

# Creating Livable Communities

## Managing Washington's Growth for 15 Years



June 2006



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When rapid growth began to change the quality of life in Washington State in the late 1980s, leaders from both political parties, the business and environmental communities, and local governments debated long and hard about what action was needed.

The Growth Management Act took shape over two legislative sessions and the passage of two bills, in 1990 and 1991. A dedicated Democratic Speaker of the House and Republican Senate Majority Leader made public promises and set a tone of leadership and collaboration. Six diverse committee chairs worked in concert on issues spanning the environment, local governance, transportation, housing, and economic development. More than a dozen interest groups and a 20-member Growth Strategies Commission collaborated. Planning directors who daily faced the demands of growth in their communities also contributed their ideas.

Washington's leaders didn't select the top-down growth management style they'd studied in other states. They crafted a system more suited to our state's long tradition – one of local determination by local governments in meeting their community needs.

The act doesn't attempt to stop or slow growth. Its purpose is to ensure that the impacts of growth are measured and that communities lay the groundwork for that growth.

Washington's growth management law is unique. Counties and cities:

- Decide how to reach goals set by the state.
- Work together to coordinate plans.
- Identify and protect the most sensitive lands.

In 2002 the American Planning Association recognized Washington for developing and carrying out one of the six best planning laws in the nation.

At the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Growth Management Act, we can say that growth management plans are living, working documents that help cities and counties plan for and deliver livable communities.

This report offers a glimpse of how our state's leaders crafted the Growth Management Act, how comprehensive planning helps local communities reach their goals, and the challenges that remain.

I look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming years to improve the quality of life in our communities. Thank you for your inspiring work.

Sincerely,

Juli Wilkerson  
Director

## Creating Livable Communities: Managing Washington's Growth for 15 Years

1987	1989	1989	1990	1990	1990	1991	1992	1992
Speaker of the House stuck in traffic; seeds of GMA planted	Steel Magnolias coordinate; planning directors write strategy	Creation of Growth Strategies Commission	Legislature passes SHB 2929	Commission issues report	CTED adopts guidelines for resource lands and critical areas	Legislature passes ReESHB 1025	Most communities adopt interim critical areas ordinances	Carnation adopts first GMA comprehensive plan

# Introduction

To mark the 15th Anniversary of the Growth Management Act (GMA), the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) interviewed 20 people who envisioned, inspired, and influenced the creation of the act. They provided the inside story of how this important legislation was conceived, fought over, and ultimately passed into law.

By the late 1980s Washington State's quality of life was threatened by traffic congestion, the loss of open space and farmland, and the rapid spread of suburbs. Washington residents and their public officials were concerned and took action to rein in sprawl and maintain the unique character of the state that citizens cherish.

After fiery debate in 1990 the Washington State Legislature passed and Governor Booth Gardner signed the Growth Management Act. It offers ways for citizens and elected officials to create livable communities that work.

In 1991 legislative leaders debated growth management again and passed amendments on how the Growth Management Act would be carried out.

Under growth management planning, citizens are finding attractive, urban places with amenities to live in, which helps to cut back on sprawl. They can enjoy new suburban town centers in cities such as Redmond and Mill Creek where they can walk from their home to nearby stores and movie theaters. In Renton, Bellevue, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Port Townsend, and Wenatchee, they can stroll through thriving downtowns and maybe even shop at a Farmers' Market. And they can walk along trails beside the river, play in new regional parks, and go on wetland



**Governor Booth Gardner signs the Growth Management Act in 1990.**

PHOTO / WASH. STATE ARCHIVES/HOR CHIEF CLERK

tours. Growth patterns in the state are changing and that's improving communities for Washington's citizens.

