

A SHORTCOURSE

ON LOCAL PLANNING

**Comprehensive  
Planning under the  
Growth Management Act**

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Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**

# Contents

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



# Why do we plan?

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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.

# 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:

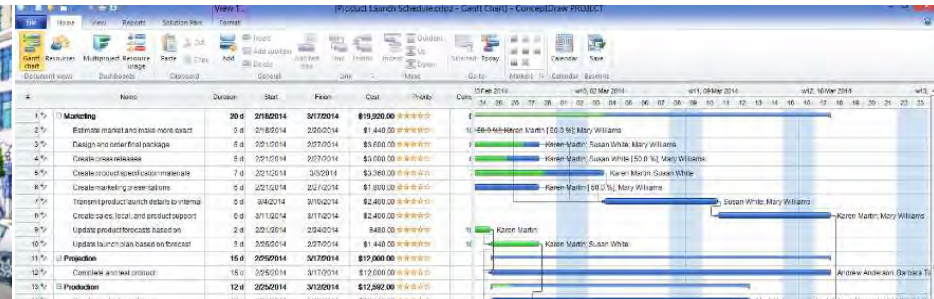
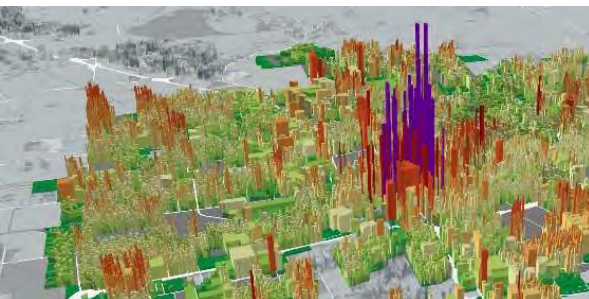
- Forecast
- Inventory
- Analysis

### Compelling:

- Vision
- Goals and policies

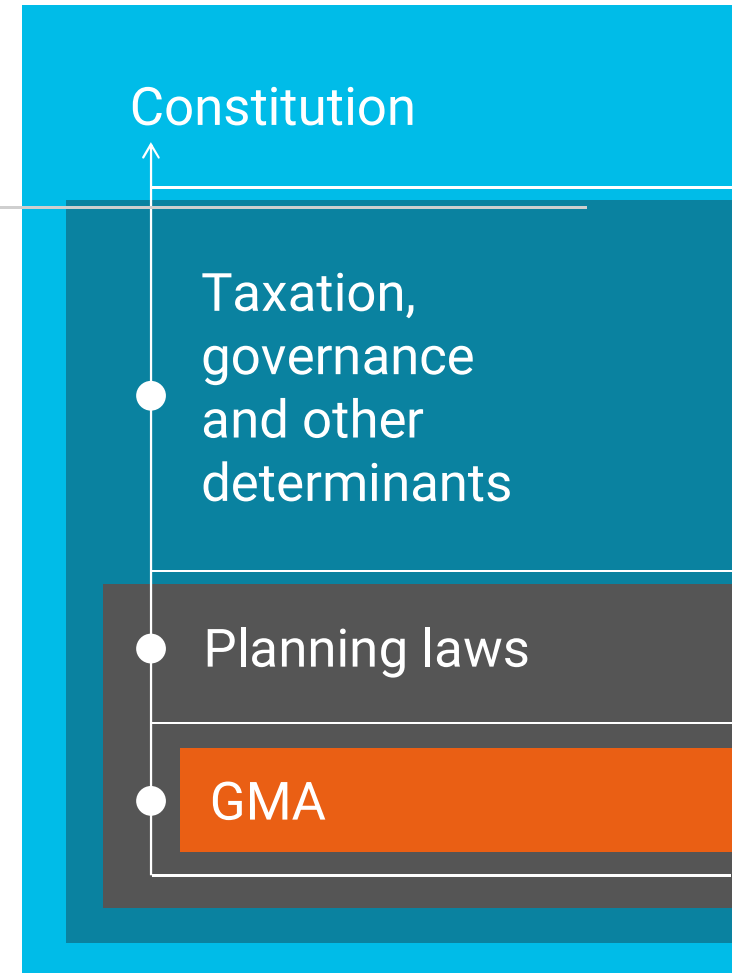
### Specific:

