

LUCY STEERS

Lucy Steers is a public involvement consultant and longtime civic activist.

Lucy was the president of the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Seattle and on the board of the LWV of Washington from 1987-1997. She conceived and implemented a Growth Management Awards program for the LWV of Washington in 1997 and was a League representative on the GMA (Growth Management Act) Working Group.

Lucy served on the Governor's Growth Strategies Commission and chaired its Land Use Subcommittee. She served on task forces and subcommittees advisory to the state's Regulatory Reform and Land Use Study groups, and she participated in the effort to integrate the Shoreline Management Act and GMA.

Lucy was a charter board member of Futurewise (formerly 1000 Friends of Washington) and its president from 1991-1995.

Lucy co-chaired the statewide campaign "No on R-48," defeating the Property Rights Initiative in 1995.

Lucy co-chaired then-King County Executive Locke's Growth Management Task Force. She was vice chair of the Regulatory Reform Task Force, convened by 1000 Friends and the Housing Partnership to recommend regulatory reforms for housing affordability. Lucy was also a member of Governor Locke's Competitiveness Council.

Lucy is a long time trustee of the Municipal League of King County and has been Issues chair since 2002.



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Tape 1, Side 1

Diane Wiatr: This interview with Lucy Steers is about the history of Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA). The date is August 11, 2005, and the interview is taking place at the Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) in Seattle. My name is Diane Wiatr, and I will be interviewing Lucy Steers today.

Diane: Lucy, what interest did the League of Women Voters of Washington have in land use planning and growth management before the GMA was passed in 1990?

Lucy Steers: Well, it had significant interest for many years. The League establishes its advocacy program by doing studies which all of its members read, comment on, and then from that arrive at a sort of consensus about what we want to do about that issue. And we had studied land use planning—I believe in 1986—we'd had a lot of studies on the various issues falling under the GMA umbrella.

We'd also had a Puget Sound organization that coordinated all the issues of Leagues within Puget

Sound, and so there was plenty of understanding of the need for it and the lack of proper coordination in planning and enforcement. The League was, I would say, tremendously interested in this issue.

Also its largest and most active chapter—which was the Seattle League of Women Voters—had a number of studies on the downtown and zoning in the city of Seattle, and was extremely concerned that managing growth was not on the radar screen of Seattle city officials, and did a variety of things to try to get the attention of some officials on growth management.

Diane: Can you tell me what a couple of those things were?

Lucy: Yes, one of them was supporting the CAP Initiative in 1988, which limited the height and FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of buildings downtown and metered out how much growth could occur annually downtown—the rate of which was getting out way ahead of what had been predicted and analyzed in the plan EIS (environmental impact statement). More importantly CAP called for a study of the relationship of downtown growth to neighborhoods, transportation, housing, and other issues—that kind of integrated look that was not happening in Seattle because we didn't really have a comprehensive planning process. So we supported that strongly and got the signatures and campaigned for it. And it did pass, and it did open eyes all over the place to the importance of growth management concerns, at least to the voting public.

Diane: What role did the League of Women Voters play in the passage of the GMA?

Lucy: We had a representative on the Growth Strategies Commission. And midway through the development of GMA, after the defeat of the environmental Initiative 547 in 1990, we worked very hard to ensure that the state Legislature would finish the job because House Bill 2929 was incomplete. It was very good, what the Legislature had already done, but they hadn't finished the job on really key issues like enforcement and regional coordination in planning and siting—how to deal with siting problems.

So the League, in lieu of supporting the growth management initiative, wrote a letter to the heads of both caucuses and to the Governor, and said that many members of the League wanted to support the initiative, but we were not going to do it if we got assurances from the leadership in Olympia that, in fact, they would finish the GMA the following year. If we didn't get those assurances, we would need to support the initiative. A letter subsequently came out from all of the leadership [laughs] saying, "Yes, we will, we will finish the job," and so League did not support the initiative and in fact the Legislature did finish the job. That letter became very instrumental the next year when Senator [Bob] McCaslin, from Spokane, chair of the Senate State Government Committee, I believe, did not want to give the House bill a hearing. The important 1991 amendments to growth management would have simply died had not the majority leader, Jeannette Hayner, (signatory to the letter I mentioned) been a woman of some integrity and true to her word. And she said, "Okay, we will do what I said we were going to do and you, Senator McCaslin, will either hold the hearings or we're going to put it in another committee." So he held the hearings, the thing moved along, and we had the second year with the key final pieces in place.

Diane: When the League of Women Voters came to the table, what did you hope to achieve?

Lucy: Well, we certainly hoped to achieve getting a reasonable enforcement mechanism. And we certainly hoped to achieve a solution to the real lack of coordinated regional planning, which many of us in our local Leagues and county Leagues around the state had observed and been concerned about. And we hoped that a reasonable piece of legislation could come out which could help communities accommodate future growth in much more rational ways than we'd been doing in the past—sort of to get a handle on runaway, uncoordinated,

and inappropriately managed growth and the resulting sprawl and congestion we were all experiencing.