For example, the City of Kirkland had to decide under the Growth Management Act how to accommodate growth. "Attention was directed to creating compact, mixed-use urban activity centers with extensive pedestrian and transit-oriented amenities," said Mayor Mary-Alyce Burleigh, councilmember and former mayor. "The GMA gave us the opportunity to consciously shape our community to create

1992	1993	1994	1995	2000	2004	2005	2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Governor appoints first growth management hearings boards members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Governor appoints Task Force on Regulatory Reform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 45 communities adopt initial comprehensive plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Governor appoints Land Use Study Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 10th Anniversary of GMA. 234 initial comprehensive plans adopted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 25 communities adopt growth management updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· GMA 15th Anniversary. 246 (of 247) initial plans adopted. 60 updates adopted. Governor launches Land Use Agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Governor's reception and awards program</li> </ul>

an attractive, vibrant, and inviting place to live, work, play, and visit.”

Along with interviewing leaders who were prominent in bringing the Growth Management Act to the state, we also wanted to recognize the efforts of local communities. Communities have made tremendous strides in their growth management planning since the act became law 15 years ago.

To learn how growth management is supporting local communities, we asked local governments and state land use leaders about their experiences with how growth management is working. Summaries of their comments are offered in this report. To read their more detailed comments, see the report *How Growth Management Helps Communities Achieve Their Goals: Reports From Local and State Leaders* at [www.cted.wa.gov/growth](http://www.cted.wa.gov/growth).

The Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development would like to thank the Secretary of State's Office for their assistance with our Growth Management Oral History Project and for posting our oral history interviews on their Web site. To read the interviews, see [www.secstate.wa.gov](http://www.secstate.wa.gov) and click on Oral History.

Communities face challenges as they continue to deal with rapid growth in many parts of the state or as they work to bring economic development to their area. However, as this report shows, growth management is making a difference in the lives of the residents of Washington.

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

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND







**Speaker of the House Joe King and Representative Maria Cantwell present testimony on growth management at a 1990 hearing.**

PHOTO / WASH. STATE ARCHIVES/HOR CHIEF CLERK

Citizens were expressing their frustrations and looking for answers:

When you live on an island you get pretty paranoid when the growth is doubling in a short period of time. We were really seeing locally the impact and people were saying, 'Well, why isn't the county doing something about this? Why aren't you dealing with these issues such as educational opportunities and traffic? and Why are you allowing development to occur in this place or that place?'

— SENATOR MARY MARGARET HAUGEN

These problems created a political climate that pushed legislators to look toward the future of the state and what it would look like if unplanned growth and sprawl-development patterns continued. It also provided an opportunity for the visionary Speaker of the House of Representatives Joe King to coordinate a talented group of legislators, staff, and commissions toward creating the Growth Management Act.

### *The Seeds of the Growth Management Act: The Inefficiencies of Sprawl*

In June of 1987 Speaker Joe King and Tom Campbell, his senior policy advisor, were stuck in traffic on I-405 on the Eastside near Seattle. King pointed to high-rise apartment complexes that were in the process of being built, and whose inhabitants would considerably increase congestion on I-405. King asked Campbell who was responsible for the impacts of this new growth on traffic and the community.

Campbell responded, "Well, funny you should ask because there is nobody who is centrally or even regionally

responsible for this that has any authority. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, there is no accountability for growth, for land use and therefore for our transportation dollars." In a definitive moment, King gave Campbell the task of researching existing examples of effective comprehensive statewide growth management strategies in order to move Washington toward a regulatory system to deal with growth. By 1989 Speaker King also made the commitment to work against a gas tax unless it was linked simultaneously with growth management.

The original intent of growth management according to Joe King:

...was to make sure that as we grew we had measured the impacts of growth and had infrastructure in place to fund the impacts. It was not – at least in my mind, remember you had a lot of people who worked on it – intended to be an antigrowth law. It wasn't even intended to slow growth. It was saying, 'Look, if we're going to grow, let's figure out how we're going to get people to work. Let's figure out what we're going to do on sewage capacity. Let's figure out how we're going to handle the services that that growth is going to require.'