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



# Washington's framework

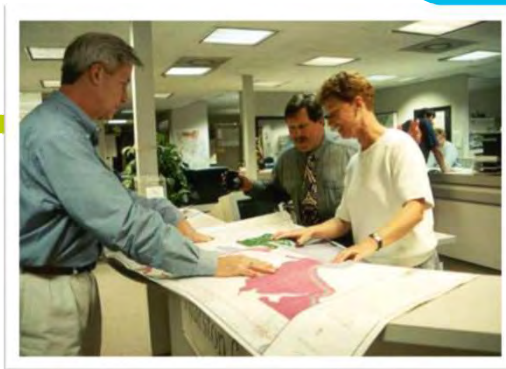
- Growth Management Act – 36.70A
- Counties and Cities – Titles 35 & 36
- Local Project Review – 36.70B
- Shoreline Management – 90.58
- SEPA – 43.21
- Impact Fees - 82.02
- Water Law – Title 90
- Regional Planning – 47.80
- Subdivision – 58.17





# Values in Tension

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



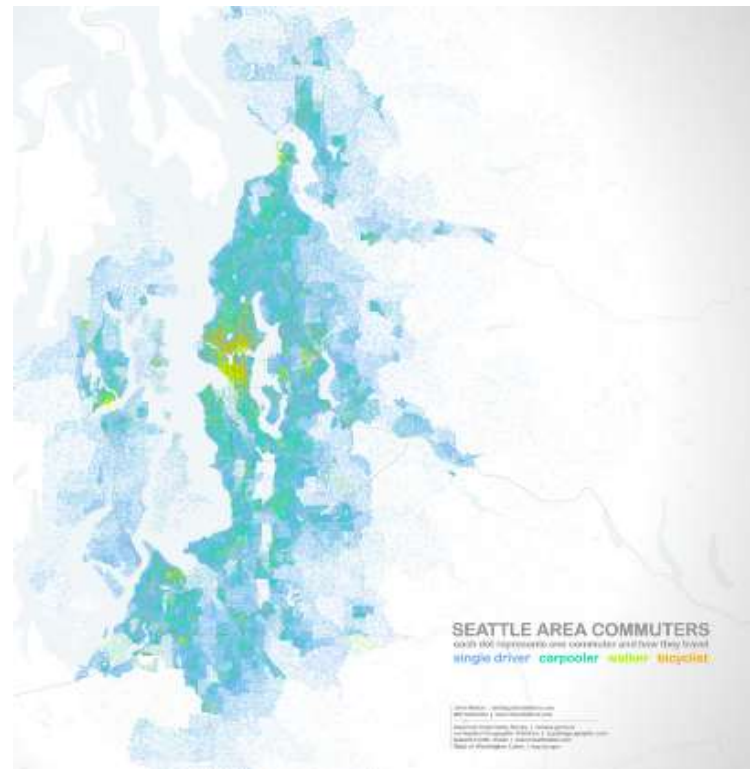
“This affects my neighborhood and my home. I should have a say in what happens.”



