

How Growth Management Helps Communities Achieve Their Goals



Reports From Local and State Leaders



washington state department of
community, trade and economic development

Cover Photo

Local governments, such as the City of Vancouver, are making progress in revitalizing their downtowns under the Growth Management Act.

Photo/CTED/Rita R. Robison

How Growth Management Helps Local Communities Achieve Their Goals: Reports From Local and State Leaders

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Introduction

To recognize the 15th Anniversary of the Growth Management Act, the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) asked, “What is the single, most important way growth management is helping your community, organization, or those you work with to reach your goals and vision for the future?” Here are replies from public and private sector leaders.

Capital Facilities

Growth management aids capital facilities planning

*By Rick White
Planning Director, City of Kennewick*

The Growth Management Act (GMA) set the standard and offered the framework for realizing Kennewick’s community vision.

Kennewick enjoys a dedicated source of infrastructure funding and a system of public improvements that keeps the city “ahead of the curve” in dealing with growth.

However, Kennewick doesn’t have a successful history of integrating long-range planning with our system of public improvements. The GMA helped shape the community’s vision into goals and policies. It also offered an array of mechanisms to carry out that vision.

During the GMA’s early stages, our appointed and elected officials didn’t fully embrace its planning model. There

was resistance to being told “what to do” and “how to do it.” As Kennewick worked with GMA provisions and saw successful results, that resistance weakened.

Our community leaders now view GMA as a means to achieve an end through the integration and consistency requirements of the act. The end is the carrying out of the vision for the community.

In this way, Kennewick has been able to use its “head start” in providing public improvements and acceptable levels of service. It can stay ahead of the pressures that a healthy growth rate places on community infrastructure.



In Kennewick, growth management planning provides a framework for Kennewick’s community vision to be realized.

Compact Urban Development

The Growth Management Act and Kirkland's Vision

*By The Honorable Mary-Alyce Burleigh
Councilmember and Former Mayor,
City of Kirkland*

British industrialist Peter Kirk's plan for Kirkland was to create a "Pittsburgh of the West." With the 1893 financial crash, his dream faded.



Attractive new developments are part of Kirkland's efforts to create a vibrant community.

On October 12, 2005, Kirkland celebrated its Centennial. With 100 years of small town and then suburban growth, Kirkland has been forged into a tapestry of desirable neighborhoods, waterfront parks, and a walkable downtown. In recent years, Kirkland has grown beyond a bedroom community to become a commercial and employment center.

We adopted our first comprehensive plan in 1963 and then rewrote it in 1977. In 1995 the city overhauled its plan as a

result of the GMA. The GMA sparked us to reflect on our vision for our future.

The GMA required the city to accommodate growth. The new plan did this while protecting residential neighborhoods, environmental resources, and our quality of life. Attention was directed to creating compact, mixed-use urban activity centers with extensive pedestrian and transit-oriented amenities. Our downtown now has a rich mix of commercial, residential, civic, and cultural activities. Over the past 15 years, Kirkland has embraced the principle of creating vibrant places and a sense of community.

This vision is being used to transform other areas of the city into centers and gathering places while maintaining our human scale and small-town feel. The GMA gave us the opportunity to consciously shape our community to create an attractive, vibrant, and inviting place to live, work, play, and visit.

Environmental Quality

Environmental quality important to Issaquah

*By The Honorable Ava Frisinger
Mayor, City of Issaquah*

When the GMA was passed in 1990, Issaquah enlisted a stakeholder group to develop a community vision and identify what they valued most. Most cherished are the unspoiled, natural environment,

the wildlife corridors, streams, and permanent open space that characterize Issaquah and neighboring areas. Nearby areas include the Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, Squak Mountain State Park, and West Tiger Mountain Natural Resource Conservation Area.

Issaquah sits inside the eastern and southern edge of King County's urban growth area. Growth targets are established for cities inside the growth area. Only minimal growth is allowed outside the urban growth area; therefore, the risk of dense development directly to the south and east of Issaquah is greatly reduced.

In the mid-1990s, Issaquah directed potential King County development into Issaquah thus enabling its growth targets with 3,250 housing units and 1.3 million square feet of commercial space in an urban village. In return, more than 1,500 acres of permanent open space in King County were preserved adjacent to Issaquah's city limits.

Similarly, in 1999, the city worked with developers to add 1,700 housing units and 800,000 square feet of commercial space to a second urban village. Again, the city required the preservation of almost 400 acres of public open space in Issaquah.

The greatest benefit? Our environment. Issaquah currently has the third largest

amount of parks and open space in King County, something that would not have been possible without the opportunity the GMA provided to create a permanent legacy.

Environmental Review

Growth management and city design and development

*By Bill Trimm, AICP
Planning Director, City of Mill Creek*

One of the most important parts of Mill Creek's GMA comprehensive plan is the objective to build a compact, walkable, mixed-use community that can reduce vehicle trips and inspire livability. This objective is based on several key GMA goals.



Up-front environmental review is helping Mill Creek create a new neighborhood that is compatible with nearby wetlands.

GMA goals require urban growth areas to limit low-density sprawl while concentrating urban growth in cities where urban services, including multimodal transportation facilities, can be provided. These goals have been partially responsible for the

city's ability to attract private sector construction in the Mill Creek Town Center and surrounding compact residential neighborhoods. Without the GMA requirement to reduce low-density sprawl, the city wouldn't have been as successful in encouraging companies to

build compact, mixed-use developments in the city's core rather than continued outward expansion.

Also, a GMA "planned action" was used by the city to prepare the SR 527 Corridor Subarea Plan. The plan, environmental impact statement, design guidelines, and planned action ordinance allowed the city to create high-density neighborhoods with more than 1,150 new residential units. These neighborhoods are connected to the Town Center with streets, sidewalks, trails, and transit service and contribute to the center's economic and livable success.

The GMA goals to reduce sprawl and encourage compact developments where services can be economically provided and the provision for planned actions has made a notable contribution to the city's economic development program and the creation of a strong sense of community.