Tom Campbell, state Representative Maria Cantwell, and Mike McCormick, FAICP, CTED assistant director for Local Government Assistance, went to Florida to attend the National Conference of State Legislators with the objective of researching a coherent system of land use policies and efficient transportation funding. Florida had developed concurrency regulations that served as one model for administering land use regulations, and they went to gather

Lacey 1986



Rapid growth in Washington is changing the landscape in Lacey.

Lacey 2005



PHOTO / WSDOT

information. They discussed statewide systems including Oregon's, which in the late 1980s had the oldest and strongest statewide land use regulations in the United States. Georgia and New Jersey had also developed statewide planning regulations, which were considered in the drafting of Washington's Growth Management Act.

### *Political Climate/Public Opinion*

In 1989 a Democratic House of Representatives and Governor and a Republican Senate served Washington residents. There was public discontent about the operative modes of growth and its consequent sprawling form, and it was demonstrated at the polls.

*The Seattle Times* also published a series of reports in 1989 that spotlighted the issues associated with growth by the urbanist Neal Peirce. The "Peirce Reports" outlined the opportunities for the Puget Sound as well as the many problems associated with sprawl. The articles brought a new awareness to many Puget Sound residents.

Jim Simon, a reporter for *The Times*, said interest in protecting habitat and wetlands was high nationally at the time and traffic congestion was becoming a problem.

In King County, Republican Brian Dardowski, who ran on a growth management platform, defeated the Republican Bill Reams, a long-term incumbent on the county council. And Seattle's CAP Initiative that limited the height of downtown buildings was widely supported as Seattleites witnessed unharnessed growth downtown.

These election results alerted politicians that there was popular public concern about issues related to growth. And they ultimately swayed Republicans under the leadership of Senator Jeannette Hayner to consider supporting growth legislation in the interest of maintaining their stronghold in the Senate.

Everybody was interested in doing something about growth management because they wanted to stop the tidal wave that was coming in – and that included people in the Legislature, it included environmentalists, it included the business community. And it included party officials, a whole variety of people.

— GOVERNOR BOOTH GARDNER

### *Crescent Bar: Toward a Growth Strategy*

While the Legislature was seeking models for state planning systems, the city and county planning directors of Washington were also addressing similar issues. The Planning Director's Conference convened at Crescent Bar in Central Washington in 1989 and produced a publication that outlined an approach for dealing with growth from the perspective of the practitioners involved in the daily work of planning. "Toward a Growth Strategy for Washington" was compiled from the ideas of 60 planners to determine what a new growth law in Washington could look like.

We began that whole conference with the premise that we weren't just city or county people who were

accountable only to our city and county elected officials, but professionals who had in mind the best interests of the entire state, including both city and county governments. We all went through a group process – brainstorming what works well with the system we had in place at the time, what were the gaps, what were the conflicts, what were ideas that we could we bring from other places like Florida or Oregon. And at the end of three days of thrashing these things around by city and county planning directors from all parts of the state – Walla Walla, Spokane, the coast, Seattle metro region – we pretty much began to find agreement.

— JOE TOVAR

“Toward a Growth Strategy for Washington” was published in *The Seattle Times* for public interest, and presented to the newly formed Growth Strategies Commission and the Legislature to influence the form of responsible planning statewide.

### Growth Strategies Commission

Governor Booth Gardner also recognized the need for growth management in Washington and funded the Growth Strategies Commission (GSC) to research strategies with input from diverse interest groups and stakeholders statewide. The commission also served to keep legislators

focused on creating growth management legislation. See Appendix A for a list of members.

While initially a commission to the Legislature as part of a budget item that passed during the 1989 session, Governor Gardner vetoed the item. By an executive order, Gardner then recreated the commission as a commission to the Governor. The commission was “designed to have important interests from across the state to come together, ponder, and think through what should be done,” said Mary McCumber, commission executive director.