# Structure of the GMA

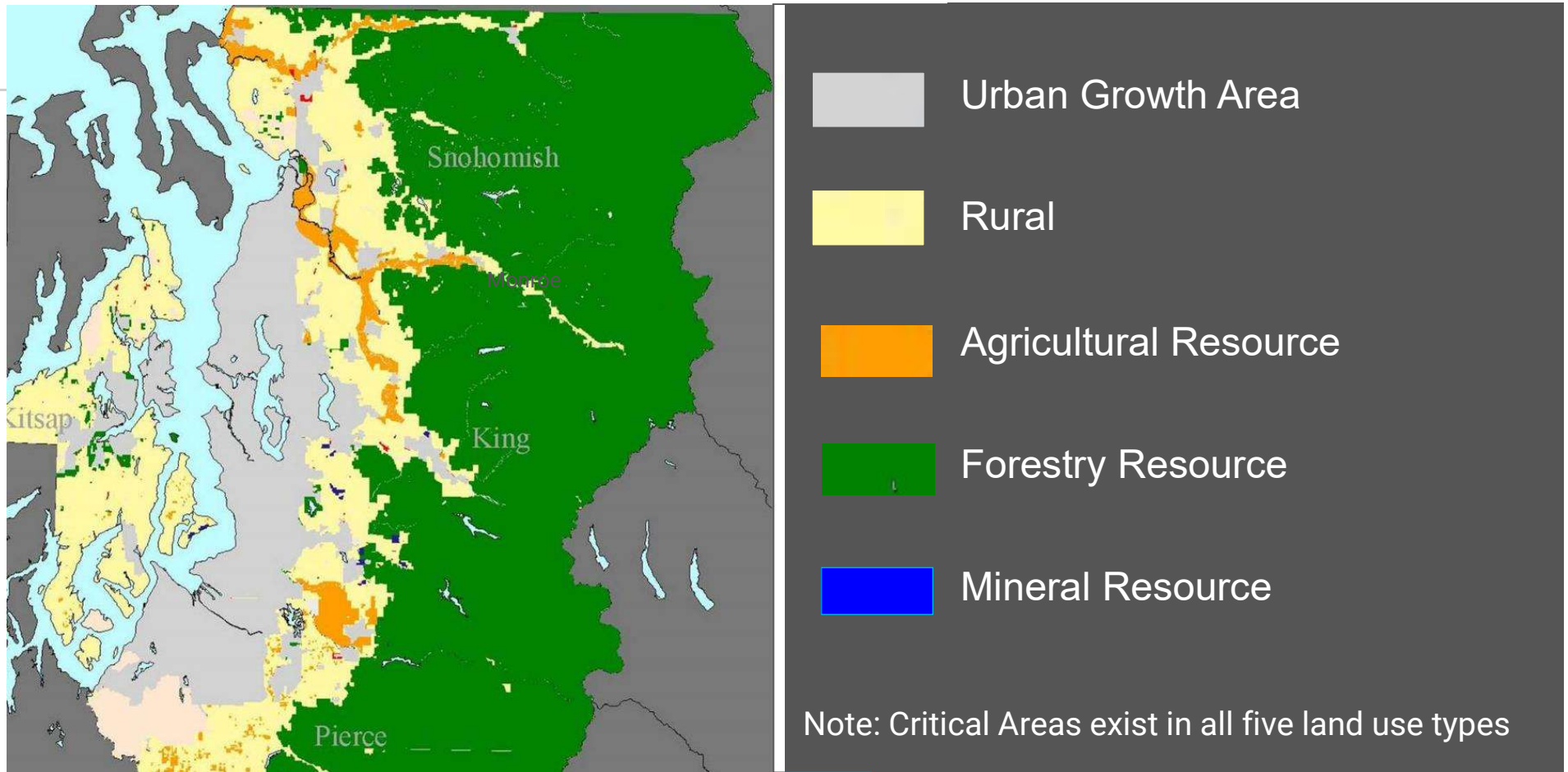
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Differentiated landscape  
Goals & Requirements  
Regional variation  
Roles and procedures  
Implementation





# The Differentiated Landscape under GMA



# GMA: Planning Goals

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- **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)



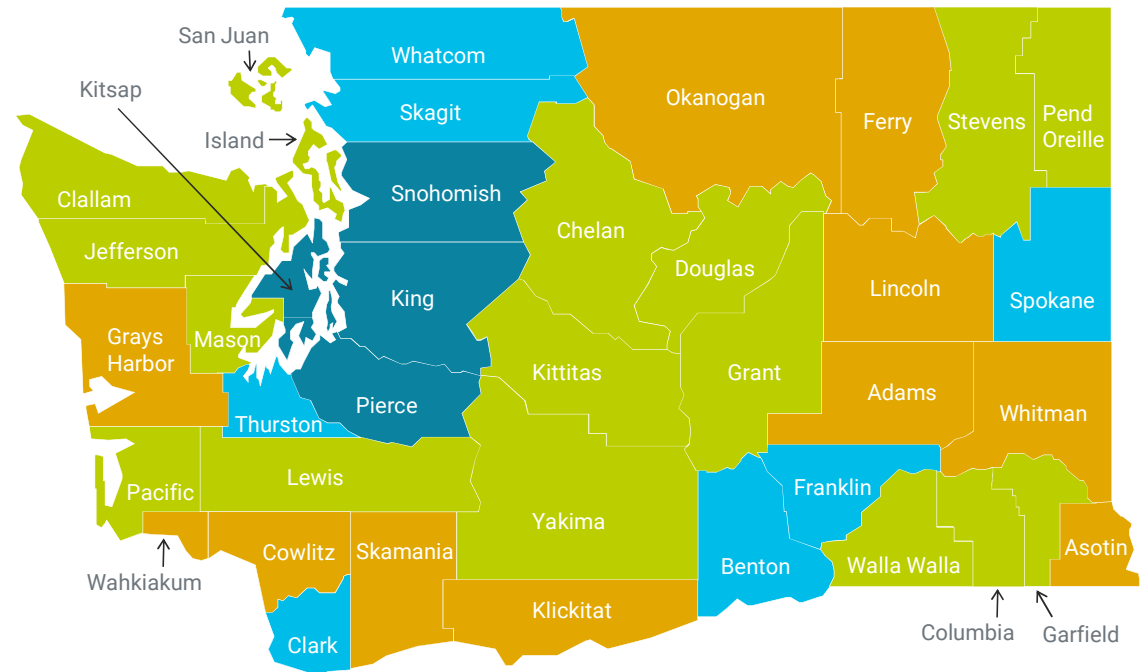
# Requirements: *Core Substantive Mandates*

