The Short Course in Local Planning
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Comprehensive Planning and Implementation

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NAVIGATING THE RIVER OF GMA
GOALS AND REQUIREMENTS

A wide range of local choices
What is a comprehensive plan?

The Growth Management Act (GMA) definition:

“A generalized coordinated land use policy statement of the governing body of a county or city that is adopted pursuant to this chapter (the GMA).”

RCW 36.70A.020(4)

So, a comprehensive plan is a **generalized policy** statement about **land use**. These typically consist of a vision, goals, policies, and maps.
What is a development regulation?

GMA definition:

“...the controls placed on development or land use activities by a county or city, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances, critical areas ordinances, shoreline master programs, official controls, planned unit development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances.”

RCW 36.70A.020(7)

Unlike plans, development regulations are not generalized policies, they are specific controls on how land may be used and developed.
Q. Why is **Land Use** so important?
A. Because it drives or influences virtually everything cities do!
Why did the legislature adopt the Growth Management Act?
Washington’s rapid growth from 1980-2010
OFM forecast is for continued growth 2010-2040

Washington’s population is spread unevenly across the state

Central Puget Sound Region has 2/3 of state’s 6.9 M population in less than 10% of its land area
GMA consists of **GOALS** and **REQUIREMENTS**

**GOALS** are aspirational expressions of intent to *guide* local choices.

**REQUIREMENTS** have the legal force of law and *must* be complied with.

They are enforced by appeals to the Growth Management Hearings Board.

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13 GOALS are set forth at RCW 36.70A.020

(1) Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

(3) Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

(4) Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing 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.
(6) **Property rights.** Private property **shall not be taken** for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners **shall be protected** from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

(7) **Permits.** Applications for both state and local government permits **should be processed** in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

(11) **Citizen participation and coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

“ . . . nor shall any person be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation. ”
“Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan... **shall establish and broadly disseminate** to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. ....”

RCW 36.70A.140
GMA REQUIREMENT:
All land must be designated as one of five mutually exclusive types.
GMA REQUIREMENT:
Counties are regional governments and cities are primary providers of urban services within urban growth areas

The legislature recognizes that counties are regional governments within their boundaries, and cities are primary providers of urban governmental services within urban growth areas...

RCW 36.70A.210 (1)
GMA REQUIREMENT:
All agricultural, mineral and forest resource lands must be designated and regulations adopted to conserve them.

Duty to designate resource lands is at RCW 36.70A.060
Duty to adopt regulations to conserve is at RCW 36.70A.170
GMA REQUIREMENT:
Critical Areas must be identified and regulations adopted to protect their functions and values.

Critical areas are:
- Wetlands
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas
- Frequently Flooded Areas
- Geologically Hazardous Areas
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Duty to identify critical areas is at RCW 36.70A.060
Duty to adopt regulations to protect is at RCW 36.70A.170
GMA REQUIREMENT:
Essential Public Facilities are defined and local government plans and regulations are precluded from prohibiting their siting or expansion.

Essential Public Facilities provisions are at RCW 36.70A.200
Vision 2040 constitutes MPPs for 4 counties and 78 cities

- County and city comprehensive plans must be consistent with CPPs and MPPs
- Vision 2040 assumes another 1.5 M people region-wide
- 1.5 M equals the combined population of Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Bellevue
- Very little change in the location of the urban boundary line
The Growth Management Act requires that city and county comprehensive plans be updated every eight years.
City Comprehensive Plan Elements (Chapters)

- **Sustainability**
- **Environment**
- **Urban Design**
- **Subarea Plans**
  - Neighborhood
  - Town Center
  - Station Area
  - Major Institutions

- **Land Use**
- **Housing**
- **Capital Facilities**
- **Utilities**
- **Transportation**
- **Shoreline**
- **Parks & Rec.**
- **Economic Development**

**Future Land Use Map**

**Comprehensive PLAN**

**OPTIONAL ELEMENTS**

**REQUIRED ELEMENTS**
Goals give broad direction or describe desired outcomes
Policies set objectives or direct specific implementing actions

Element 1
LAND USE

Goal LU V: Enhance the character, quality, and function of existing residential neighborhoods while accommodating anticipated growth.

Goal LU VIII: Encourage redevelopment of the Aurora corridor from a commercial strip to distinct centers with variety, activity, and interest.

Policies

LU8: Provide, through land use regulation, the potential for a broad range of housing choices and levels of affordability to meet the changing needs of a diverse community.

LU5: Review and update infill standards and procedures that promote quality development, and consider the existing neighborhood.
Goals give broad direction or describe desired outcomes
Policies set objectives or direct specific implementing actions

Goal NE I. Minimize adverse impacts on the natural environment through leadership, policy, and regulation, and address impacts of past practices where feasible.

Goal NE X. Maintain and improve the city’s tree canopy.

Policies

NE45. Design natural infrastructure into projects whenever feasible to mimic ecological processes.

NE46. Create incentives to encourage enhancement and restoration of wildlife habitat on both public and private property through new and existing programs, such as the Backyard Wildlife Habitat stewardship certification program.
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:
Through regulation of development projects
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: Through public capital projects
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:
Through city sponsored or volunteer programs
How does this all fit together?

State laws, regional plans, comprehensive plans, capital facilities, development regulations and implementation on the ground?
Consistency permits zoning, subdivision, building, etc. (RCW 36.70B.020(4))

Capital Budget Decisions (RCW 36.70A.120)

Internal Consistency

Community Vision

Shoreline Management Act GOALS & REQUIREMENTS (Ch. 90.58A RCW)

Countywide Policies (36.70A.210)

Vision 2040 Multicounty Planning Policies

Capital Budget Decisions (RCW 36.70A.120)

Capital Projects Roads, parks, public buildings, water, sewer, surface water systems

Permits Zoning, subdivision, building, etc. (RCW 36.70B.020(4))

Policies & Programs Annexation & tax policies, volunteer programs like “ivy out” and “streamkeepers”

NOTE: Every “action” is subject to SEPA review (Ch. 43.21C RCW)
Most great ideas get even better over time
Thank You!

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