Diane: Did the League of Women Voters have membership in Eastern Washington as well?

Lucy: Yes. It has chapters all over the state, and they were all interested in this issue.

Diane: And you were on the Growth Strategies Commission.

Lucy: I was.

Diane: Can you tell us about the creation of the Growth Strategies Commission (GSC), and why it was significant in the creation of the GMA?

Lucy: Well, yes. Interestingly it started out as a commission to the Legislature, a product of the 1989 session. The Governor vetoed that and made it a commission to the Governor and provided the money to make it happen. It was significant because even though the Legislature in 1990 got out ahead of some of the work of the commission and enacted House Bill 2929, the fact that this group was working on this issue, was talking to people all over the state about it, was keeping the visibility very high, and was coming up with a series of strategies—was certainly helping to keep the political heat on the Legislature to do something.

I also think the GSC was instrumental in that it raised expectations—that in fact, a truly statewide product was going to come out that would reflect the concerns of people around the state. That was because of how the commission worked—we went all over the state and listened very carefully to community concerns. So expectations became pretty high that what came out of Washington’s GMA would in fact reflect what was heard by the commission, and would reflect the concerns of communities and interests from around the state.

Diane: What were the challenges and highlights of participating in the Growth Strategies Commission?

Lucy: Well, one of the challenges was—candidly—the makeup of the commission. With a couple of exceptions, it was pretty much very high-level heads of companies and large business people and important politicians and CEOs and people like that. And then there was Rod Brown, representing the environmental community, and a young lawyer named Sam Kinzer, who was from Snohomish County. I don’t know who he was representing, but he was knowledgeable on these issues. The three of us sometimes felt like we had to carry the whole burden of representing everyone but the business community and the power structure—which was challenging and fun.

Another challenge was to keep the group focused on the general public benefit instead of a narrower vision of what would help particular clients or what a special constituency or interest would like, what one’s business would find most beneficial. I have to give a lot of credit to Mary McCumber who really helped those of us that were concerned about this, worked with everybody else to make sure that the big picture was always at the forefront of what we were looking at.

Diane: What were the highlights for you as a representative of the League of Women Voters?

Lucy: Well, coming from the League of Women Voters, we had always cared about public participation. So one of the highlights of being on the Growth Strategies Commission was the emphasis that was put, despite some resistance from some of the members initially, on hearing from people all around the state. There was a lot of public participation, a lot of public hearings. We went many places, to many communities, and that was just the kind of thing that League likes to do; really believes in. This, after all, was going to affect everybody and, if you had a really very narrow base of input, it wasn’t going to work as well as hearing from a lot of people. So I think the League was particularly pleased about that aspect of it.

Diane: Tell us a little more about public participation. How did you organize the public and what issues they

were most interested in?

Lucy: Well, Mary McCumber worked with the Growth Strategies Commission and others to identify the various constituencies within any particular community who would actually care about these things. The public comment sessions were well advertised before we came to town. This was another thing that was a little bit of an effort to get in place, but was worth it. We always had a session for average people from the public to come and speak about what concerned them before we starting hearing from the wheat growers and the this and the that, and the realtors and so on. And that was very helpful in that it kind of gave us a heads up on what our education challenges were—what was understood and not understood, what people cared about, how they might want to be involved in the implementation—just gave us a lot of insight into both how the act should be shaped and how public participation should be structured later.

Diane: What were the most important issues the Growth Strategies Commission was addressing?

Lucy: Well, I think one of them was trying to overcome many decades of land use and development patterns—now called sprawl—sort of non-intensive, non-compact, non-transit friendly, totally auto dependent, land-inefficient development.

We were also concerned about how, in the course of managing growth, that some of our key economic drivers could be protected. That is to say agriculture and timber— primarily—as the land was being gobbled up for other uses.

We were concerned about trying to make regional and county and city planning more integrated and cooperative than it had been. There had been a long history of just rank competition for tax dollars and inconsistent land use and other things—and that seemed like a very important thing to address and try to resolve with the Growth Management Act.

We were concerned about the whole issue of how you try to make sure that when you accommodate growth, that it's done where it should be accommodated rationally. You also make sure that it is, in fact, served by infrastructure and think through how the funding could be procured for that. We were concerned about how people could be trained to sort of think ahead, long range, and try to factor that into their planning, which hadn't much been done before then.

We were concerned about siting unpopular, but necessary, public facilities. How that could be done, because it historically had entailed enormous warfare and years and years of delay and lawsuits and cost, which just made situations worse.

We were concerned about the problem of vesting, which simply is the legal right of people to develop according to what the law says at a certain point in time. This is because we were in the process of changing that law. We worried that any improvements might be undercut by the magnitude of the number of vested properties, and what to do about that. We struggled with that, and there was a task force that really dug into it and developed a compromise proposal that went into our final report.