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- **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

|  | Metro Puget Sound | Other Metro Counties | Rest of GMA | Partially Planning |
|--|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Vision 2050                            | █                 |                      |             |                    |
| GHG Reduction                          | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Climate Resilience                     | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Concurrence                            | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Countywide Planning Policies           | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Local Project Review                   | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| REET 2                                 | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Impact Fees                            | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Authorized Essential Public Facilities | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| GMHB Hears Appeals                     | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Rural Element                          | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Conservation of Resource Lands         | █                 | █                    | █           |                    |
| Periodic Review                        | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| Designation of Resource Lands          | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| Best Available Science                 | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| Critical Areas                         | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| SMA                                    | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| SEPA                                   | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |
| Planning Enabling Act                  | █                 | █                    | █           | █                  |



# Roles and Procedures

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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)

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## **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

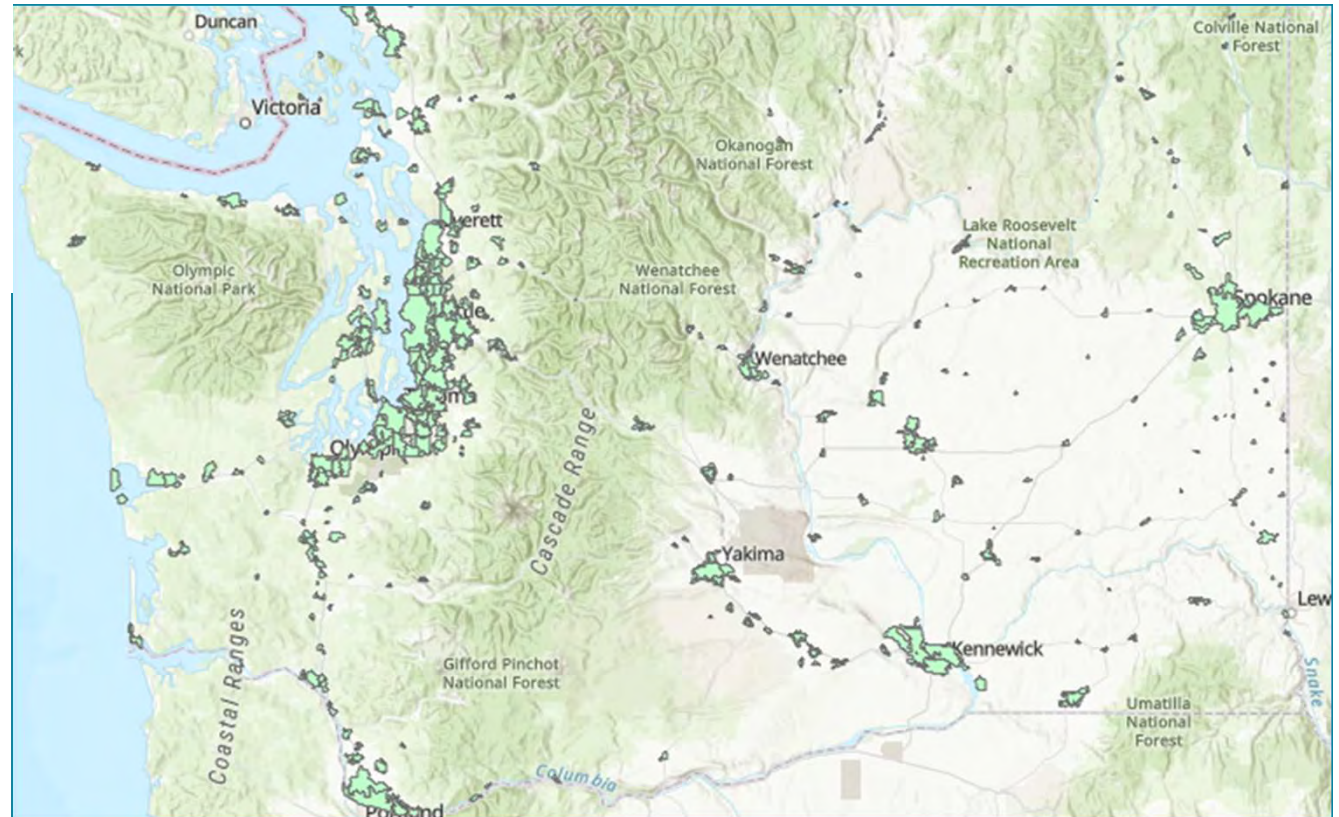
## Rural areas to maintain rural character

