

# A SHORTCOURSE

## ON LOCAL PLANNING

# Comprehensive Planning under the Growth Management Act

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Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**

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- Why Plan?
- GMA Framework
- Implementing the Plan
- Updating the Plan



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# Why do we plan?



- Land use decisions have long-term effects.
- Many individuals and groups must work together.
- Accomplishing your goals requires persistent effort.
- Infrastructure has long lead times and long payback periods.
- The public expects fairness and transparency.

# Legal Foundations: Takings & Due Process



- Is there an understandable process for how decisions are made and by whom?
- Was that process followed?
- Is there a rational connection between a rule and a legitimate public purpose?
- Is a rule clear enough that you know what you need to do?
- Is there a rational connection between conditions required for project approval and an impact associated with the project?
- Is the mitigation required proportional to the impact associated with the project?

# What Makes a Good Plan?

## Disciplined Imagination

### Realistic:

- Forecast
- Inventory
- Analysis

### Compelling:

- Vision
- Goals and policies

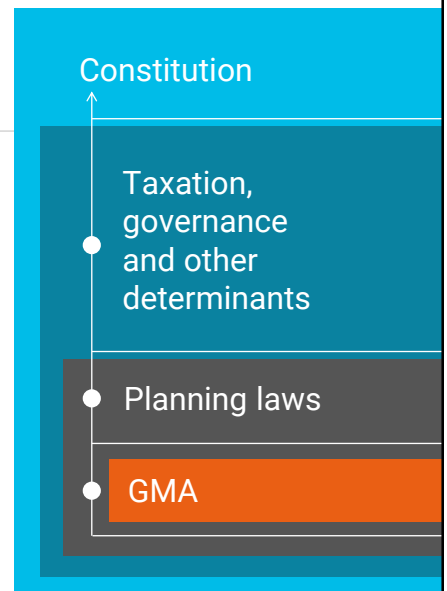
### Specific:

- Level of service
- Performance measures
- Implementation plan
- Projects



# Washington's framework

- Growth Management Act – 36.70A
- Counties and Cities – Titles 35 & 36
- Local Project Review – 36.70B
- Shoreline Management – 90.58
- SEPA – 43.21
- Impact Fees - 82.02
- Water Law – Title 90
- Regional Planning – 47.80
- Subdivision – 58.17



## Values in Tension

"I need to know what I can do and when I can get my permit."

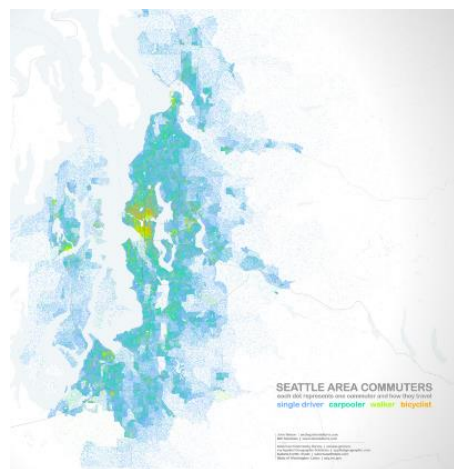


"This affects my neighborhood and my home. I should have a say in what happens."

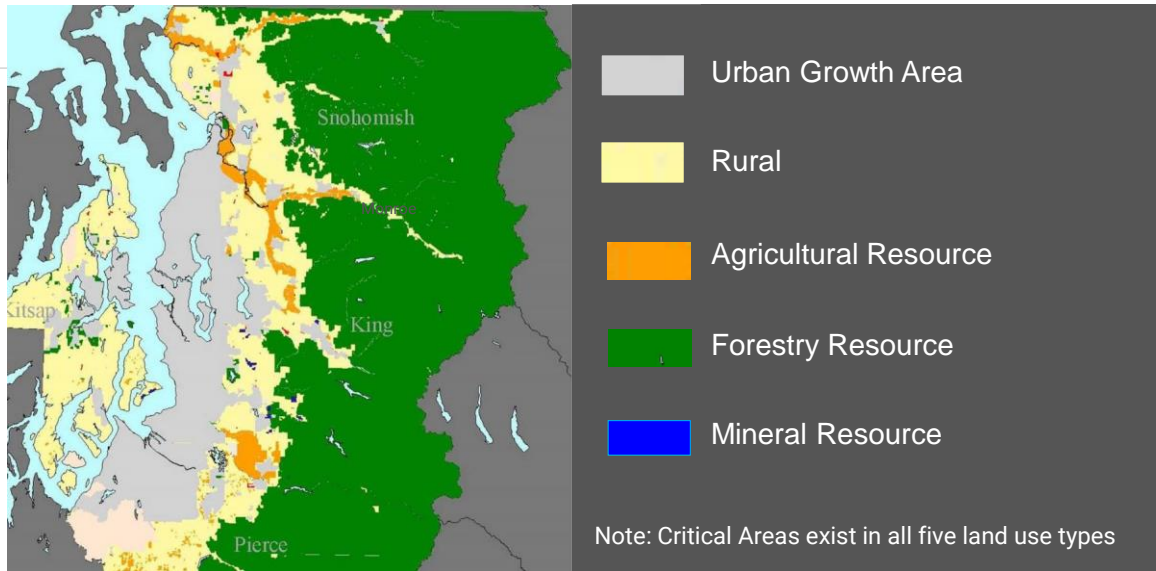


## Structure of the GMA

Differentiated landscape  
Goals & Requirements  
Regional variation  
Roles and procedures  
Implementation



