An Overview of Washington’s GMA

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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.
What Makes a Good Framework?

- The People Have a Voice.
- Decisions are Based on Relevant Facts.
- Decisions are Made in Public and Based on Valid Public Concerns.
- Decisions Get Made and Stay Made.
- Favors Adaptive Behavior.
Public Expectations

“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.”
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
How we Got Here – Before GMA

- Plans optional - advisory
- Zoning governs
- Zoning and CFP in silos
- CPF not resource constrained
- SEPA – largely project specific & piecemeal
- More discretionary permits
- SMA – 200’ of shoreline
- No framework for coordination
- No framework to address larger issues
“I was driving in Puget Sound—my district was Vancouver, which was starting to undergo some growth, but nothing like what was happening in Puget Sound—and I was stuck in traffic on a state highway. I looked over on my right-hand side and here were a couple hundred new apartment units going in. I like apartments, I like higher density. But I wondered, How the people were going to get to work, and I wondered, Who coordinated all this? Somebody must have taken into consideration the kind of impact the new residents will have on traffic and other impact they will have on the community.

Well, I looked into it and clearly there wasn’t any coordination. There weren’t different people who were individually worrying about the impact of this growth. So that was really the impetus for growth management.

-Representative Joe King
Structure of our GMA

• Differentiated Landscape,
• Goals
• Requirements
• Roles and Procedures
Types of Land in the GMA

1. Resource lands (agricultural, forested, mineral)  
   RCW 36.70A.170

2. Urban lands (cities, towns and unincorporated urban growth areas)  
   RCW 36.70A.110

3. Rural lands (not resource or urban)  
   RCW 36.70A.070(5)
Goals

- Encourage compact urban growth
- Reduce sprawl
- Encourage coordinated, multimodal transportation
- Encourage affordable housing
- Encourage economic development
- Protect property rights
- Predictable permitting

- Maintain natural resource industries
- Retain open space, enhance recreation
- Protect the environment
- Encourage citizen participation
- Ensure availability of public facilities and services
- Encourage historic preservation
- Manage shoreline development*

RCW 36.70A.020

Department of Commerce
Requirements: *Core Substantive Mandates*

- Critical areas must be protected (RCW 36.70A.020(10), .060, .170, .172, .175)
- Resources lands must be designated and conserved (RCW 36.70A.020(8), .060, .131, .170, .177.)
- New growth to urban growth areas (RCW 36.70A.020(1) and (2), .110(3), .115)
- New development may not be allowed unless adequate transportation facilities are provided concurrently (RCW 36.70A.020(12), .070(6))
- Cities and counties may not preclude essential public facilities (RCW 36.70A.200, .020(4), .070(2)(d))
- Cities and counties must provide for early and continuous public participation (RCW 36.70A.020(11), .035(2), .140)
Regional Variation

Rural Counties
- Protect Critical Areas
- Conserve Resource Lands
- SEPA
- Subdivisions
- Planning Enabling Act

Fully Planning
- Rest of GMA
- UGA
- Concurrency
- Local Project Review
- Impact Fees Allowed
- 2nd Quarter REET Authorized

Clark & Thurston
- Fully Planning
- Plus Buildable Lands
- Multicounty Planning Policies

Central Puget Sound
- Fully Planning
- Plus Buildable lands
- Multicounty Planning Policies
What’s in a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive plans

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

• Goals and Policies
• Inventories
• Analysis and Conclusions
• Strategies & Commitments

RCW 36.70A.070
Coordination and Consistency

Internal consistency
• Is the plan based on the same set of assumptions? Do the plan elements all tell the same story?
• Can adequate public facilities be provided with planned development? (concurrency)

External consistency
• Neighboring jurisdictions
• Special Districts
• State & Regional Plans
Enforcement

Percent of city/county actions complying with Growth Management Act

- 2005: 97.9%
- 2006: 97.4%
- 2007: 98.4%
- 2008: 98.0%
- 2009: 99.1%
- 2010: 99.0%
- 2011: 98.9%
- 2012: 99.2%
An Evolving Framework

I feel on my part, one of the things that I wanted to happen, and I think is one of the best things to come out of the Growth Management Act, was to get the cities and counties to sit down and start talking together. That’s—everybody will say, even opponents will say—what was really important about the Growth Management Act, is that the cities and counties started planning together.

-Senator Mary Margaret Haugen