- 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.

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

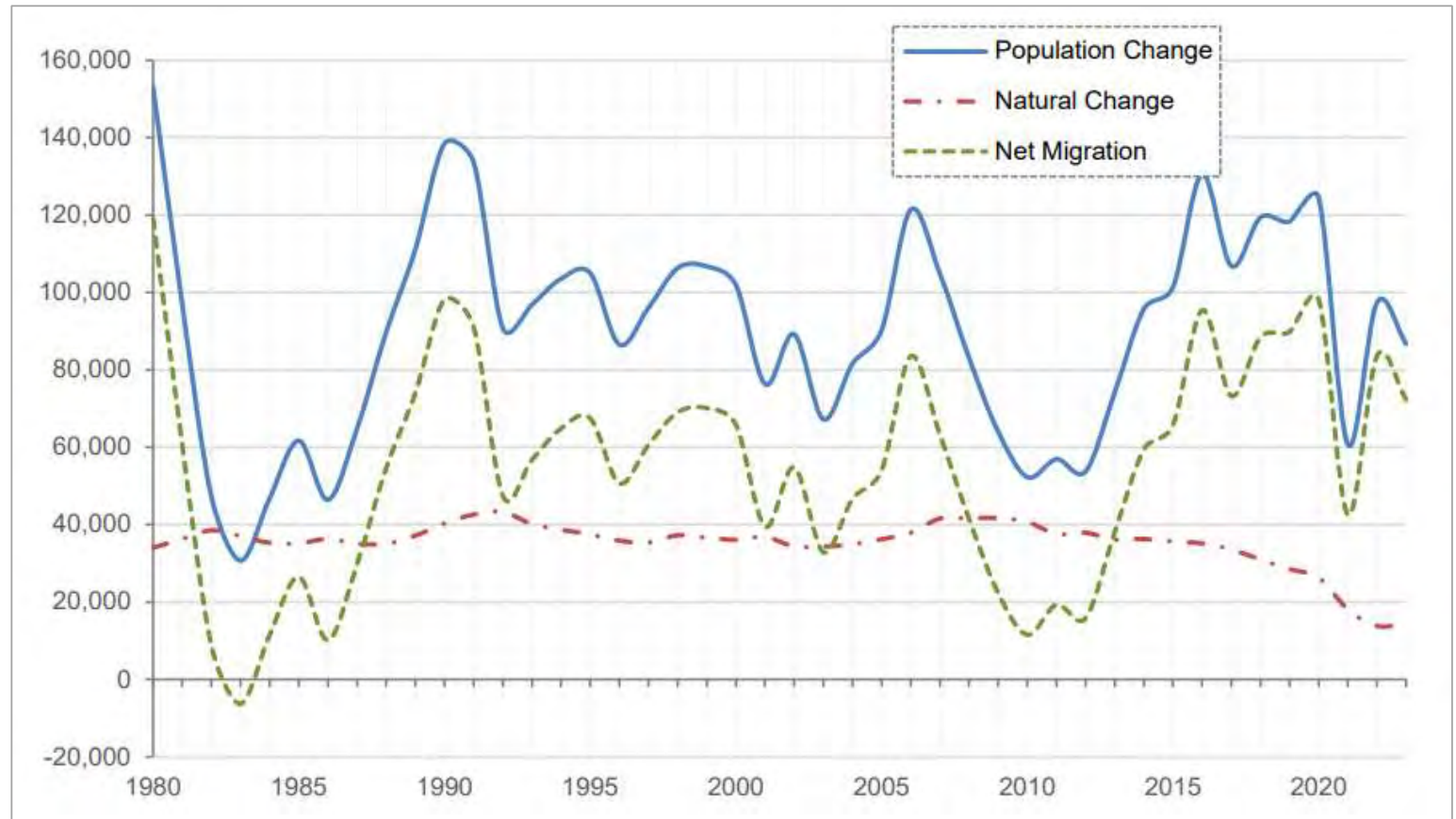


Washington Geospatial Open Data Portal: ArcGIS (Updated May 2022)

## Washington State Population Change and Components of Change (1980 – 2023)

**Population change involves many factors that must be considered to accommodate future population growth (births, deaths, migration, etc.).**

[Source: OFM](#)







# Growth Management Act amendments

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## The Legislature has enacted a number of substantive reforms to the GMA:

- [HB 1220 \(2021\)](#) – **Affordable Housing**: An act relating to supporting emergency shelters and housing through local planning and development regulations. Actively “plan for and accommodate,” housing across income segments.
- [HB 1717 \(2022\)](#) – **Tribal Participation**: An act relating to tribal participation in planning under the Growth Management Act.
- [HB 1110 \(2023\)](#) – **Middle Housing**: An act increasing the variety of housing options for Washingtonians.
- [HB 1337 \(2023\)](#) – **Accessory Dwelling Units**: An act relating to expanding housing options by easing barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units.
- [HB 1181 \(2023\)](#) – **Climate Change and Resiliency**: An act relating to improving the state's climate response through updates to the state's planning framework.

*Note: Jurisdiction size, planning status, and other criteria determine applicability for each bill.*

# New Housing Element Requirements

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**New GMA housing goal:** “~~Plan for and accommodate~~ encourage the availability of affordable housing affordable to all economic segments.”

- 1) Conduct an **inventory and analysis of all housing needs by income**, PSH and emergency 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

# Process: Housing Element Update

Use Commerce projected housing needs & allocate to jurisdictions

Book 1: Establishing Housing Targets for Your Community & Housing for All Planning Tool

Show sufficient land capacity for each income level and housing type

Identify barriers to housing needed & document programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability

Book 2: Updating your Housing Element with HB 1220 (Ch. 3 & 4)

Review, identify, and address racially disparate impacts, displacement and exclusion, and areas at high risk of displacement

