

2022 Task Force Topic Sheet

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Category: Adaptive Planning

Topic: Varied Planning requirements

Topic Overview: Cities and counties across Washington State currently have varied planning requirements under the Growth Management Act (GMA) (*See Attachment A*). After more than 30 years implementing the GMA, discussion and recommendations on this topic would look at where there may be opportunities to make planning requirements easier to implement or to recognize regional differences and needs throughout the state.

Problems this topic could address:

- **Staffing:** smaller cities and counties have limited technical staff and financial resources to complete comprehensive plan updates and implement new and existing GMA requirements. Some jurisdictions do not have planners to complete required planning.
- **Benefits to smaller jurisdictions:** particularly in smaller or slow growing cities and counties, implementation of certain GMA update requirements may not provide the same benefit as faster growing cities and counties.
- **Right sizing:** after more than 30 years of the GMA, there could be advantages to reviewing the requirements cities and counties must meet under the current types of levels of GMA planning to “right size” requirements.
- **Appeals:** Comprehensive plan and development regulation appeals can be very costly and time consuming, especially for cities and counties with fewer resources.

Preliminary recommendation options:

1. **Increase Department of Commerce funding** to provide greater technical assistance and/or funding to certain cities and counties.
2. **Provide model policy and code language** that cities and counties could adopt when updating comprehensive plans and development regulations.
3. **Provide optional Department of Commerce approval process and defense** of certain elements of countywide planning policies, comprehensive plans, and development regulations (could be optional but follow the process under the [Shoreline Management Act](#)). If appeals are filed and jurisdictions opt in and follow the new process, Commerce would defend appeals that are filed against those elements.
4. **Allow comprehensive plan grant funds to be used for technical assistance.** For the three options above, a portion of the funding to pay for this could come from grant dollars allocated to cities and counties for comprehensive plan updates. As an example, a city could take ½ the allocated grant amount in exchange for technical assistance from the Department of Commerce.
5. **Update categories for planning requirements** as outlined in Attachment A to reflect what we have learned about the effectiveness of planning in various communities around the State.
6. **Modify planning certain planning requirements** for cities and counties with minimal growth during the planning period under the current categories of GMA planning. Cities and counties that could demonstrate minimal growth pressure could potentially be allowed to “drop down” to partially planning status during the next update process.
7. **Modify planning certain planning requirements** regarding the frequency of updating [Countywide Planning Policies \(CPPs\)](#) and jurisdictions subject to the [Review and Evaluation Program](#). Specifically, to consider changes which could include counties and the cities within those counties east of the crest of the Cascade Mountain Range with a total population of greater than 150,000 (See RCW 36.70A.215(5)).

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How these problems are impacting people/groups:

- Some communities have greater resources with which to plan under the GMA. This could include planning for housing, the environment, people and jobs, capital facilities, parks, and other important requirements of the GMA. Jurisdictions with fewer resources may not be currently planning at the same level as others which could impact people/groups at a disproportional rate.
- Some jurisdictions with few resources may be spending their small budgets defending appeals of GMA plans. These general fund resources may take away from important programs which assist people/groups in their respective communities. *Please note that this statement is not debating whether appeals which are filed are valid and important. Rather, it is highlighting the cost to communities with fewer resources.*

Potential statutory changes

- Various sections of the Growth Management Act could be impacted. The actual sections would depend on the specific changes proposed.

Potential budgetary impacts

- Increasing the role Commerce in local planning could have an impact on the agency's (and therefore state's) budget. The level of budget increase would depend on the services Commerce would provide.
- One option outlined above to offset some costs could be decreasing planning grants to jurisdictions when Commerce provides certain types of assistance.
- Some of the options outlined could increase or decrease planning requirements for local governments.
- Increasing who must plan under RCW 36.70A.215 would increase costs for state grants to fund the program and counties and cities within those counties which would be required to implement new requirements.
- Modifying RCW 36.70A.210 could require some jurisdictions to update Countywide Planning Policies more frequently. This would increase costs for counties and cities within those counties which would be required to implement new requirements.

New statutes or revision to existing statutes? New Revision

Complexity – time to develop recommendations: Low Medium High

Are the required changes technical, substantive, or both? Technical changes alone could be run through working groups primarily, while substantive changes (new GMA comp plan elements, for example) would have to be worked extensively through the Task Force.