Historic Preservation

Growth management provides framework to protect historic properties

*By Reuben McKnight
Historic Preservation Officer, City of Tacoma*



The City of Tacoma is using growth management tools in its historic preservation efforts.

In Tacoma, the historic preservation goal in the Growth Management Act provided policy support for the city to develop its first Cultural and History Element in its comprehensive plan in 2004. This element has served as the foundation for recent regulatory and zoning reform, greatly improving the protection of historic properties in Tacoma.

Growth management aids historic preservation

*By Timothy Bishop
Former Director, Walla Walla
Downtown Foundation*

In 2003 the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation was faced with the monumental challenge of retaining our largest retail anchor, the Bon Marche (now Macy's) department store. The store, which had been an anchor in our downtown for decades, expanded in the early 1990s and occupied two historic buildings.

They received a lucrative offer to leave Main Street and relocate to a nearby mall. For Downtown Walla Walla, this move would have been disastrous and a threat to undermine nearly two decades of revitalization.

The foundation couldn't match the financial incentives being offered. Our only tool in the retention effort was the development of a 20-year downtown plan.

We met with Macy's leadership and presented the planning process outline. We convinced them this would address key issues affecting the economic viability of their downtown location.

In 2004 the downtown plan was adopted. Macy's stayed and is investing in building improvements.

The downtown plan that enabled Macy's to remain an important economic anchor in our downtown was funded in part by a growth management emerging issues grant and a growth management planning grant, both from CTED.

Much of growth management focuses on curtailing sprawl. In Walla Walla, growth management became an important tool in the revitalization of our historic downtown by demonstrating that with good planning based on solid economics, a traditional, pedestrian-oriented downtown can still provide viable opportunity in today's economy.

Without growth management, our downtown would have lost its last department store. Instead, with the help of growth management, the retention of this national retailer has served as a catalyst for the continued revitalization of our city.



Walla Walla's downtown plan enabled its major retailer Macy's to remain an important economic component.

Housing

Communities planning for housing needs locally and regionally

*By Arthur Sullivan, Program Manager
A Regional Coalition for Housing*

A critical component of the GMA that is impacting housing is the requirement for all communities to assess and plan for housing needs for all segments of the population in their community and to do so in the context of county-wide needs.

Under the GMA:

- Each city must assess its own needs.
- Cities need to come together at the county level to assess county-wide needs.
- Cities are given broad discretion on how to address their needs.

These ingredients are creating "conversations," leading communities to better understand that they do have a direct role in addressing the wide range of housing needs in their community and the broader region. These conversations are occurring both within communities and between communities, leading to a broad range of efforts to increase the supply, diversity, and affordability of housing within our region:

- Allowing higher density housing in downtowns and commercial centers.
- Permitting accessory dwelling units, cottages, and multiplexes in single-family neighborhoods.
- Up zoning land or granting density bonuses in exchange for including moderate priced housing.
- Agreeing that employment and housing goals need to be better balanced throughout the region.

- Creating an interlocal agency, such as ARCH in East King County, so suburban jurisdictions can pool their resources to directly fund affordable housing throughout the region.

Housing solutions 15 years into the GMA

*By Kurt Creager
CEO, Vancouver Housing Authority*

Housing, being a commodity of increasing value, has a fascinating constituency: Realtors®, builders, developers, nonprofit organizations, consumers, and social welfare advocates.

Local planners and policy makers must, in the context of the GMA, fashion an acceptable compromise between these interests, and craft a comprehensive plan Housing Element that provides an adequate supply of housing for all economic segments of society. They must also zone an adequate supply of land for single-family and multifamily developments as well as manufactured home parks, group homes, and other government-supported housing.

Some good has come out of this planning process:

- The GMA strengthened state expectations for local comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances. It went beyond previous laws and created a common basis for population projections.

- Citizens now have fuller disclosure on the cost of growth and its impact on schools, transportation systems, and natural resources than previously when there was a policy disconnect between the cause and effect of development.
- Now zoning and the comprehensive plan designation must conform, which allows land to be developed.



Affordable housing units are being constructed as Vancouver revamps its downtown.

- Affordable housing has a seat at the table when policy choices among competing interests are being debated.

Creation of the Growth Management Act in 1990 may not have solved housing supply and affordability problems in Washington State, but it made potential solutions possible. The GMA has created a healthy conversation locally about what kind of community we want to nurture and create over time.

Growth management impacts housing costs

*By Sam Anderson, Executive Officer,
Master Builders Association of King and
Snohomish Counties*

The Growth Management Act is working well in some areas and poorly in others.

When you look at the goals, the ones that talk about containing sprawl and building more densely, they're very successful. They're working extremely well in King and Snohomish counties. We're building 95 percent or more of new construction inside the urban growth area.

By containing growth in urban areas, farm and timber lands are being conserved, which is what the act was designed to do.

This is occurring at the cost of other goals – housing affordability and, to some extent, the timely permitting goal. However, cities and counties are getting better at the permitting goal.

While affordable housing is a function of more than growth management, the act is impacting housing costs.

Concentrating density within the urban growth area exacerbates traffic and limits building sites. As a result, development leapfrogs to other counties. In reality, 110,000 people leave Snohomish County each day to come to jobs in King County. The majority isn't doing that out of convenience. While some want a lifestyle like that, some of it's due to housing affordability.

Pierce, Skagit, and Island counties are facing growth pressure, and developers are also looking at Kitsap and Thurston counties too.

Challenges remain with the Growth Management Act that need to be addressed. While Master Builder members like the concept of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, some people in the suburbs don't want the density that comes with living in an urban area. We do a lot of work talking to people about the jobs-housing balance.

Planning for Growth

Tools for planning for growth

*By Jorge Vega
Former Planning Director, City of
Bellingham*

The most important function of the GMA is that it requires that communities plan for growth in a coordinated and thoughtful manner. It also requires an early and continuous public process that informs the decisions on how we plan for this growth.



Growth management is helping Bellingham plan for growth in a coordinated, thoughtful manner.