We were concerned about housing affordability. We recognized that when the land base was minimized or limited, the cost of land was going to go up. So it was going to be challenging to develop sufficient housing and have enough supply to keep the demand met, and therefore the cost down.

We were concerned about how, in the face of a lot of growth that was going to happen, the GMA could ensure that the environment was sufficiently protected because it was pretty hard to do. Conventional wisdom held that major growth and environmental protection could not be achieved simultaneously. There was

this constant conflict and we felt like it really didn't need to be that way, if you did good planning and were thoughtful about it. Those were most of the issues—and, of course, public participation. We knew that we were asking a lot of the public and local government officials to make all kinds of tough decisions that required changes in lifestyle. And unless you had the public feeling pretty good about it and that they'd been listened to and that they had buy in, it was going to be incredibly difficult.

And we were concerned about enforcement. How do you make sure that what's done is done appropriately and properly?

Diane: And when the Growth Strategies Commission finished their report and handed it to the Governor, how was it used in creating the second part of the Growth Management Act?

Lucy: Well, our ideas for regional coordination and the county-wide planning policies were used pretty well. On enforcement, rather than the hearings boards, we had recommended that the Governor have the power to enforce the act, and could refer disputes to arbitration, but we were a little bit tentative on that because there were several models that we thought could work. And, in fact, there was a lot of discussion about the merits of arbitration versus a hearings board model, versus sending disputes straight to court.

I remember the Washington State Bar Association (Lane Use Section) got called in, and they and a lot of other people struggled with this issue for a while and, I think, what they came up with ultimately, the three regional hearings boards, the commission was generally happy with this, and it has worked pretty well. The siting stuff was hard, and the essential public facility notion was important in order to get some kind of judicial authority and clout behind the ability of local governments to site. It wouldn't just be directly challenged and overridden constantly, which had been happening pre-GMA.

Once we made our report, Governor Gardner didn't automatically embrace it in its entirety and rush it to the Legislature for the next year. He mulled it over and gave a lot of thought to other options, and there was a period of time where nobody knew quite where he was going to come down on things and quite what the Governor's request for legislation was going to look like. It was right at that point that the growth management initiative (I-547) sponsored by the environmental community failed at the polls quite seriously. At that point—I'm probably jumping ahead to another question...

Diane: No, that's fine.

Lucy: And this is to me, one of the really significant things. At that point a lot of the people that didn't particularly like growth management down in Olympia, especially Eastern Washington legislators, said... "See the public doesn't like growth management, we don't need to go forward." [laughs] Running the growth management initiative was kind of a high-risk strategy because if I-547 failed, it ran the risk of jeopardizing further momentum to finish GMA legislatively in 1991.

So that was quite a problem and the environmental community came to the League of Women Voters after I-547's defeat and said, "We want to participate in helping to influence the next steps, but our name is mud down there right now. Can you facilitate a stakeholders group, broad-based, and let us sit at the table and participate? People can come together and work to get some kind of consensus and take it down to Olympia to help the Governor and the Legislature get some direction for steps needed to finish GMA."

So, League, ever happy to do this kind of thing, complied with this request. As growth management chair, it [laughter] fell to me to convene these weekly meetings of large groups of people all through the winter and into the early part of the session. We were working on issues and sending—where we could

reach agreement—consensus ideas and direction down to Olympia. We testified at quite a few hearings and participated in quite a few legislative work sessions. And that was challenging and interesting.

We didn't succeed in getting the Legislature to adopt a Community Character Element, which really means the process of the community getting together and talking about and agreeing on what it wanted to be when it grew up and what it wanted to preserve—what it cared about, what it wanted to preserve in the face of future growth. And I think we all recognized it would really help the politics of managing growth in a community—if you had that kind of foundation. So we tried to do that and the Legislature thought it was kind of fluff and were very nervous about notions of any kind of design guidance or controls or anything of that nature—so they got skittish and didn't go along with that suggestion.

We differed with the Governor on the issue of fully planned communities and actually succeeded in getting the Legislature to put this tool into the GMA. The Governor had not wanted it—and the Growth Strategies Commission had recommended it as a useful tool for managing growth in certain circumstances, but the Governor vetoed that and set that aside, he didn't like the idea—but we did and so we sent that down. Our proposal had a lot of protections in it that we felt would be essential if you were going to do fully contained communities outside the existing urban growth boundaries. You would put something out, but if you could have protections in place that would prevent added sprawl from occurring, that could be very useful.

Unfortunately, when we reached agreement on that and shipped it off to Olympia, it became an opportunity for folks that wanted that tool, but didn't want the protections, to work very hard to persuade the Legislature to adopt the fully planned communities, but to weaken some of the protections that we had envisioned. That, regrettably, is what happened.

It wasn't quite how we had hoped it would be, but it was something that got added to the GMA by the Legislature despite the fact that the Governor had not wanted it there. We did other things like that, including trying to tighten Washington's vesting law, in which we did not succeed. But our process in general was useful both in terms of helping the Legislature make decisions, and also in terms of getting people to listen to each other and work together when they had pretty different perspectives.