Book 3: Guidance to Address Racially Disparate Impacts

Update policies and regulations

Books 2 & 3, plus HAP Guidance

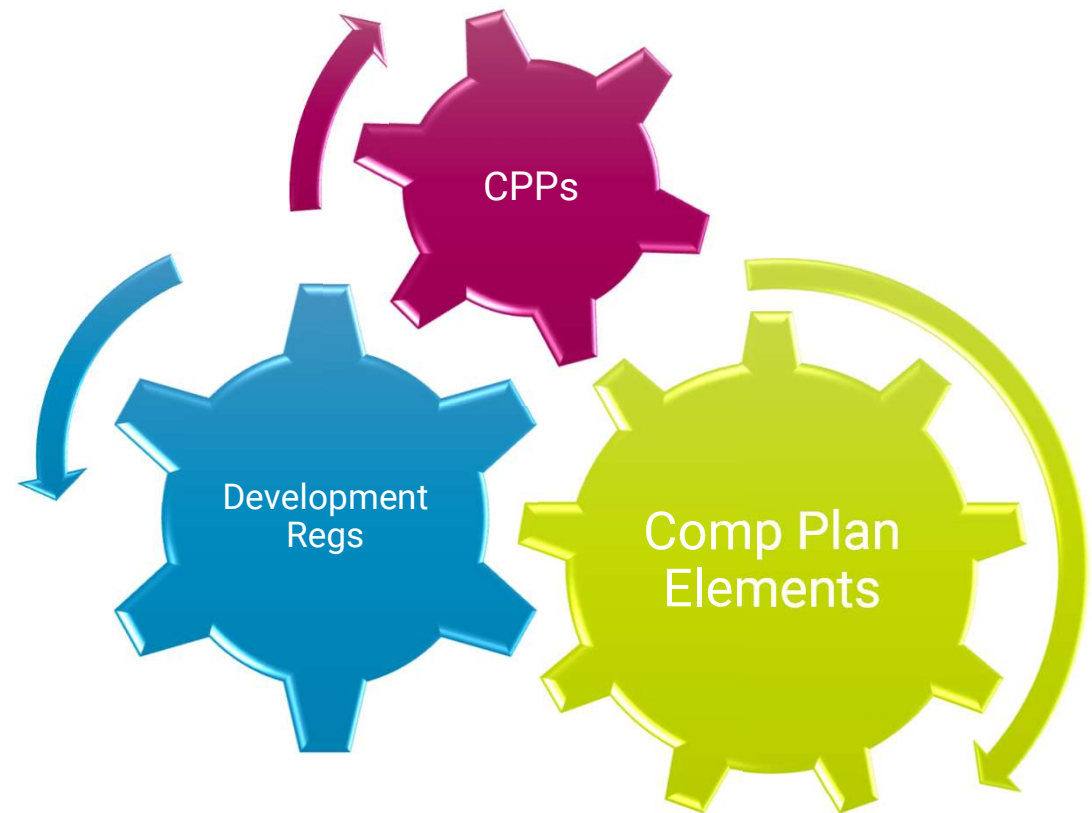


# Mandatory Consistency & Coordination

**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

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## 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 Improvement Plans (CIP)** priorities for local infrastructure investments must be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