The act is nonjudgmental as to the pros and cons of growth and doesn't seek to encourage or restrict it. Rather, it recognizes that based on historical data and trend projections communities are growing. The act recommends communities plan for that growth in a way that will encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist. This reduces the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

The act mandates that communities adopt a 20-year population projection, and that our plans make room for that additional population within the urban areas. All the cities in Whatcom County and the county came to consensus on the population projection approved by the county. Once agreement is reached, the act provides for local control to determine how we plan for the additional population. The requirement of planning for the 20-year population projection compels the community to seriously assess its priorities and preferences while meeting the required goal. In short, the act requires that we be prepared for anticipated growth by planning for it.

Growth management's impact on Olympia: 'A most worthwhile challenge'

*By The Honorable Mark Foutch
Mayor, City of Olympia*

Although Olympia and Thurston County led the way in interjurisdictional cooperation on land use planning with an urban growth boundary established in 1988, complying with the GMA presented a worthwhile challenge.

Developing "truth in planning" forced Olympia officials, property owners, and citizens to acknowledge the contradictions in our earlier planning efforts. We could no longer count on large lots, cul de sac development, and ever-wider roads.

Instead we substituted high-quality subdivision and building design, connected streets, multimodal transportation, historic preservation and cultural attractions, and parks, play fields, and open space for residents to enjoy. Then we had to demonstrate our ability to pay for the public amenities that would be key tradeoffs for increased housing densities.



Infill is happening in Olympia's older neighborhoods.

How are we doing? We're starting to see the results of our work as new subdivisions and old business corridors adopt new forms. Infill is happening in long-overlooked older, close-in neighborhoods. Olympia's downtown is a vital, attractive place to live, work, and visit. People have new transportation choices as bike lanes are extended and transit improvements continue. Our voters have approved tax increases for transit, parks, and sidewalk construction.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of our response to the GMA has been the conversation with our residents, property owners, and businesses. The continuing public involvement prompted by the GMA is increasing the level of knowledge and understanding of community planning, helping us to make the right choices and assisting us in paying for them.

How growth management helps Spokane achieve its goals for the future

*By Steve Franks
Planning Director, City of Spokane*

When the GMA became law in 1990, its authors were aware that plans are often written but merely collect dust on shelves without being carried out. To prevent this from happening as new GMA plans were developed, the state assessed some of the reasons for “dusty plans.” They concluded that plans often were not supported by the people they were intended to serve, conflicted with each other, and were not financially feasible to put into practice.

Some of the key GMA requirements to address these shortcomings have made a difference to the City of Spokane as we use and carry out our new comprehensive plan, adopted in 2001 after six years of GMA planning. Spokane’s consistent, unified, and relatively succinct comprehensive plan replaced a host of documents that had been prepared and amended (and sometimes virtually forgotten) over several

decades. The city’s plan includes: consistency within the plan, connecting the plan to budgets and financing, addressing concurrency, and ensuring citizen participation as we carry out and refine the plan.

In summary, growth management is helping Spokane achieve its desired future by providing us with a realistic, useable, and pragmatic tool to help it get there.

Growth management improves county’s livability

*By John Ladenburg
Executive, Pierce County*

In 1990 Pierce County was known as the poster child for the GMA. With an obsolete comprehensive plan followed by inconsistent regulations, perhaps the title wasn’t undeserved. The GMA changed all that. Today, Pierce County has adopted a comprehensive plan that can be characterized as a business plan for the county’s future.



Tacoma is encouraging development around transportation hubs to enhance downtown living.

The single, most important way the GMA is benefiting Pierce County is the establishment of the urban/rural line. Now growth is directed into urban areas, which in turn, stops sprawl in rural areas. This allows infill and redevelopment of urban areas, more efficiently delivers infrastructure and services, and makes citizens and investors aware of what to expect in their communities and from county government.

By focusing growth in urban growth areas, the county is also able to commit the resources and infrastructure necessary to achieve a high-quality urban lifestyle. In addition, directing growth has improved predictability and allowed greater protection of rural lands, lifestyles, and resource lands.

The establishment of urban/rural areas has opened the lines of communication between conflicting interests and required a focus on common ground and the long term. Fifteen years after the GMA went into effect, developers and environmentalists, cities and counties, and regional agencies and local government have stopped bickering and are involved in beneficial, productive discussions.

In every sense, the GMA has helped turn Pierce County into one of the most livable communities in the country.

The single most important growth management ingredient

*By The Honorable Ron Sims
Executive, King County*

The success of GMA has forced us to rethink the value of our cities and the

costs of sprawl to our infrastructure and our society. We're now looking at our urban areas with a revised vision that will rekindle the awe and excitement of our urban spaces.

Before the GMA, we took our urban areas for granted – we looked at cities as places of the past and not the future. We didn't think about efficient use of land, we didn't account for the cost of extending services to support sprawling development, and we didn't put a value on providing housing options to suit everyone's unique needs. But since that time, we've grown to understand the public health benefits of living in communities where we can easily walk and take public transportation to school, work, and shopping.

Fifteen years after GMA became law, many of our urban areas are bustling communities. We have added apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and cottage houses to the mix of housing choices. Our urban areas are becoming vibrant, 24/7 communities. Each summer we have more and more farmers' markets setting up shop in urban neighborhoods to sell local fresh produce from the farms that have been spared the bulldozer because we have learned to look inward and not to sprawl out.



In King County, urban areas are being revitalized as new attention is being paid to their importance.

Public Participation

The importance of growth management planning in Richland

*By Rick Simon
Development Services Manager, City of Richland*

A number of significant achievements are occurring in Richland due to growth management planning.

The city has seen the development of Columbia Point – a city-owned, mixed-use project located on the Columbia River. Other important capital plans have been realized, including a new community center, expansion of the park system, and improvements to the arterial street system as well as increased levels of private construction. However, the



Columbia Point is one of Richland's capital projects.

most important GMA impact has been to raise the level of awareness of planning issues among city officials and residents.