Diane: What was the original intent of the GMA and why do you think the GMA became law?

Lucy: I think the intent of it was to try to get Washington out of a reactive mode. Up to then, we had been sitting there wringing our hands as things were happening to us that we didn't like, and we weren't doing anything really proactive about it. The intent was, through good planning and other tools, to get ahead of that so we could shape what's happening instead of just being shaped by it and being victimized by it.

The Washington economy at the time and for decades before that was so dependent on Boeing that whenever Boeing had one of its ten-year busts, the whole economy busted. And we just went up and down, and up and down, and up and down. The housing market could never get in synch with what was happening to jobs—it was always behind and would overbuild, just never quite got in synch with that.

Additionally, transportation was just a terrible mess, and we had not been properly funding transportation for a long time. And people were suddenly seeing awful congestion and hoping that the Growth Management Act could save them from that.

Diane: What in the political climate led to the passage of the GMA?

Lucy: Two things I can think of, other than congestion and the visible changes that we were all suffering through. One of them was the passage of the CAP Initiative in Seattle, which was very startling to a lot of

public officials who'd sort of laughed it off as sort of a wacko thing until it passed quite handily. It was a real signal that people were concerned about unmanaged growth.

And the other thing was the defeat—for the first time ever, I think—of an elected official on this issue. That was when Bill Reams, a county council member in King County, who was defeated by Brian Derdowski who was considered to be a growth management advocate.

Diane: And what models were used in drafting the Washington GMA?

Lucy: Well, we looked at Oregon, we looked at Georgia's legislation, we looked at Florida's, we looked at Vermont's. And looked at what worked and what didn't work, and tried to select from what would make sense in our state and stay away from the parts that didn't work. There was a general consensus, not only on the part of the commission, but on the part of the Legislature and local elected officials and a lot of other citizens too, that a model featuring top-down, state standards and a state role of certifying plans was not politically appropriate for our state. And that's why we have such an emphasis on bottom-up and local decision-making. The Oregon model was intentionally looked at carefully, but that piece of it was pretty much set aside as not workable in the state, politically.

Diane: Let me ask you a Steel Magnolias question. Getting all those committee chairs together in the House is unusual, so why did Joe King do that and how did they make it work?

Lucy: Well, I think he did it because he rightly perceived that these women were really influential and that growth management, if it were going to work right, was a question of dealing with a whole lot of different issues. It wasn't just land use and it wasn't just government operations, but it was also natural resources and parks and open space and transportation and housing and a whole bunch of stuff.

By the way, Dick Nelson was the Housing (Committee) chair in 1991, the year after Busse Nutley, and he was not a Steel Magnolia [laughs]. But anyway, he also played a role. I think there was a sense that it was smart politics to bring together a number of capable legislative leaders with a variety of expertise. It was also an accurate representation of the GMA's attempt to integrate a lot of different issues. I'm trying to remember who all of the Steel Magnolias were...

Diane: Busse Nutley, Mary Margaret Haugen, Maria Cantwell, Jennifer Belcher, Nancy Rust, and Ruth Fisher.

Lucy: No, I guess there were no Eastern Washington Magnolias, but nonetheless they were from up and down the I-5 corridor and they represented quite different constituencies. That was a really smart way to broaden the support.

Side 1, Tape 2

Diane: What was the opposition to the GMA and why did those groups oppose it?

Lucy: Well, I remember—this was the first time I ever heard the term “social engineering,” and I heard it from a broad spectrum of people. UW (University of Washington) professors and transportation advocates and a lot of people that were very uneasy about containing urban development within a boundary. And they were, I guess you'd say, free marketers, so philosophically a lot of people were concerned about that.

A lot of other people were concerned about the state in any way telling local government what to do and felt that was a step toward socialistic control or big brother or whatever. There were a lot of terms like that floated around. Chelan County is a great example of that because their county commission in the beginning got advice, and, I guess, believed that it was unconstitutional for the state to require local government to do growth management planning. They fought it on that basis and started getting some pretty bad results from their

recalcitrance.

There were a lot of people, especially in Eastern Washington, who were skeptical of the notion of planning. It felt like city and county bureaucrats somehow having the power to determine what they personally could do and not do—that didn't feel very good. And then there were the constituencies who thought they might lose economically.

I remember the realtors were not happy at the time the Growth Management Act was passed and for a couple of years after that, they sang this funny tune of, "It's failed, it's failed, we're still having sprawl, it hasn't worked so we have to move the urban growth boundary." They were saying this as early as 1992 and 1993 and, of course, the comprehensive plans weren't due until 1994 and 1995. It took the county a couple years to do the county-wide planning policies, and, I think, a lot of people didn't understand that turning the Titanic was going to take a while. You needed to get all the tools in place, get them tested, get them working before you could actually expect to see even the beginnings of results.