**Development regulations** must be consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan.

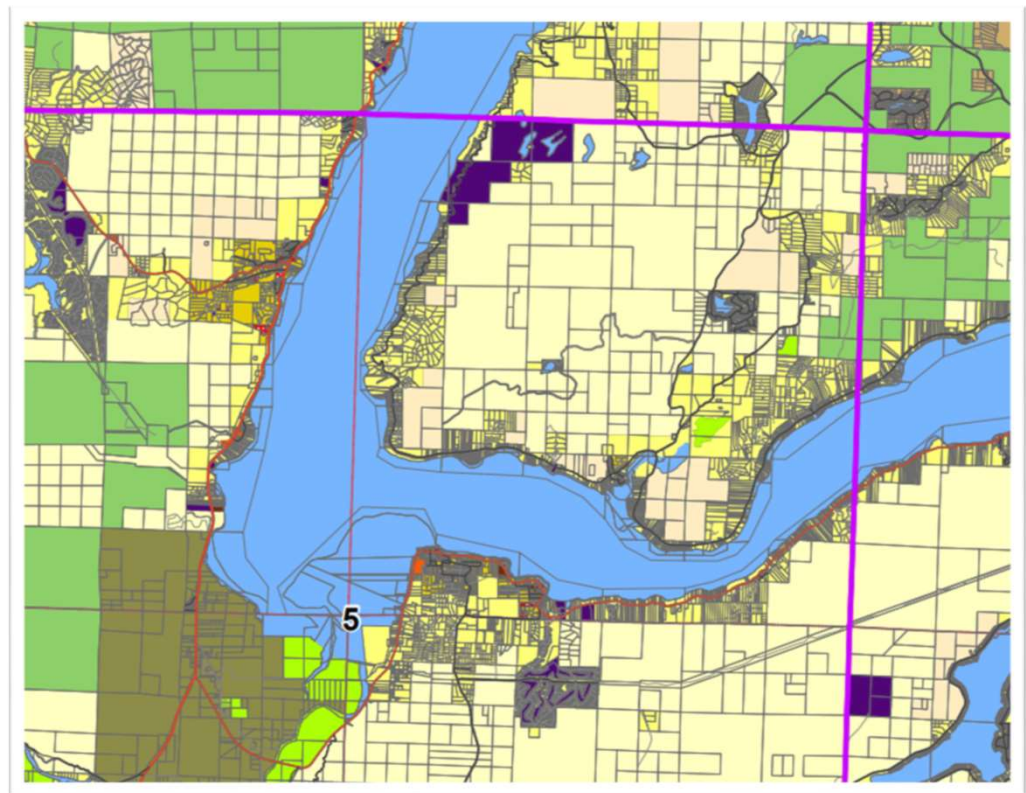
# Capital Facilities and Transportation



# Development Regulations

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

*Clip of Mason County  
Development Areas Map*



# Review and revision

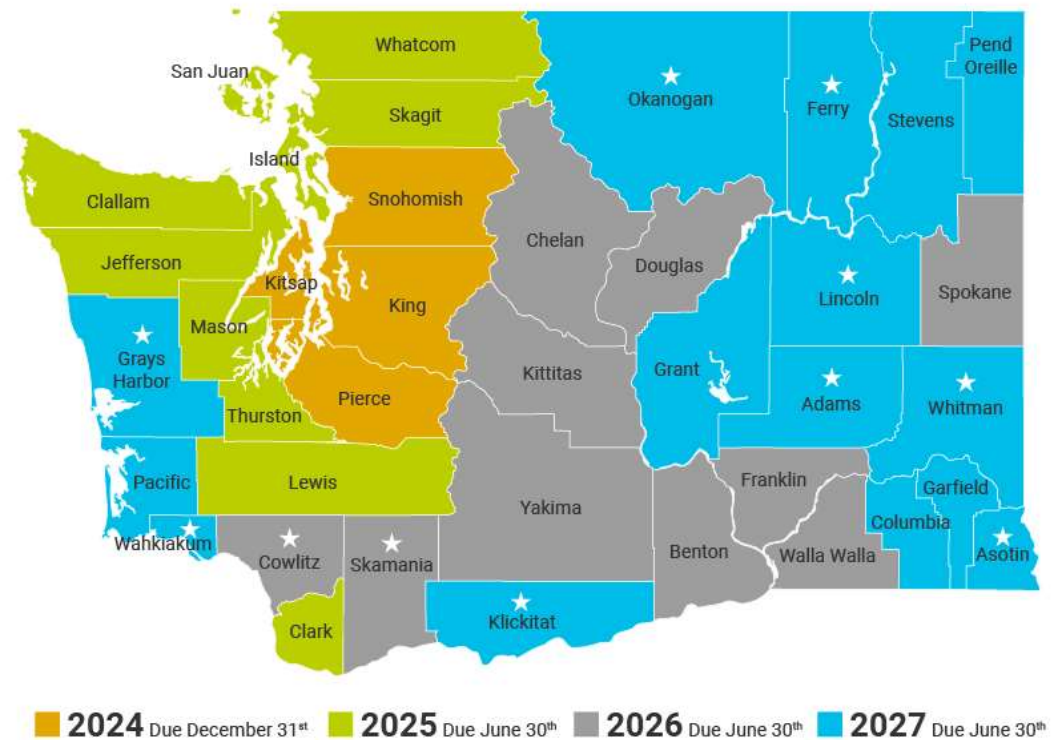
RCW 36.70A.130

## What to Review?

- Comprehensive Plan
- Development Regulations

## What to Review it for?

- New Housing Targets
- Capital Facilities and Transportation Update
- Critical Areas Ordinance for New Science or Management Recommendations
- New Legislative Requirements





# Short Course on Local Planning

Full short course scheduled monthly on Zoom - [Short Course Video Study Guide](#)

Read the Guidebook - [A Short Course on Local Planning: Resource Guide \(295 pages, 2017\)](#)

Watch the Videos:

[Introduction to the Short Course](#). 5 minutes

[Comprehensive Planning Basics](#). 11 minutes

[Implementing Your Plan](#). 10 minutes

[Updating Your Plan](#). 10 minutes

[Washington's Legal Framework for Land Use Planning](#). 7 minutes

[Constitutional Issues and Other Protections](#). 8 minutes

[Roles and Responsibilities in Planning](#). 7 minutes

[Public Participation and Effective Meetings](#). 7 minutes

[Open Public Meetings Act](#). 27 minutes - [OPMA Certificate](#)

[Appearance of Fairness Doctrine](#). 17 minutes



Click on image above  
to visit the Short Course webpage.



# Resources

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- [Growth Management Act Periodic Update](#)
- [Updating GMA Housing Elements](#)
- [GMA and Related Laws Update 1995 – 2023 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Tribal Planning Coordination](#)
- [Climate Element Requirements](#)

# Questions?

# Then a 10-Minute Break!



Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**

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