While Richland has a rich tradition in planning, as one of only a few planned communities in the Northwest, the GMA has raised the knowledge of and interest in planning. The requirement that local governments must carry out their plans has moved planning out from a behind-the-scenes operation into the forefront of

many communities. This is especially evident in Richland.

In recent years, the city has broadcast its planning commission and city council meetings on a local cable station. It's surprising how many residents watch planning commission meetings and monitor the city's planning efforts. In addition, many people have at least a basic understanding of many of the concepts of GMA planning – such as level of service standards, urban growth boundaries, and protection of critical areas.

I expect this level of community interest will translate to other important achievements in the years to come.

Public involvement important to citizens

*By Larry K. Frazier, AICP
Director of Planning and Community Development, City of Bainbridge Island*

The citizens of Bainbridge Island are fortunate to have the GMA as a primary tool to assist them in defining the future livability of their island.

The city was incorporated in 1991. The 1990 GMA adoption by the state was very timely for Bainbridge Island citizens because it assisted them in preparing the island's first comprehensive plan. The plan was adopted in 1995.

Of particular importance to Bainbridge Island is the GMA requirement for early and continuous public involvement in the planning process. In response to this requirement, a comprehensive community-wide survey was undertaken

in 1992 to understand residents' vision for the future Bainbridge Island.

In 2002 another community-wide survey was undertaken to provide guidance to the update of the city's comprehensive plan. In addition, as a result of the public involvement requirement, the city developed an extensive public information process utilizing local television, the Internet, and many other public outreach programs. The plan update was adopted in December of 2004.

The GMA requirement for public involvement has played a large part in the city's planning programs and will continue to do so in the future.

Regional Planning

The benefits of regional agreement on an urban growth area

*By Roberta Lewandowski
Former Planning Director, City of Redmond*

The GMA provides visionary planning principles that bring common goals to the various planning efforts of more than 250 cities and counties in the state.

An example is the collaborative effort to designate an urban growth area in King County. It's had a huge, beneficial impact on urban quality. Designating a growth area is a policy commitment to invest public resources into completing infrastructure where it's needed for compact urban growth, rather than adding more areas to compete for limited public dollars.

For the City of Redmond, being within the urban growth area means higher quality commercial investments and more varied housing as well as long-term



Regional planning in cities such as Redmond helps keep downtowns vital economically.

protection of nearby rural and resource lands. The commercial investor who built Redmond Town Center (an open air-shopping district with a grid system that mirrors the historic district) said he wouldn't have tried that experimental concept without growth management. He relied on the regional plan indicating there wouldn't be another large retail area springing up in the rural areas east of the city.

Many urban areas have seen their center cities and first-ring suburbs decay as publicly supported new growth attracts jobs and population ever further from the center. In King County, the urban growth area has helped us avoid that scenario, as it represents a regional decision to invest in our existing urban areas.

Growth management and regional planning

*By Bob Drewel
Executive Director, Puget Sound Regional Council*

Over the last 15 years, the GMA has been instrumental in advancing regional planning. A core feature of the act is its emphasis on interjurisdictional

coordination, which can be seen in the region’s shared vision and strategies.

When the Central Puget Sound region first adopted VISION 2020 in 1990 – the same year the GMA became law – it provided a common growth management and transportation vision, but had limited status locally. It satisfied certain federal regional planning expectations, but localities could use it or ignore it. The GMA gave this vision a formal role – the regional strategy became the foundation for multicounty planning policies. For the first time, the region had an integrated framework for achieving goals that built on and supported local, county-wide, regional, and state planning efforts.



The Puget Sound Regional Council works cooperatively in new ways under growth management.

This framework guided the development of the region’s transportation plan – *Destination 2030* – and placed a new emphasis on the importance of monitoring our progress toward achieving regional goals.

This sense of a common regional purpose also lies at the heart of The Prosperity Partnership – a coalition of government, business, labor, and

community leaders that has developed a common strategy for long-term economic vitality integrated with land use and transportation planning.

As we strive to create vibrant and accessible communities and to preserve and enhance our quality of life, the GMA has helped to foster a belief in the region that many of the challenges we face are best addressed together.

Regional coordination helps city reach its goals

*By The Honorable Jerry Smith
Mayor, City of Mountlake Terrace*

Of all our successes, the most significant benefit from carrying out the GMA is better regional coordination – working together with other cities and counties to accommodate growth and keep our community livable.

Mountlake Terrace has always supported the planning process for community development and environmental protection. Under the GMA, we’ve made even greater progress, especially when state grants are available to help.

In the “old days,” each city and county went its own way without working together on common issues. But in the 1980s and ‘90s, we saw traffic congestion, polluted streams, and growth issues hitting our radar screen. We realized all of us were affected, and we needed a coordinated approach.

Regional coordination for planning is required by the GMA. In 1993 and 2003, we joined with other cities and Snohomish County to develop county-

wide planning policies. That gave us a framework to plan for future population and jobs in our urban growth areas and to know that sprawl would be limited in the countryside.

Having regional policies made it easier to plan for roadway and utility improvements because we knew where growth was going. Mountlake Terrace also talked more with other cities and the county about transportation. It takes all of us working together to solve transportation needs.

Regional coordination is more important than ever. With state requirements and local knowledge, we've made a good start at reaching our goals.

Resource Lands

Growth management and agricultural lands in Grant County

*By The Honorable Richard Stevens,
LeRoy Allison, and
Deborah Moore
Grant County Board of
County Commissioners*

Grant County is well known for its agricultural products and being located in one of the country's largest federal irrigation projects. As a producer of field crops, seed crops, vegetables, and livestock, the county consistently ranks as a state leader in market value for agricultural products sold.

Our citizenry has guided our planning efforts to balance the community's interest in maintaining the commercial viability of agricultural lands with the needs and rights of individual landowners. This has resulted in the adoption of goals, policies, and regulations that promote agricultural land use and conservation by steering new, nonagricultural development towards accessory uses, supporting agricultural uses, and limiting nonagricultural-compatible activities.