## The Differentiated Landscape under GMA



## GMA: Planning Goals

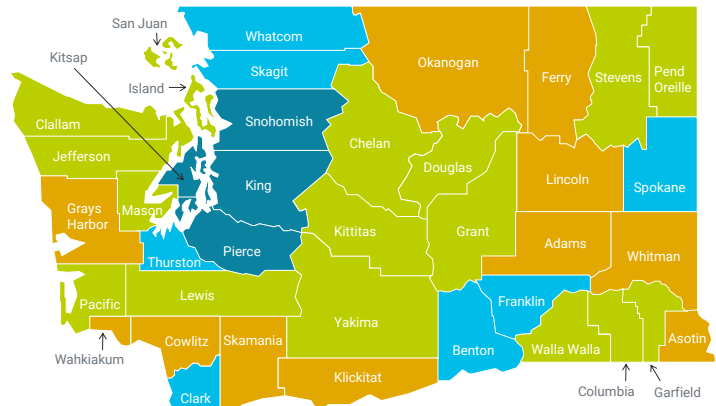
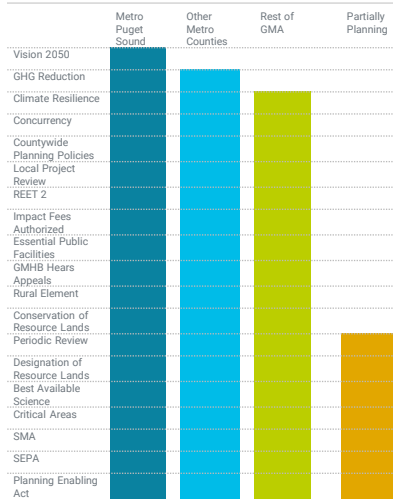
- **Encourage** compact urban growth
- **Reduce** sprawl
- **Encourage** efficient multimodal transportation
- **Plan for and accommodate** affordable housing for all economic segments
- **Encourage** economic development
- **Protect** property rights
- Timely and fair permit processes to **ensure** predictability
- **Maintain and enhance** natural resource-based industries
- **Retain** open space, **enhance** recreation
- **Protect and enhance** the environment
- **Encourage** citizen participation and **ensure** coordination
- **Ensure** availability of public facilities and services
- **Identify and encourage** historic preservation
- **Ensure** comprehensive plans adapt to and mitigate effects of a changing climate
- **Manage** shoreline development (per SMA set forth in RCW 90.58.020)



# Requirements: *Core Substantive Mandates*

- **Protect Critical Areas**  
(RCW 36.70A.020(10), .060, .170, .172, .175)
- **Designate and Conserve Resources Lands**  
(RCW 36.70A.020(8), .060, .131, .170, .177.)
- **Direct New Growth to Urban Growth Areas**  
(RCW 36.70A.020(1) and (2), .110(3))
- **Provide Adequate Public Facilities**  
(RCW 36.70A.020(12), .070(6))
- **May Not Preclude Essential Public Facilities**  
(RCW 36.70A.200, .020(4), .070(2)(d))
- **Provide for Early and Continuous Public Participation**  
(RCW 36.70A.020(11), .035(2), .140)

# Regional variation



# Roles and Procedures

Local project review / Implementation progress

Capital facilities / Development regulations

Comprehensive plan

Housing needs analysis and land capacity analysis

Growth target allocation

Countywide planning policies

**IT'S A SET  
OF NESTED  
DECISIONS**

## The land speaks first Natural resource lands, critical areas. . .



All counties must **designate natural resource lands** of long-term commercial significance. RCW 36.70A.170:

- Agricultural lands
- Forest lands
- Mineral resource land

All jurisdictions must **designate and protect environmentally critical areas**. "Best available science" must inform regulations that protect the functions and values of:

- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas
- Critical aquifer recharge areas
- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Wetlands

**RCW 36.70A.172**

WAC 365-195-900 through 925 provides guidance related to best available science.