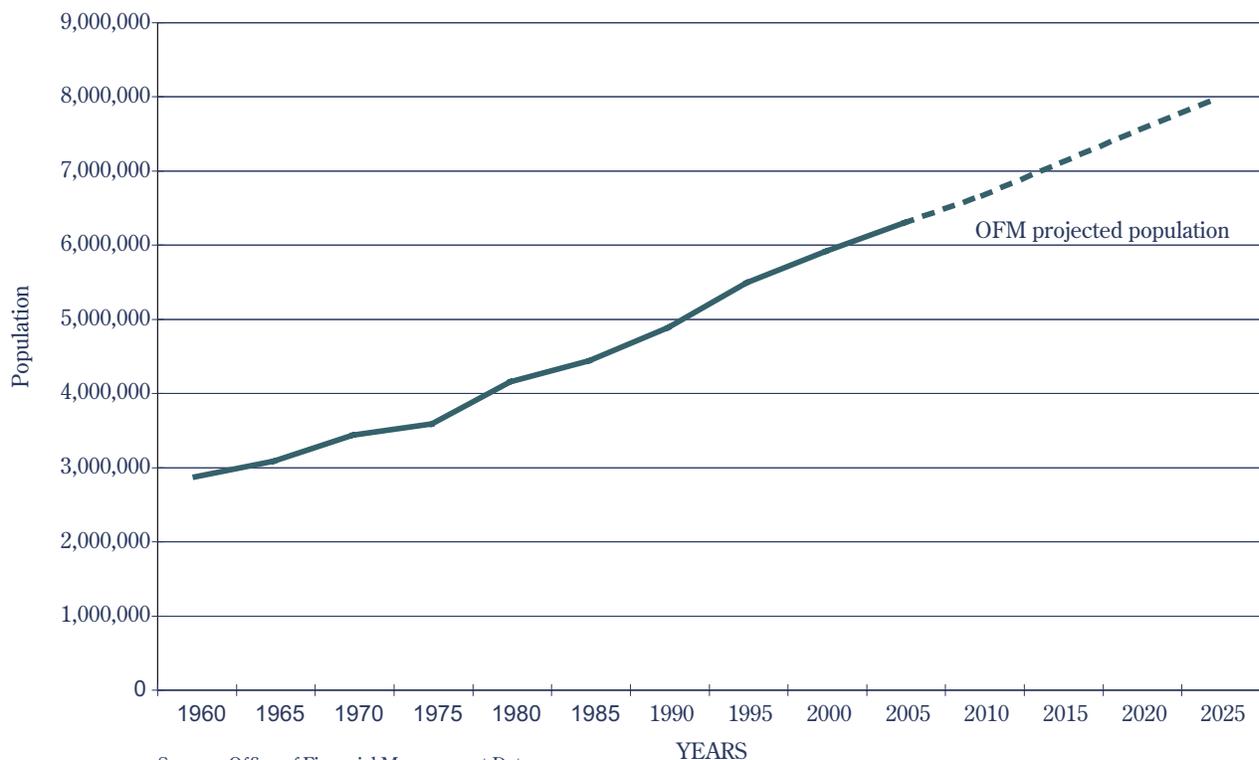
The 20-member commission consisted of various stakeholders and reached out to a large audience statewide for input.

It’s a big state, and there are a lot of people, and there weren’t very many of us working on the GSC. So it didn’t reach everybody obviously, but it did reach the major farm and forest people, cities and counties, environmentalists, the building community, and development community.

— MARY MCCUMBER

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.

FIGURE 2  
Washington State Population Growth, 1960-2025



Source: Office of Financial Management Data



**Speaker Joe King, center, and ‘Steel Magnolias,’ from left, Busse Nutley, Mary Margaret Haugen, Marie Cantwell, Jennifer Belcher, Ruth Fisher, and Nancy Rust, present growth management testimony to the Senate.**

PHOTO / WASH. STATE ARCHIVES/HOR CHIEF CLERK

They were Jennifer Belcher, Maria Cantwell, Busse Nutley, Ruth Fisher, Mary Margaret Haugen, and Nancy Rust. King provided these committee chairs the vivid moniker

“Steel Magnolias” after the popular movie at the time. The Steel Magnolias took on the task of creating a good, solid piece of legislation.