In addition to a residential maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres, "residential clustering" is being used. It allows limited residential development while encouraging the retention of large agricultural land tracks and reducing the need for rural infrastructure and services.

Since some residential development is expected, we have strengthened our "right-to-farm" ordinance by adopting a more proactive educational approach to its implementation. In addition to the more than 874,000 acres of agricultural lands in



Agricultural policies in Grant County help keep farmlands in long-term production.

use, a decision was made to recognize the importance of the undeveloped second phase of the Federal Irrigation Project, which could add 538,600 acres of farmland.

We believe a proactive approach to the long-term stewardship of our agricultural lands will poise Grant County to continue to be successful and economically sustainable well into the future.

Growth management planning in Franklin County

*By The Honorable Frank H. Brock, Neva J. Corkrum, and Robert E. Koch
Franklin County Board of County Commissioners*

In June 2005, Franklin County completed its growth management update for the county’s comprehensive plan. This is the first major update of the plan since its original adoption in 1995.



Growth management provides tools for Franklin County to designate and conserve agricultural lands important to the economy in the county.

The comprehensive plan encourages urban scale developments to occur within designated urban growth areas while continuing to conserve the county’s agricultural lands and the farming industry.

The goals, policies, and strategies of the plan protect the viability of agriculture in the county while providing for rural development. The plan concludes that agriculture will continue to be a major industry in Franklin County and the Mid-Columbia, and that the county’s agricultural lands should continue to be conserved as an important county resource. A result of the recent growth management planning process was the additional designation of 62,000 acres of agricultural land previously designated for other land uses.

During the past decade, Franklin County’s population increased 37 percent with the majority of the growth occurring in the county’s urban growth areas. The county population forecast can be accommodated within the designated urban growth areas and in the county’s rural lands through existing Rural Settlement and Rural Residential designations.

In total, Franklin County consists of about 809,000 acres of which about 680,000 acres are actively irrigated, dry land, and rangeland agriculture.

Organizations

15 years of growth management planning: Cities Look Back and Forward

By Pam Carter, President, Association of Washington Cities and Councilmember, City of Tukwila

Initial passage of the GMA in 1990 was greeted by most cities with enthusiasm. The GMA called for a “bottom-up” approach to local planning, rather than the “top-down,” state control called for in Initiative 547, which voters rejected in

1990. Local decision making was the key to cities' active support of the GMA. Cities also appreciated that they were identified as the primary providers of urban governmental services and were given a greater role in determining how areas just outside the city would grow and develop.

While it's difficult to speak with one voice for all of the 281 cities and towns in Washington, including the 248 with a full set of GMA requirements, this bottom-up approach to local planning has helped cities to define and meet their local goals in ways most appropriate for their communities. While many cities had developed comprehensive plans long before the adoption of the GMA, the act established a new framework within which we engaged our citizens in examining the challenges and benefits that accompany growth.

In many communities, the required emphasis on public participation brought a new level of citizen engagement and a vision that more accurately reflected the views of the community. Looking back after 15 years of planning under GMA, we can say that the act's most beneficial aspect has been that it helped us engage our citizens in preparing for the future.

Public participation – An important benefit of growth management

*By Tim Trohimovich
Planning Director, Futurewise*

Public participation has been called the "very core of the Growth Management Act." Futurewise, as a citizen-based organization, agrees.



Throughout the state, citizens are meeting to discuss growth management issues, including economic development.

The best plans combine the public's local knowledge with the technical knowledge of planning professionals and the judgments of city and county elected officials. The GMA provides a framework that communities can use to fashion an effective and economical public involvement process that fits the issues and the community.

"Our experience throughout Washington State is that active citizen participation results in better plans," said Aaron Ostrom, executive director, Futurewise. A study of planning in Washington and Florida found that the greater the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process the greater the success in carrying out plans.

Another benefit of effective public involvement is a greater understanding of planning and the community by residents and property owners. A good public involvement program educates the public on planning, the consequences of alternatives, and the goals and requirements that the community is seeking to achieve.

“Public involvement can transform skeptics into supporters of good planning and good plans,” said Mary McCumber, Futurewise’s president and former executive director of the Growth Strategies Commission and the Puget Sound Regional Council.

Citizens benefit too. A fair and well-run public involvement process gives residents and property owners the opportunity to voice their preferences and make sure the needs of the entire community are considered in local planning.

Washington growth management’s role as a tool for farmland protection

*By Don Stuart
Northwest Field Director, American Farmland Trust*

In many years of working with farmers, I’ve yet to meet one whose real desire was to sell the farm for development. After a lifetime of work turning their land into the most productive, desirable farm they could create, it’s tragic when



Farmlands are being kept in production using growth management tools.

the day comes to sell and their only option is to watch their dream disappear

under houses and strip malls. Avoiding that is the central mission of American Farmland Trust.

Unfortunately, farming is a land-extensive business. Today, across Washington, farmers can no longer compete with recreational, residential, and commercial users in the purchase of land. If land prices are too high, farm businesses can’t afford to buy it and still turn a profit through its agricultural productivity. Unless some mechanism holds down the price of farmland to what farm businesses can afford, those lands will continue to fall out of agriculture and our farming industry will continue to disappear.

That is the function growth management serves for agriculture. Once land has been bought and sold under protected agricultural zoning, a settled, established, dependable growth management is hugely important to the future viability of agriculture and to its continued contributions to economic, social, and environmental quality in Washington’s communities.

Conserving agricultural lands

*By Gene Duvernoy
President, Cascade Land Conservancy*

When the GMA was enacted in 1990, the Seattle metropolitan area was in an economic slump. So drawing a line to keep urban growth from spilling over into rural areas didn’t seem important.

But a few years later, the area was booming and the growth boundary line suddenly grew in importance. The act was ground breaking because it forced

the region to confront its future. How do we as a region want to manage our scarcest resources?



Growth management planning is helping the Cascade Land Conservancy keep important landscapes as open space.