So I remember the realtors in the beginning were very opposed—they have since come round and been quite good advocates. They have had interesting concerns about whether or not the land within urban growth boundaries really is sufficient to accommodate the growth. So we now have the buildable lands legislation, and they have been responsible for some things that have been surface reality checks, which actually have been useful; maybe expensive and maybe cumbersome, but kind of useful to make sure GMA really did what it said it was going to do.

The state building industry group—BIAW (Building Industry Association of Washington)—and some others, and a lot of the timber companies and mining companies were very upset with the GMA thinking that it was costing them a lot of bottom-line. So they funded signature gathering and were responsible for getting the property rights initiative (I-164) before the 1995 legislative session. It was an initiative to the Legislature that the Legislature unfortunately enacted into law, instead of passing on to the voters. And that's another big thing the League did. We took the leadership in putting together a campaign to defeat it I-164 (which became R-48). That initiative was really a mark of frustration against the Growth Management Act and what it was doing. I think their issues had to do with not being able to use timberland for development. Not being able to quickly and easily and cheaply just make that change. Certainly the BIAW's concerns had a lot to do with regulation in general, but growth management unfortunately became the scapegoat for a lot of stuff that wasn't really growth management—the Endangered Species Act and things like that.

I remember Boeing being very upset with growth management because in 1989 the City of Everett had hit them with a very large mitigation fee when they wanted to expand their plant up there. Of course, that was before the Growth Management Act was passed, but GMA got blamed for that, and I think it just took a lot of hits it didn't deserve.

Diane: How was the opposition accommodated? What compromises were made for them?

Lucy: Well, one of the accommodations in the GMA was certainly not having a top-down, Oregon-style model. That was the big one because that would have been extremely upsetting to the opposition. I think enacting the buildable lands legislation was an accommodation—this legislation requires the six largest counties to have to more explicitly show how they're going to accommodate future growth within the urban growth boundaries—whether they can and if they bottom-line can't do it, then they have to make some changes—not necessarily to the boundary, but to the zoning of the areas.

There were several statewide commissions in the 1990s that came about because of the level of opposition, and one was the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform put together by Governor Lowry in, I believe, 1994 and chaired by Karen Lane. That commission was trying to make regulation more user friendly because, again under the umbrella of growth management, there was a lot of stuff that was upsetting people.

Another one was the Land Use Study Commission which was refining a lot of the problem areas of the Growth Management Act, primarily as I recall, a certain mushiness in the language about rural areas, what it meant to be rural, and these lands would be protected, and the allowed and prohibited land uses in rural areas. GMA hadn't been as clear as it could have been and, according to a lot of the people in the rural areas, didn't take into account some of the realities of their day-to-day living. So that was a big part of what the Land Use Study Commission looked at. The commission did come up with some big improvements to the act.

And then there was another commission looking at SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) and the GMA in a more coordinated way. Because with SEPA, most jurisdictions didn't know how to do EISs having to deal with growth management planning, and the EISs were not something that governments were very good at and the process wasn't working very well. So the EISs about comprehensive plans weren't done very well. And a lot of people felt it would be better if you could tightly coordinate these in a way so when you did your planning, you really had a better understanding of what the environmental impacts were likely to be.

Out of that developed a lot of interest in subarea planning. Under a concept called planned actions, jurisdictions could do a sort of broad subarea or regional level EIS that would assume a certain level of development and impacts. Then when specific developments came along, they could rely on that EIS for most of the environmental analysis that had to be done, and only if they were unique or outside the umbrella would they have to do significant additional analysis. This was a great idea and, at least once, was used successfully in South Snohomish County, but it was pretty costly.

There was a lot of interest in figuring out, How can we afford good planning such as planned actions and subarea planning? Is there some new and unique way we could find the money to let good planning happen early so it doesn't have to happen in a kind of piecemeal fashion later? CTED convened a task force (which I served on), which was pretty fun. We examined lots of ideas and concepts and scenarios. The upshot was there's no good way to find adequate resources upfront for top-quality planning. Public development authorities and private/public partnerships were a couple of ideas we looked at, but you can't really turn public planning over to the private sector in terms of making them responsible for it. We struggled a lot looking for silver bullets, but we didn't really come up with a good solution.

Diane: What did you think of the 1991 amendments to the GMA that included creating the growth management hearings boards?

Lucy: I thought they all made sense. I know how they got there, and it was not frivolous. They'd been in intensive debate and study and analysis and struggle. With the hearings boards, the sense kind of was, "Let's wait and see how it works—the jury's out." In the first couple years there was some dismay. I think the hearings boards were just feeling their way and weren't really sure of what they were doing. There were some opinions that were written that appeared to some to be too flowery or too dictatorial or too this or too that. It was only over time that people began to say, "Oh, we're getting a body of case law here; Oh, we're beginning to know what we can expect, this is helpful." And I think that they have grown really very well in stature to fill their role, and they've become increasingly professional and procedurally careful and have, by and large, been

doing an extremely good job at this point.