King said of the Steel Magnolias:

They began to work, and it was an unusual way to do the legislation. Normally a bill like that would go through one committee. We sent parts of it to each of the six committees to work on. On a policy basis, that was done to give it as comprehensive a look as we could. On a political basis, it was done to confuse our enemies and not give them a real clear target of what to shoot at. So after it came through all those committees, we then put it back together into one piece of legislation.

Representative Jennifer Belcher, a former legislative leader and commissioner of public lands, commented on the process of the chairwomen working together:

The camaraderie between the six chairs was pretty incredible even though we did not all get along. Some of us were far more liberal and some us were far more conservative. So we weren’t the six who you’d ordinarily find working together on a project. And yet we took this one and we knew that in order to get something done, we were going to have to accommodate each other. We found a way to do that by breaking the bill up and letting each committee take their role and carry it to fruition. It was a fabulous example of how you can make something really good happen.

The six committee chairs went to the Senate to testify and the Senate was less than receptive to them.

And the chairman of that committee was rather rude to us and called us ‘the ladies from the House’; ‘The ladies from the House have come over to tell us senators what we need to do about growth management.’ Ruth Fisher took him on, challenged him, and let him know in no uncertain terms that we were not

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.

— LUCY STEERS, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COMMISSION

The commission worked rigorously for 11 months and produced a final report from this research titled, *A Growth Strategy for Washington State*, in September of 1990. The significant findings include wide public interest in protecting the environment and conserving resource lands; in planning decisions to be made at the local level; and in addressing issues of economic growth.

In a letter to Governor Gardner Chairman Dick Ford wrote, “We researched and wrote background reports, conducted work sessions, and met with public officials and tribal representatives, and business, environmental and community groups throughout the state” to draft their report. This report proscribed the second phase for the Growth Management Act, with recommendations to ensure compliance and expand the number of jurisdictions required to plan.

## *Timeline: Two Legislative Sessions, Two Growth Management Acts*

### **Steel Magnolias**

Speaker of the House Joe King coordinated six talented committee chairs to work on the complex issues associated with growth in the state. The committees researched the issues associated with natural resources, economic development, housing, transportation, local governance, and environmental affairs and how they should be considered in growth legislation. The committee chairs all happened to be potent women in leadership positions.

‘the ladies from the House’; we were six committee chairs who had equal responsibilities with his own and that we had something serious to talk about. But it was kind of an interesting dynamic to watch Ruth and this committee chairman kind of go at each other, because they were not compatible in thinking about the Growth Management Act at that point.

— JENNIFER BELCHER

The novelty of the committee chairs all being high-powered women helped make growth management high-profile legislation. The local media liked the story and printed numerous articles about the unusual collaboration of the Steel Magnolias. This helped bring growth issues to the public attention.

## Initiative 547: Forcing the Hand of the Growth Management Act II

The Growth Management Act, SHB 2929, which would become to be known as the first part of a two-part act, became law in July of 1990. A landmark piece of legislation for Washington, the act required fast-growing counties and the cities within them to prepare plans to address how growth would be accommodated for 20 years. It also required these counties, in cooperation with cities, to set urban growth boundaries surrounding cities where urban growth would occur. The act also required all local governments to designate and protect critical areas and to set out ways to keep natural resource lands – farm, forest, and mineral – in production.

Tom Campbell said one of the original intents of the act was to obtain greater efficiency in public spending. “That was certainly one central element. It was also to protect our most critical areas so that we ensured that we have increased environmental protection. It was, in terms of efficiency, to work to contain sprawl as there were a number of studies at the time documenting that sprawl was inefficient. And it was to bring about accountability between governments, to look at how land use policies were affecting the pattern of growth, and to bring about greater coherence and alignment with state goals.”

