to community college classes and vocational classes at Clark County Skills Center in Vancouver, Washington (ESD 112, 2004). **Figure 3.7-2** shows public school locations in relation to the alternative project sites. **Table 3.7-7** shows additional information for the La Center and Ridgefield School Districts.

Expansion plans for the Ridgefield School District involve three phases. The first phase includes a new 1,200 student capacity high school. The second phase involves renovating the two existing elementary schools and expanding the current high school to house the middle school. The final phase involves purchasing land to build two additional elementary schools and one middle school

Figure 3.7-2

TABLE 3.7-7
LA CENTER AND RIDGEFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT INFORMATION 2002-2003

Category	La Center School District	Ridgefield School District
Total Schools	3	4
Total Students	1,334	1,824
Classroom Teachers (FTE)	65.8	85.1
Other Staff (FTE)	44.9	47.7
Student Teacher Ratio	20.3 : 1	21.4 : 1
Diploma Recipients	100	108
Revenue per Student*	\$6,478	\$6,559
Total Revenue*	\$9,115,000	\$12,022,000

NOTES: * Fiscal data from 2001-2002. FTE = Full Time Equivalent.
Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003.

(E.D. Hovee, 2006a). However, voters rejected the bond measure for funding these projects in November 2005 and May 2006 and so the timeline for completion of these projects is unknown.

In 2005, the La Center School District completed an expansion of its high school, leaving eight to ten portable classrooms for future use. Both the primary and middle schools are close to 100% occupancy. Additional planned improvements include a new primary school, sports stadium, district office, and high school addition (E.D. Hovee, 2006a).

Libraries

The Ridgefield Community Library is located at 210 North Main Avenue in Ridgefield, Washington. The La Center Community Library is located at 1402 E. Lockwood Creek Road, La Center, Washington. Both libraries are a part of the Fort Vancouver regional library system, which includes 13 branches in Southwest Washington and serves approximately 383,000 people. The libraries are approximately 2 to 3 miles from the alternative project sites.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation within 1 mile of the La Center Interchange Site include Paradise Point State Park and Tri-Mountain Golf Course. Paradise Point State Park is an 88-acre camping park and Tri-Mountain Golf Course is an 18-hole public golf course. The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is located approximately 3 miles west of both alternative project sites and contains various habitats for wildlife viewing and hiking. The refuge is 5,217 acres and hosts 165,000 visitors annually (USFWS, 2006).

3.7.3 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

REGULATORY SETTING

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, as amended, directs Federal agencies to develop an Environmental Justice Strategy that identifies and addresses disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has oversight responsibility of the Federal government's compliance with Executive Order 12898 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The CEQ, in consultation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and other agencies has developed guidance to assist Federal agencies with their NEPA procedures so that environmental justice concerns are effectively identified and addressed. According to CEQ's *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act*, agencies should consider the composition of the affected area to determine whether minority populations, low-income populations, or Indian tribes are present in the area affected by the Proposed Action, and if so whether there may be disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects.

TRIBAL ISSUES

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe was restored to Federal recognition on January 4, 2002, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA's) administrative Federal Acknowledgement Process. Tribal demographic and socioeconomic information is discussed in **Section 3.7.1** above. A brief overview of the Tribe's Federal recognition process and relevant historical background are discussed in **Section 3.6** Cultural Resources. The Tribe is governed by a 22 member Tribal Council, which has a Tribal Council Chairman who speaks for the Tribal Council, and by an elected Tribal Chairman, as provided in the Tribe's constitution and Tribal ordinances. The Tribe's constitution was last amended in 2000. The BIA approved the base Tribal membership roll on January 31, 2003. The current Tribal Government offices are located in Longview, approximately 20 miles from the alternative project sites.

HUD has designated Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Lewis and Pierce counties as the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's service area, with Clark and Cowlitz counties being designated as exclusively Cowlitz. Similarly, the Indian Health Service has defined the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's service delivery area as Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Thurston, Skamania, King and Pierce counties, with Clark County designated as an exclusively Cowlitz Tribal service area.