The GMA has matured and continues to serve the region well. When the Cascade Land Conservancy goes about its efforts to preserve important landscapes, it provides a legal framework for our work.

We recently unveiled the Cascade Agenda. It could be considered a second generation product of the GMA. We have a boundary. We have done a good job of staying within that boundary. The act has been generally successful. But now, how do we begin to use the market so the economy supports those efforts to control sprawl?

That's the vision of the Cascade Agenda. As the GMA matures, we ask key questions: Is the GMA saving the land or simply shuffling acreage around? Is the goal of the GMA – conserving farm and forest lands while encouraging dense, livable urban areas – being achieved?

We applaud the value of the GMA over the past 15 years. But we also believe

the Cascade Agenda has the power to answer those important questions that remain.

Growth management working reasonably well

Bruce Kendall, President and Chief Executive Officer, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County

The Growth Management Act is working reasonably well in Pierce County.

When the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County works with an individual company, it hardly ever runs into a growth management-related problem.

We're better off with growth management than without it. Is it perfect? No.

More work needed on including economic development as part of growth management work

By Deborah Knutson, President, Economic Development Council of Snohomish County

The Growth Management Act was designed to basically increase density and preserve open space.

It's an excellent goal to have. It seems to be working. It's causing some increased densities, which is a good thing.

While more communities are doing economic development planning as part of their growth management work, further work is needed. I have been pushing for

economic development planning to be included in growth management for a long time. That means looking at your economic markets. It becomes more than a consideration. What the economic market is determines what land they need to set aside. I think it is really important that happens.

Ports reflect on the growth management's 15th birthday

*By Patrick Jones
Executive Director, Washington Public
Ports Association*

The occasion of the 15th birthday of the GMA is an excellent time to reflect on this important law. Most 15-year olds are a mix of difficult immaturity and sparkling promise. The GMA is a little like a person in this respect: sometimes exasperating and not done growing.

For port districts, the GMA has been an alternatively easy and uneasy partnership. On the positive side, the GMA has catalyzed a large amount of beneficial planning between special districts and local general-purpose governments. The original mandatory planning goals of the GMA have all proven worthy, and the general model of state-overseen local control is one that most local governments have made work.

There is much more to do, though. To start with, the state hasn't delivered on its responsibilities to list and help plan for the siting of essential public facilities – those unpopular but necessary things like airports, landfills, and correctional facilities that no one wants but everyone needs.

Similarly, more needs to be done to create true state/local partnerships for economic development. Economic development planning is easy for everyone to be in favor of, but in the real world it requires a commitment to infrastructure and a series of land use decisions that can conflict with other priorities. Until economic development becomes a real priority, and not an optional one, a big part of the promise of the GMA to provide jobs for our citizens goes unmet.

The GMA and Realtors® work to improve quality of life



Ports are strong supporters of economic development, a GMA goal.

*By Bryan Wahl
Government Affairs Director, Washington
Realtors Association*

For 15 years, the GMA has helped guide the way for managing growth and improving the quality of life in communities. Yet, we face many challenges in our ability to accommodate growth and ensure there is sufficient land capacity available for new homes and jobs.



Affordable housing such as this for farm workers in Wenatchee is being built as communities plan for growth.

Because Realtors® are in the business of selling communities – not just homes – quality of life is their major concern. Like others who live and work in our communities, Realtors® want good schools and parks, safe neighborhoods, a strong economy, and good transportation choices.

Realtors® understand the challenges in carrying out the GMA. The Realtors®' Quality of Life Project is a public education program that generates ideas about how our state can continue to manage growth. As part of the project, Realtors® conduct research on growth options and survey our citizens to find out how they would like to see their communities grow.

We develop policy recommendations to help us address the need for a supply of housing that will accommodate population and employment growth. In order to ensure the GMA is successfully carried out, we must have sufficient land capacity for new jobs and homes and adopt measures to ensure a sufficient

supply of housing is available for projected growth.

Realtors® look forward to sharing their insight and working with communities to accommodate growth, provide housing opportunities, ensure economic vitality, preserve our environment, and improve our quality of life.

Growth management difficult for small, rural counties

*By Bill Lotto, Executive Director,
Lewis County Economic
Development Council*

The GMA can be an effective planning tool if used by local governments as originally intended. However, since the act's interpretation and application has been left to an appointed board, rather than to local government, a growing number of jurisdictions have encountered serious implementation problems. Most problems can be traced to numerous appeals that occur from individuals and outside interest groups.

Lewis County's Cardinal Glass project was the first major industrial development project outside an urban growth area to be approved under the GMA. The law worked the way it was supposed to. The county and Cardinal prevailed on almost 30 appeals and lawsuits filed on the project.

While GMA planning is vitally important to fast-growing urban areas, it's proven to be unduly burdensome, costly, and resource consumptive for most rural counties, particularly those suffering from high unemployment and lower than average family incomes.

The growth management process is an enormous effort for rural counties, and particularly to those counties with limited resources. It has taken the county almost ten years to get everything accomplished under GMA mandates. Now, the county is required to update their GMA requirements.

State Land Use Leaders

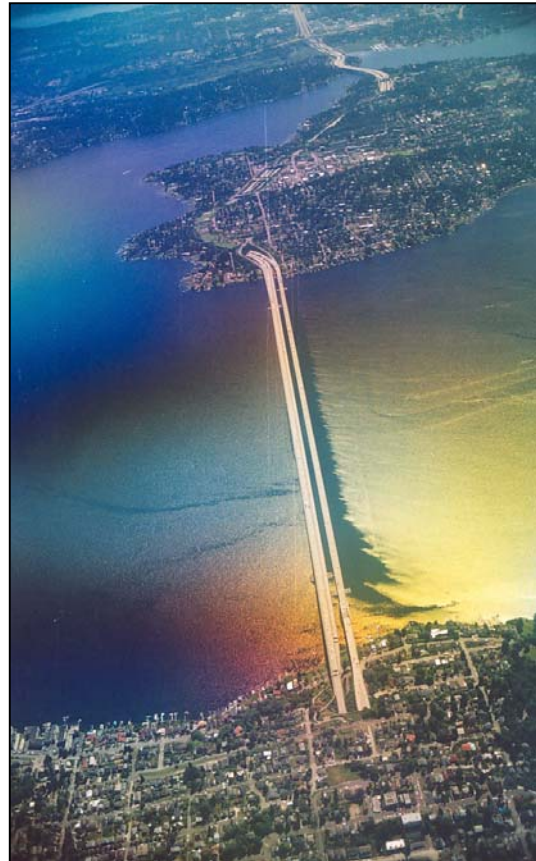
Growth management consistency changes planning