According to Wayne Ehlers, former legislative liaison for Governor Booth Gardner, the intent of growth management was to have an orderly process and to try to look at issues in a comprehensive way instead of a piecemeal way.

One goal that Ron Main, former governmental relations director for King County, had during the development of the Growth Management Act was to establish counties as a regional player in the planning process. “We pushed that, and that was included as part of the act.”

Although it was a significant law, the act didn’t comprehensively address all issues, particularly those of compliance. And it prompted a response from the environmental community to file Initiative 547 with staunch support from the Washington Environmental Council. The intention of I-547 was to put more teeth in growth management, give greater enforcement and regulatory control to the state, and provide stricter environmental protection than the brand new law SHB 2929. When I-547 garnered enough signatures to go on the November ballot, the key players involved with the first Growth Management Act snapped into action to fight it. They determined that improved legislation addressing enforcement would better serve Washington than I-547, which would be much costlier and complex to mandate.

Governor Gardner considered himself a strong proponent of the environment, but thought that I-547 was too stringent and top-down governance, and he had the pressure of vehement opposition from the business community. I-547 was a contentious issue, and it also worried Republicans who considered it far too regulatory. Senator Jeannette Hayner took the lead in agreeing to pass a second part of the Growth Management Act that addressed some of the concerns I-547 had brought to public attention if voters didn’t support it. Senator Hayner signed a letter with Speaker of the House Joe King that was pub-

### *The Seattle Times Editorial*

Land use planning took a confident step forward last week, thanks to the determined leadership of House Speaker Joe King and Senate Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner.

King, a Vancouver Democrat, and Hayner, a Walla Walla Republican, held powerful lobbies at bay as they cajoled an honorable compromise through both chambers.

Last fall King and Hayner committed the Legislature to reinforce weak sections of the 1990 Growth Management Act. Those promises have been kept.

Last year’s growth-management act was King’s doing, and he worked to keep the issue alive. Hayner generally reflected a suspicion of land use planning that pervades her party and her colleagues from east of the Cascades.

Whatever her personal doubts, Hayner respected and responded to strong public sentiment for growth management legislation with backbone.

Powerful business and government lobbies pushed hard in the other direction, but Hayner refused to budge, and she held the Senate Republicans together. A gritty performance.

The resulting law empowers the state to draft standards and criteria for city and county plans, and creates financial sanctions to ensure that the guidelines are followed. Local influence is guaranteed through public hearings and grievance procedures of three regional dispute-resolution panels.

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**Senate Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner works with Speaker Joe King on a commitment to follow through with a second growth management law in response to I-547.**

PHOTO / WASH. STATE ARCHIVES/HOR CHIEF CLERK



lished in the press stating her commitment to working on a second growth management law in lieu of I-547. They agreed that “...if the initiative did not pass that they would pledge to work with the Governor and all Four Corners of the Legislature to pass an alternative to the initiative,” Tom Campbell said.

The article on page 9 describes Hayner’s leadership role in passing a second growth management bill in 1991.

Hayner was able to convince other Republicans that the continuation of the Growth Management Act would be less detrimental and regulatory than the environmental bill that was coming before the voters.

Ultimately, I-547 lost overwhelmingly at the polls, and Growth Management Act II (ReSHB 1025) passed into law in 1991. It included the enforcement mechanism of the growth management hearings boards, sanctions, county-wide planning policies, and siting of essential public facilities.

Strong leadership was instrumental in the passage of the act.

We had good leadership in both Joe King and Jeannette Hayner, and both of them, to some degree, were visionaries. I think they recognized the fact that growth was going to occur, and if local governments didn’t begin to start planning for it that they were going to get more calls coming to them as leaders saying, ‘You’ve got to give us some money to help me solve this problem in my community.’ I think the legislators at that time recognized that growth was going to occur in the state of Washington and the infrastructure wasn’t going to keep up unless we had some planning in place that was really going to stick so that we could plan how to pay for it, and have the infrastructure in place.