Technical

Substantive

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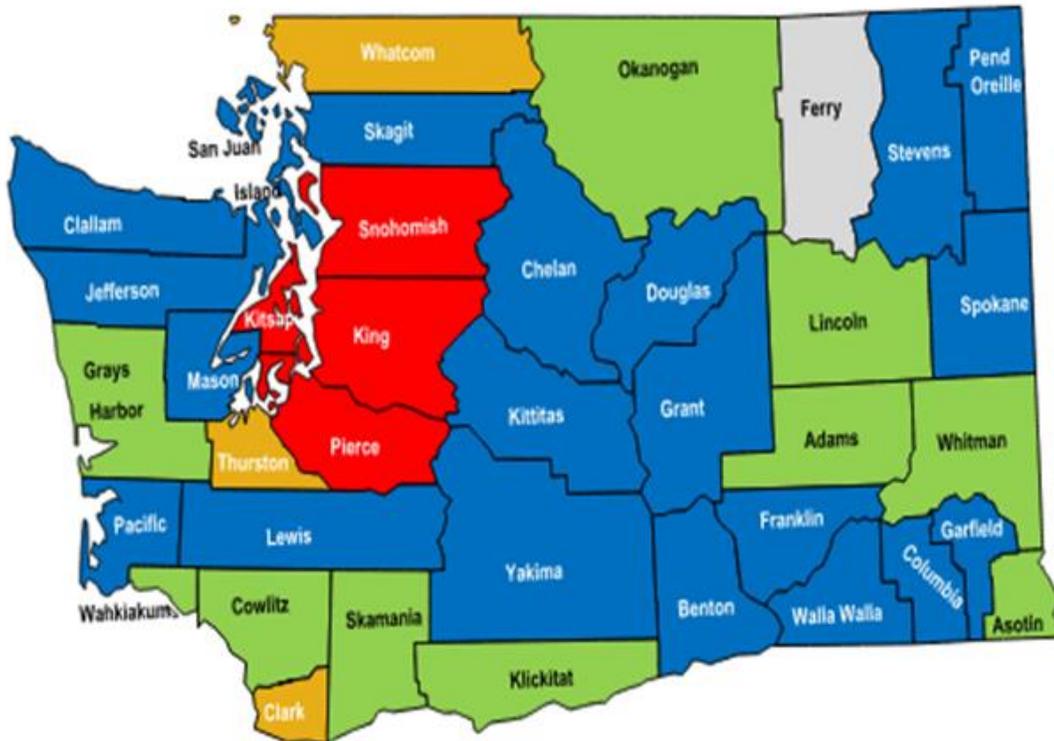
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Is this issue based on recent legislation? Yes No

If yes, link to the most recent legislation.

ATTACHMENT A

Range of planning requirements by county under the Growth Management Act (GMA)



GMA 1.0	GMA 2.0	GMA 3.0	GMA 4.0	GMA 5.0
Fully Planning + Buildable Lands + Vision 2050	Fully Planning + Buildable Lands	Fully Planning	Partially Planning	Partially Planning + Rural Element
4 Counties 4,264,200 Pop.	3 Counties 1,018,200 Pop.	22 Counties 1,993,720 Pop	10 Counties 372,170 Pop.	1 County 7,910 Pop.
95% of State population is fully planning under GMA			5% of State population is partially planning under GMA	
Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Schedule				
Conserve Resource Lands Protect Critical Areas Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulations Countywide Planning Policies Urban Growth Areas Rural Element Concurrency Essential Public Facilities Impact Fees authorized 4 th Qtr. REET authorized Growth Hearings Board	Conserve Resource Lands Protect Critical Areas Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulations Countywide Planning Policies Urban Growth Areas Rural Element Concurrency Essential Public Facilities Impact Fees authorized 3 rd Qtr. REET authorized Growth Hearings Board	Conserve Resource Lands Protect Critical Areas Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulations Countywide Planning Policies Urban Growth Area Rural Element Concurrency Essential Public Facilities Impact Fees authorized 3 rd Qtr. REET authorized Growth Hearings Board	Conserve Resource Lands Protect Critical Areas Rural Element	Conserve Resource Lands Protect Critical Areas Rural Element
State Environmental Policy Act Shoreline Management Act Planning Enabling Act Subdivision Act Land Use Petition Act Regional Transportation Planning Watershed Planning Voluntary Stewardship Program				