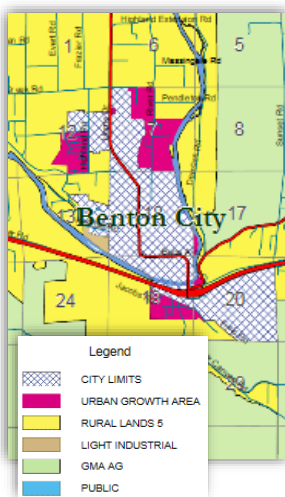
# Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs)



## Regional framework to:

- Plan for future growth & address countywide population projections (from OFM)
- Consider affordable housing needs
- Designate & plan for UGAs and expansions to designated urban areas
- Plan for countywide facilities (e.g. highways or airports)
- Plan for countywide economic development
- Ex: Puget Sound region has multicounty planning policies assembled in Vision 2050

# Growth Target Allocation



## Urban areas to contain most of new growth

- Each Urban Growth Area (UGA) is sized based on 20-year countywide population projections from OFM **and countywide housing needs projections from Commerce.**
- Greater housing, greater job densities, efficient use of facilities/public dollars

## Rural areas to maintain rural character

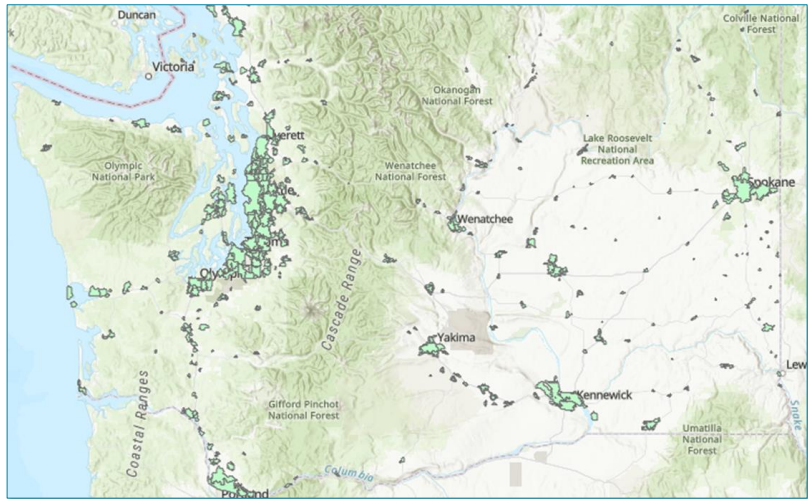
- Low-density development, rural service levels, agriculture/forestry, and Local Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs)

## “Buildable lands” counties

- must consider “reasonable measures” before expanding a UGA.

# Washington's Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)

Fully planning counties **must** work with cities to designate existing and future urban growth areas.



Washington Geospatial Open Data Portal: ArcGIS (Updated May 2022)

## What is in a comprehensive plan?

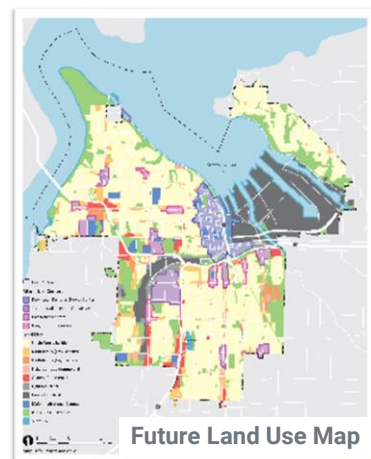
### Comprehensive plans

#### Contain Elements ("Chapters")

- Land use
- Housing
- Capital facilities
- Utilities
- Rural (for counties)
- Transportation
- Climate

RCW 36.70A.070

- **Inventories**
- **Goals and policies**
- **Analysis and conclusions**
- **Strategies and commitments**



# New Housing Element Requirements

**New GMA housing goal:** “Plan for and accommodate encourage the availability of affordable housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.”

- 1) Conduct an **inventory of existing housing, and an analysis of all housing needs by income**, emergency and permanent supportive housing (#s from Commerce)
- 2) **Identify sufficient capacity of land** for identified housing needs
- 3) Include policies to **support middle housing** and other laws
- 4) Make adequate provisions for all housing needs, including “**document barriers to housing availability such as gaps in local funding, development regulations, etc.**”
- 5) Address **racially disparate impacts, displacement, exclusion and displacement risk** in housing through policies and regulations

# Mandatory Consistency & Coordination

**Internal consistency** – differing parts of the plan must fit together

**Interjurisdictional (external) consistency** – consistent with and carry out CPPs

Comprehensive plans **must be consistent and coordinated** with other county and city plans.