*By Joe Tovar, FAICP
Planning Director, City of Shoreline,
and Former Member of the Central
Puget Sound Growth Management
Hearings Board*

Under the GMA, comprehensive plans are now truly comprehensive and local actions must be consistent with them. This is a sharp contrast to the pre-GMA era when issues such as land use and transportation were addressed in fragmented, disconnected, and even counter-productive ways. It's also a big change from decision making, which too often was driven by expedient and narrow interests rather than the deliberate, open, and inclusive public participation process now required under the act.

Comprehensiveness and consistency have changed the way that planning and planners operate. In order to achieve the internal plan consistency required by the act, planning practice in Washington has returned to its historical, multi-disciplinary roots. Plans now do more than simply explain the zoning map – they provide direction to capital budget priorities and link local policies and actions to county-wide or even regional

plans. To prepare successful GMA plans, planners must work with multidisciplinary teams of attorneys, engineers, natural scientists, finance officers, economists, and others.



Capital budget priorities and local policies are linked under growth management planning.

A final benefit of consistency is that it clarifies and reinforces the importance of the policy-making role of local elected officials. In the pre-GMA era, the line between policy making and policy administration was often blurred, which resulted in elected officials paying insufficient time to the “big picture” of adopted policy and too much time micro-managing the administrative and policy implementation work of their staffs. Consistency thus fosters a more efficient and effective partnership

between elected and appointed officials in achieving the vision in the comprehensive plan.

The Growth Management Act's consistency requirements

*By Keith Deaborn
Planner and Attorney*

An important facet of the GMA is the “consistency” requirements. While the growth boards have been called on to explain this requirement, written commentary and planning literature haven’t given it a great deal of attention. Making planning mandatory and requiring plan and regulatory consistent may be the most radical requirements of the GMA. They certainly initiated the most profound changes in planning law.

The GMA requires consistency in three ways:

- Plans must be internally consistent and consistent with the future land use map.
- Plans of cities/counties with common borders must be coordinated and consistent.
- Development regulations must be consistent with and implement a comprehensive plan.

In *Alberg*, the Central Washington Growth Management Hearings Board also concluded that development regulations must be internally consistent and all development regulations adopted to implement a comprehensive plan must be consistent. These consistency requirements have significant implications for planning practice. However, the requirement that development regulations implement the

comprehensive plan may be the most significant, for it profoundly changed the statutory law in Washington State.

All three growth boards have said that a development regulation must implement a comprehensive plan. Washington courts haven’t addressed the question, but presumably the same decision would be reached. Careful attention needs to be given drafting comprehensive plan goals and policies since they now have a new legal status. To date, I’m not sure this has been the case. Updates and amendments to comprehensive plans and development regulations need to be developed at the same time to ensure consistency, for a comprehensive plan is now more a blueprint than a guide.

The effect of growth management planning

*By Mark Hinshaw, FAIA, FAICP
Director of Urban Design, LMN
Architects*

In working with many cities and towns during the last 15 years, it’s evident that at least one major change is occurring in how local governments are operating.



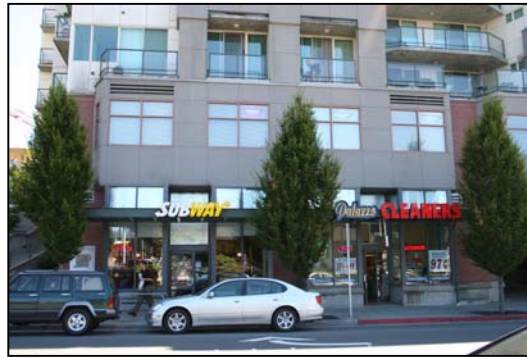
The GMA provides tools to cities for public investment.

Prior to the GMA, public investments in infrastructure – including parks and community facilities, as well as streets

and utilities – were made on an “on-demand” basis. Often these were on the edge of a community where growth was occurring. But such investments were often scattered, unrelated to each another, and involved costs of operation and maintenance that couldn’t be effectively sustained over time.

The GMA is providing cities with a great tool to use to focus public investments. Because communities have limits to what they can fund, the current direction produces a result in which infrastructure improvements can work synergistically. Such investments are concentrated and connected and can stimulate increased development that can help offset both the initial- and long-term costs.

For cities that do this aggressively, the results are dramatic. Seeing the financial commitment, the private sector comes to the table and provides forms of development that some communities have not seen in decades, if ever. And it’s fascinating to observe this happening in so many places, from Bellingham to Burien, from Walla Walla to Washougal. It’s clear to me that communities who are applying the principles of GMA in a strategic manner are witnessing tangible – and sometimes breathtaking – economic development. And they have become better, more livable places in the process.



Innovative plans are being prepared in Washington, such as the City of Bellevue’s.

Stimulus, growth management planning: The response, innovation

*William Grimes, AICP
Principal, Studio Cascade Inc.*

Innovation in planning is one of the most important results of the GMA.

Communities are finding new and more effective ways to craft their long-term plans – producing plans that make sense, are accessible to the general public, and actually get things done. The GMA challenged Washington planners to write practical, sensible plans, and although we’ve struggled with a variety of approaches over the last 15 years, creativity in method has emerged as a controlling concept.