Diane: And what did you think about three boards for Washington State instead of one?

Lucy: Oh, that was a good idea. Having traveled around the state with the Growth Strategies Commission, I understood the need for regional sensitivities. Because I saw first hand how incredibly different philosophically and politically and issues-wise these areas were. And I think that the boards being different boards, but coming together to coordinate quite frequently and working on rules together, and so on, has really been a good blend of the region-specific and the statewide interest. It's worked pretty well.

Diane: What is your most interesting memory of the dynamics of the events leading to the enactment of the GMA?

Lucy: [laughs] I think it's probably the story of the League letter. I remember hatching that in the kitchen of Ruth Kagi. She was on the League board with me and we both felt, with the majority of our board, that the environmental initiative (I-547) was not the way to go. And I know a lot of the story about how we got that initiative because I was sitting around the table during that whole process at Saturday morning meetings down in Federal Way for months chaired by Dave Bricklin. At first there was this huge group of people, like 40-odd, very concerned people—"We need to get growth management, we need to make this happen."

Then the Legislature moved ahead and passed SHB 2929. And there was some dismay among some people in the environmental community because it didn't have enforcement and some other pieces in it but, by and large, I would say, that a lot of the people were not unhappy with that—the steps taken the first year by the Legislature. In fact, there was surprise that the Legislature had gone as far as it had. Most folks who had been attending our weekly sessions had serious reluctance about running an initiative in the middle of a surprisingly positive legislative performance. But there was a hardcore group that really wanted something much, much stronger and preferred an Oregon-like model of state standards and Oregon's kind of top-down, larger role for the state. This group was quite critical of SHB 2929 and did not believe the Legislature would ever enact any strengthening amendments.

So there was a decree issued to the larger group that you could no longer participate as a voting member unless you brought \$500 to the table. Most of us from small shoestring organizations or larger shoestring organizations couldn't justify that money, and so what that really meant was that everyone was weeded out except the people that were intensely zealous on the issue. And, even then, when the chair called the vote about whether or not to do the initiative, to go ahead with the initiative, many old hands were very cautious and uncomfortable with it, and the first vote turned down the notion of running the initiative by a fairly close vote.

So the chair went home and made some phone calls and then they had a meeting the next week with a slightly different cast of characters, and another vote—and even then the initiative barely squeaked by; it was a very close vote. So it was like six to four or something like that, I don't remember the exact numbers, but that's how we got a state Initiative 547.

This decision process did not represent a huge upwelling of broad-based environmental endorsement for I-547, and there was a lot of concern about the political jeopardy it would put the community (and the issue) in if the initiative failed. There was a lot of concern that the Legislature had done remarkable things with SHB 2929, and they should be applauded for it instead of slapped in the face because I-547 was going to roll back everything already done and start all over with this new system.

So it was a close vote and the thing went out on the road, and it started out with a really high rating in

the polls because a lot of people wanted growth managed. But the cleverest way of defeating it that I remember was the opposition put together a brochure and it simply had a snapshot of pieces of the initiative and circled them, and pointed an arrow to them and said, “Is this really what you want?” And by the time it got around to the vote it went down quite badly [laughs]. I can’t remember—three to one or something like that. It’s too bad because the initiative, and its defeat, had the effect of slowing down the process of bringing people together in support of the successor bills to HB 2929 which finally were enacted in 1991.

Diane: Was that \$500 fee meant as a weeding out process?

Lucy: I suspect it was, I don’t know. It meant, probably, that they wanted people that were serious and maybe had some real representation behind them and not just anybody who was interested in growth management, which was really what we had around the table before that [laughs]. I hope I’m right about that number: It might have been \$250 or something, but it seemed too large a number for most people there.

Diane: What was your role as a founding board member in 1000 Friends of Washington, now named Futurewise?

Lucy: Well, I almost immediately became the president [laughter] because Mary McCumber, after just a couple of months, took a job with PSRC, Puget Sound Regional Council, and felt her new job would have presented a conflict of interest with leadership of 1000 Friends, so I became president. I was president for three and a half years, almost four—I started in fall of 1991. I gave it up at the beginning of 1995, but it felt like forever. Our challenge was starting with nothing and getting a viable organization. We had to hire our first executive director and get a donated office. It seemed like we were growing by leaps and bounds, but, of course, we were starting with such a small base [laughs]. In those days, because we were not known at all and we were coming from nowhere, nobody had ever heard of us, and we were really careful about the use of our name.

All of a sudden advocacy groups around the state that wanted to be 1000 Friends of Snohomish County and 1000 Friends of this and 1000 Friends of that—and we said, “No. Let us get time to get our feet on the ground. Let us get time to develop standards for these kinds of groups and come back to us later.” We were not ready for that, and we didn’t want the public to have an impression that we were something we were not. We wanted time to get known on our own terms.