# Adopting the Comprehensive Plan



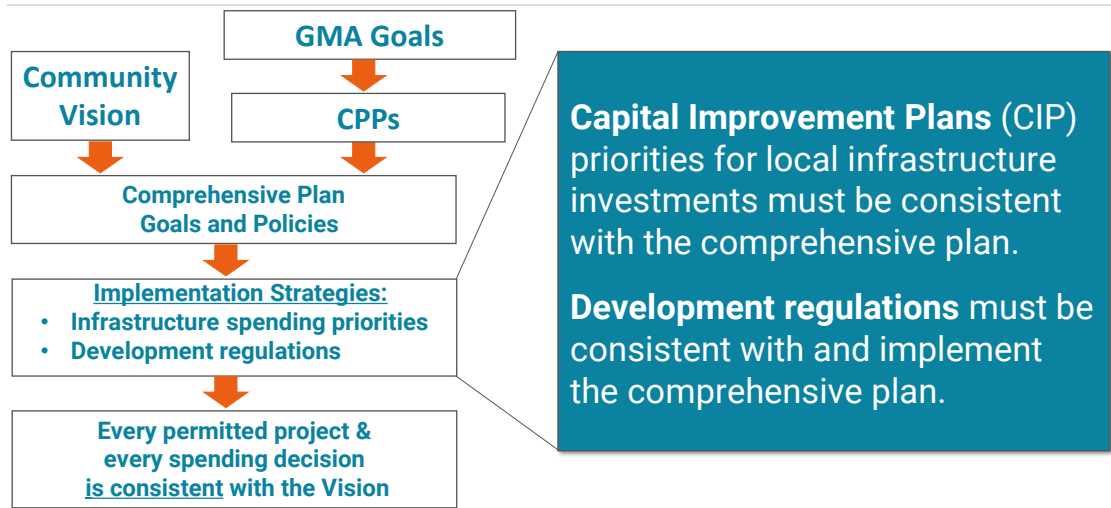
## Plan Adoption Process

- Public outreach - early and often
- Review by Planning Commission
- Complete SEPA environmental review
- 60-days notice to Commerce before adopting
- City or county council must adopt the comprehensive plan
- Transportation element to be certified by regional transportation organization

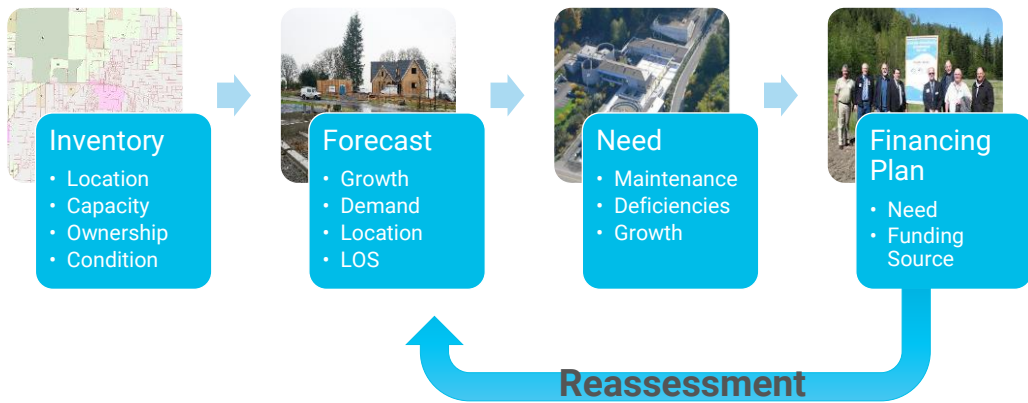
## Plan Updates and Appeals

- Can be amended only once per year
- Must be updated every 10 years
- Appealable within 60 days to a regional Growth Management Hearings Board

# Implementing your Comprehensive Plan

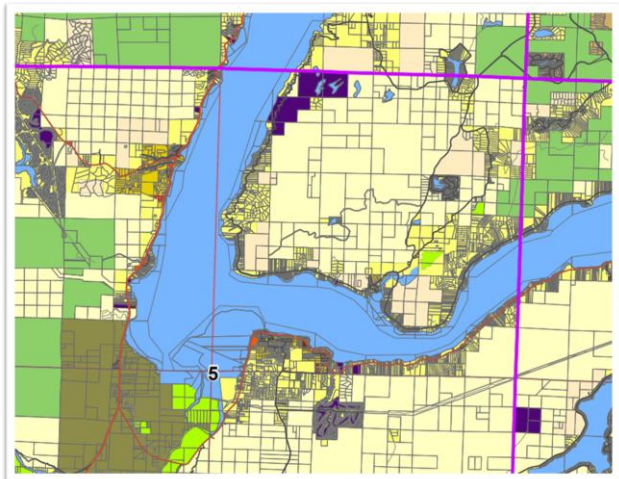


# Capital Facilities and Transportation



# Development Regulations

- Traditional zoning
- Critical area regulations
- Subdivision regulations
- Public works standards
- Design standards
- Other regulations



*Clip of Mason County  
Development Areas Map*





# Questions?



# Then a 10-Minute Break!

[www.commerce.wa.gov](http://www.commerce.wa.gov)