The 1990 law and its amendments, Washington Administrative Code rules, and interpretations through three hearings boards outline a specific set of goals, requirements, and procedural steps. While this package may look like a preformed prescription for planning, it’s precipitated something different in practice. Plans are becoming more unique.

Innovation appears as an instrument to bolster citizen participation, finding ways to jazz up the planning process, and engage community members in a variety of ways. It also appears as an instrument to rebuild trust between the

community and its government, demonstrating that the planning process is transparent, accountable, and responsive. When planners innovate, communities respond. People participate...and they remember.

Innovation is also a requirement when looking beyond the GMA's 20-year planning horizon. Communities more often call for plans and strategies that are "sustainable," motivating an examination of how the community will behave and look 50 to 100 years from now.

Growth management shifted the focus to longer-term thinking, now the process is being cast with even a longer view. Innovation is key.

State Agencies

Historic preservation celebrates 15 years of growth management planning

*By Allyson Brooks, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer,
DAHP*

Historic preservationists from across Washington extend hearty congratulations to citizens, planners, planning commissioners, and elected officials for 15 years of hard work in carrying out the GMA. Your successes represent a major milestone in community efforts to shape our built environment for a better future. The GMA has heightened public awareness and discussion of local preservation issues. A significant increase in the number of National Park Service-recognized historic preservation

commissions, known as Certified Local Governments (CLG), has occurred since 1990. CLGs administer local preservation programs that carry out public preservation policies.



Port Townsend is one of the local governments that become Certified Local Government since 1990.

The GMA has also fostered the inclusion of preservation principles into comprehensive planning and development regulations. One specific example is Whatcom County. The planning department has an informal consultation process with the Lummi Nation for identifying cultural resource issues early in project planning. This partnership recognizes the Lummi as an interested party when permitted projects may affect significant tribal cultural resources. The two entities work together to protect resources while reducing the possibility of project delays due to inadvertent discoveries. The slogan of the new state Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, "Protect the Past. Shape the Future," clearly reflects GMA goals and the vision of Washington preservationists. We share a vision of comprehensive planning with our growth management partners. We look forward to our continued partnership by using the

past for planning the future for healthy and prosperous communities.

Growth management: An invitation to work together

*By Jay Manning
Director, Washington State Department of Ecology*

Population growth, and the development that comes with it, presents a significant challenge to those of us charged with protecting Washington’s environment and natural resources. The GMA was enacted not to stop growth, but to manage it. Part of the GMA’s charge is to preserve our quality of life by protecting “critical areas.” These include wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, flood-hazard areas, critical fish and wildlife habitat, and geologically unstable areas.

When local governments began developing critical area ordinances, they turned to the Department of Ecology for our expertise and technical assistance to identify and protect critical areas. Ecology is firmly committed to helping local governments as they update their critical area ordinances. Through our connection with them, we have a unique



The state Department of Ecology provides technical assistance to local governments on critical areas.

opportunity to work in new ways on important quality of life issues across the state.

In addition, improved critical area ordinances can help streamline the development process by using standards that parallel state and federal wetland protection standards, eliminating confusion and overlapping regulations for developers. They also invite the opportunity to incorporate the latest innovations in environmental mitigation, such as wetland banks, to further streamline the development process and increase the success of wetland mitigation.

We at Ecology look forward to continuing our partnership with local government as we continue to implement the GMA. I have no doubt it will continue to be one of our state’s most important, and most controversial statutes.

After 15 years – How growth management planning helps WSDOT

*By Elizabeth Robbins,
Transportation Planning Office
Manager, WSDOT*

The most important outcome of the GMA for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) over the past 15 years is the restructuring of local and regional transportation planning. The three parts of the restructuring are:

First, the GMA requires local jurisdictions to have a basic framework in their planning process. Five parts of

this framework affect WSDOT by requiring local governments to:

- Designate critical areas and develop ordinances to protect them.
- Designate urban growth boundaries.
- Develop comprehensive plans with specific elements, including a Transportation Element.
- Develop concurrency requirements so that local jurisdictions plan for growth and build infrastructure to accommodate that growth.
- Make public presentations and publish the jurisdiction's plan for the future.

Second, GMA authorizes the establishment of regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs). RTPOs provide a forum for review of consistency in transportation planning between neighboring jurisdictions. RTPOs help to coordinate transportation planning between local and state organizations through the development of regional transportation plans, and the certification of local transportation plans with the regional transportation plan. RTPOs also develop regional strategies that include alternative modes of transportation and traffic demand management measures. RTPOs are responsible for the development of six-year regional transportation improvement programs, which combine the local transportation improvement programs of membership agencies into a regionally significant set of improvements that will be made over the near-term (six years).

Third, GMA requires that jurisdictions allow for essential public facilities in their planning, specifically, from WSDOT's perspective, transportation facilities and services of statewide

significance. The GMA also requires the Transportation Element to include the following subelement: Estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities resulting from land use assumptions to assist the Department of Transportation in monitoring the performance of state facilities, to plan improvements for the facilities, and to assess the impact of land-use decisions on state-owned transportation facilities [RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)].



Regional transportation planning organizations prepare six-year plans to guide the region.

When these three areas of the GMA are functioning, they help the WSDOT planning and project development processes by providing:

- Predictability – defined critical areas for environmental checks and defined urban areas to help establish level of service estimates.
- Consistency – highways that cross local jurisdictional boundaries have levels of service agreed on by local jurisdictions.
- Certainty – state highways can be sited under the requirement that local jurisdictions must not preclude siting of essential public facilities.

Conclusion

CTED would like to thank the local and state leaders who contributed information to this publication.

Their reports show that growth management planning offers a framework that communities can use to shape growth to meet their needs.

Under growth management, capital plans are being realized, compact urban centers with places for pedestrians and transit are being created, and open spaces are being saved and parks created. And all around the state, growth management requirements for citizen participation are producing positive results.

In addition, the GMA offers the tools local governments need to effectively designate agricultural lands

While challenges remain, growth management is an important part of community living in Washington, where rapid growth is continuing in many parts of the state and economic development is needed in others.