I think, in the beginning, 1000 Friends was seen more than it is now as a dual purpose organization—both a means of defending the GMA, but also as an educational organization because so many people didn’t have any idea what the GMA was. And also as a table to which people of various persuasions could come and work out their problems. And over time, as time went on, with the comprehensive plans and critical areas ordinances and stuff—I stepped down and this happened later—there was increasing concern about needing to defend it against some pretty bad planning and bad actors. We had always had that concern, but we had seen the need for other things as well.

And we’d had a few cases that we got involved in which were taken to the hearings board right away, and we had to use pro bono attorneys because we had no money and, in fact, our first executive director was an attorney and she—in addition to trying to make the start-up organization work—was actually doing the legal work on some of these appeals. So it was kind of a struggle, but I think we understood that development had to happen. This wasn’t a question of stopping it, but you had to stop it where it couldn’t go, and you also had to encourage it where it should go. And that proved to be the much larger challenge, in my opinion, over time.

Diane: How did 1000 Friends first get started and what did you hope to achieve?

Lucy: I think Mary McCumber pulled us together, but it was kind of an outgrowth of that League stakeholders group. A lot of the same people were in it, and we were already sort of working together on growth management issues and forwarding them to Olympia. So it was related to that. It also got started because legislators were concerned that they'd done this bold thing, and it could so easily be decimated [laughs] politically, and that they needed help. Mary really was very instrumental in pulling it together and getting it started, and she did a really good job. I wish she'd stayed president a lot longer [laughs].

Diane: Tell us about how 1000 Friends first served as the GMA watchdog.

Lucy: Yeah, okay. In the beginning we commented on anything that happened in Olympia. CTED was trying to write guidelines so we were asked to give input on that and met with the guys that did it. And we had some criticisms and some ideas, and we also tried to find people in communities that could be our eyes and ears around the state and let us know when things looked like they were going sideways. I remember immediately we got into an issue in Port Townsend where the county and city were at odds, and the city was trying to follow the spirit of the GMA and the county was trying to, as far as we could see, evade it. We had a big issue with Chelan County that was simply defying the whole thing, but we always tried to work with local citizens and with local officials when possible.

Diane: What is Futurewise's role today?

Lucy: Well, I think they've really gotten a good system for working with citizens to make sure that the act is properly implemented in communities. They have a lot of outreach staff, and they have a lot of attorneys, and they're very strong on that; I think that's very helpful. They recently announced—and I was delighted and a little surprised to hear this—that they're going to start a big public education process on the importance of livability in cities and trying to attract appropriate development to cities because that is the other piece of it.

They've been, I think, much better at stopping inappropriate growth outside the urban growth boundaries, but it's really important to focus on how you make development attractive in cities, and they're starting to pay attention to that. They have been, I think, pretty strong on making it clear to local elected officials that they have to do certain things, including minimum density rules that the growth management hearings board has promulgated. They've been very good at using the hammer, and I think now they're learning to do the carrot as well. So that's very good.

Tape 2, Side 1

Diane: In terms of how the GMA is structured, what do you think are the most important parts of the law?

Lucy: Well, I think the county-wide planning policy is a very important idea, which really has done a lot to ensure better coordination that they simply didn't used to have. And it helps people think ahead together and have a larger regional vision. I think requiring comp plans has been very helpful and requiring public participation in them, because that's really helped the public develop a vision of where they want to go, and then buy in to how it's going to be implemented, up to a point.

I think the focus on concurrency was very good. But the implementation of it was really hard and what nobody envisioned—in 1990 Tim Eyman and the kind of antigovernment-antitax-we-don't-trust-you-to-do-anything-with-our-money-about-infrastructure-sort-of-mood that people had gotten into. Not that we were ever that good about doing infrastructure, but in the old days it just wasn't a priority and now it's almost an impossibility. So I think that's proved pretty tough, especially with transportation.

I think another important part has been the buildable lands, which has helped large and fast-growing

areas focus on on-the-ground realities versus the planning rhetoric. Do they, in fact, have the parcels available for development within the urban areas? Certainly the natural resource lands designations have been useful. Some people don't think they're working as well as they should, although those that own natural resource lands think they're working too well [laughs] or are too restrictive.

I think the rural area treatment in GMA, especially after the Land Use Study Commission made it more realistic and fine-tuned, has been really helpful. It probably could use more work, but I'm not sure through growth management—it's more a question of representation and rural people feeling the county decision makers aren't very responsive to them.

The critical areas ordinance adopted in King County is an example of that. I have to say that I don't think the critical areas ordinance requirement was originally well-structured. And I don't think the implementation worked as well as it could have, especially in the beginning. People have gotten better at it, and there's more help available now and they're getting better, but in the beginning there were some that weren't very good.

Diane: How has the GMA evolved, and how has it changed land use patterns in this state?

Lucy: Well, it's evolved from a product of some political guesswork to more tested techniques and requirements and concepts. I would like to mention one issue that I think has led to some visible results and that is the urban growth boundaries. Those were a tool which, I think, we actually had one in King County's comprehensive plan in the mid-1980s. But, in general, they were tools that nobody'd ever heard of and a lot of people were really upset about and there was tremendous bloody battles about where those boundaries were going to be drawn. But once they were drawn and once the realtors sort of gave up on the fact that they could get them moved by declaring GMA a failure—once that happened, I think, people came to accept them and learned to work around them, and they did make a difference. It's not a clean a line as you see in Oregon, but it really did restrain the amount of rural growth—notably in King County, but I think other places too. The places where it worked best was where they had the tightest—well, maybe not the tightest, but the most rationally-drawn boundaries and some counties just, to be safe, drew really big boundaries. And that didn't have as clear and helpful result as places where they were more rationally drawn.

Diane: Can you give us some examples of the local success stories?

Lucy: Oh, yeah. I should say that the League of Women Voters did a growth management awards event in 1997. We had an awards breakfast, we had a broad-based, statewide selection team, we had a big nominations process, we had more than 90 applicants. We gave all these awards and there's a ton of success stories. Spokane, both city and county, did some really good public participation things on growth management. There's some wonderful examples of innovative projects that make inner city—in-city living and urban—living much more attractive, and they have been now used as examples for a lot of other communities; and I think of things like Malden Place in Seattle just north of Group Health. It's a really great, multifamily development that looks like a couple of neat old houses, but is, in fact, ten units with a lot of security and privacy and right on the bus line. It's a terrific example of GMA friendly development. There's a bunch of that stuff that GMA really encouraged to happen which, without the notion of urban growth boundaries and trying to have more and better development in cities, might never have happened.

I think, as I mentioned before, the subarea planning up in South Snohomish County, southeast of Everett, was really a wonderful cooperative process with Boeing and their EDC (Economic Development Council) and

community, neighbors, and the city and a lot of folks working together. And they came up with a very good plan which has served the way it's supposed to, meaning that individual developments can rely on it and have to do very little in the way of environmental and other kinds of planning.

I think that the PERF (Planning and Environmental Review Fund) grants that CTED gave to various jurisdictions really helped a lot of communities do a much better job than they might have done. And the technical help, which was offered in the beginning broadly around the state, actually caused a lot of communities and jurisdictions to opt in to the GMA. They weren't required to be in because they were too small and not growing fast enough and didn't meet the threshold. That really got folks to a place where they had pretty good plans, saw the advantages to planning, and what it did for their communities. They didn't always have the money or the future growth prospects to justify continuing to put a lot of money into it from their own jurisdiction—and the state money dried up a little bit. But at least it got them into the system and some of them did a really good job in unexpected places.

Another great success story to me is the new awareness of the importance of getting a town center or keeping an inner city vibrant, and making that a magnet for other development as well as for residential and other uses. Now a lot of the jurisdictions—certainly the ones I know of in King County like Burien, of all places, and Renton and even Federal Way—are really trying to do this and they know it's for a good reason and they like the idea of good planning. GMA just opened their eyes to things like this; wouldn't have happened otherwise.

So it's very exciting actually and I think there is a broad, broad awareness across many, many communities. While maybe a lot of citizens don't understand the details of GMA, they like the idea of good planning and see that it really brings advantage to their communities.

Diane: If another state wanted to adopt a growth management law, what advice would you give them?

Lucy: [laughs] I'd advise them to do what we did in terms of a lot of outreach all around their state, understanding that the politics and the needs and the requirements and sentiments are very different in different parts of the state. And to really listen to all that when they put together their growth management act.

I'd advise them to have an enforcement mechanism that is strong enough to do the job, but doesn't give the appearance of heavy hammer.

I'd advise them to remember that their growth management act is a product of a political moment in time, and it needs to work for the benefit of those people or it's either going to be watered down or rescinded. You can't just say, "Ah, there, we've done that," because if it doesn't continue to do what it's supposed to be doing and meet the needs of those people, it will be under threat as it should be. So don't rely too much on the fact that you can always take everything—growth management disputes—to court because you've still got the political arena to worry about, and broad discontent breeds political rollback.

And I'd also advise them to do what our Growth Management Act does, which is start with something like a critical areas ordinance where they identify and protect areas that really should not receive development. And be clear how they're going to do that and then go forward aggressively to accommodate development where it's intended to and try to make sure that that works well. And be careful about your enforcement mechanism, that's really important. And of course, start a 1000 Friends group [laughter].

Diane: Do you have any additional comments?

Lucy: Only that for me—I've had frustration in the last few years because I've also been involved in groups

having to do with housing—I have worried that if housing supply doesn't come close to meeting demand in urban areas, we're going to force sprawl, even if we don't want to.

So one of the real keys to making growth management work is to make housing acceptable in urban neighborhoods—additional housing and probably more compact than existing styles. And one of the most useful things environmental groups and environmentally inclined people can do is work on that issue. Work on making cities vibrant and attractive and helping communities not to feel defensive because the result of not getting housing in cities is what we all work so hard to avoid.

Diane: Great. Thank you.