— MARY MARGARET HAUGEN

Haugen said Hayner was an extraordinarily wise woman.

She came from Walla Walla, which is an area that, although it had growth problems at that time, a lot of people would not consider a high-growth area. But I think she was a bit of a visionary, she was a very strong leader in a time when women were not necessarily in leadership roles in the Legislature – many of us chaired committees, but we didn’t have many women who were in leadership roles. She was a tough negotiator and she was willing to negotiate on growth management. She played a key role, as much as Joe King. I’ve often said we wouldn’t have a Growth Management Act without Joe King, because he prodded us to do the work, but I do think Jeannette was equally as important.

— MARY MARGARET HAUGEN

### **Growth Management Hearings Boards: Why Three Boards Were Created**

The commission recommended that the Governor have the power to enforce the act and could refer disputes to arbitration, said Lucy Steers, a former member of the commission. “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.”

Steers remembers the Land Use Section of the Washington State Bar Association was called in, and they and others struggled with the issue of growth management appeals. “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 boards were established to resolve disputes regarding whether jurisdictions are in compliance with the Growth Management Act. The hearings boards aren't a review board for all comprehensive plans which some states legislate. In the interest of efficiency, hearings boards are a special body created so GMA-compliance cases wouldn't be slowed down in the existing state court system.

The new law required the hearings boards to be staffed by three members qualified by experience or training in land use planning. At least one member of each board is required to be an attorney and one other member is to be a former city or county elected official. And no more than two staff could be affiliated with a single political party to prevent partisanship. Governor Gardner appointed the first hearings board positions in April 1992.

There had been concern that it would be unfair for the urban Puget Sound to determine compliance outcomes for all parts of Washington. Instead of a single board to hear all the cases in the state, three boards were created to serve the particular needs and political sensibilities of the various jurisdictions across the state. So three boards were formed to oversee three areas of the state, Central Puget Sound and Western and Eastern Washington, in a quasi-judicial setting.

Joe King said he wanted a way for appeals on growth management to be handled promptly. “When I envisioned what became the growth management hearings boards, my goal was to have a... shortcut from sending stuff to the courts. I hoped to have a body of specialty, not courts, but a

specialty kind of hearings board that specialized in growth management.”

Tom Campbell said he was concerned about the lack of consistency between three boards. “Having independent boards like that, I thought would be problematic, even just the administration of them... So we were working with all kinds of permutations on how to structure the need to have geographic sensitivity but retain some level of consistency.”

But frankly, Campbell said, it was the politics that led to three boards being created, the difference between Eastern Washington – which had their own set of issues and probably wouldn't even want planning – and the Central Puget Sound, which obviously had the most immediate need.

And the environmentalists thought the boards didn't have enough authority, Campbell added. “We created a new standing by which citizens and groups who have been involved in the planning can bring those cases. This is also huge: to give citizens' groups the ability to say, ‘This thing's out of control,’ and for the Governor to also say, ‘This is inadequate,’ and to have penalties in place.”

The decision to have three hearings boards in Washington State was part of a state effort to develop a growth management law that would fit the needs of the state. Washington's growth management law is unique. State leaders looked at models from other states, heard from interest groups and citizens, debated among themselves, and came up with a format they thought would work to deal with rapid growth.



**Growth Strategies Commission members Dick Ford, Lucy Steers, Mary McCumber, and Nan Henriksen join Governor Booth Gardner for the signing of GMA Part II in 1991.**

PHOTO / WASH. STATE ARCHIVES/HOR CHIEF CLERK

## Implementation of the Growth Management Act

### September 1991

- Designate natural resource lands and protect critical areas;
- fully planning local governments

### March 1992

- Designate natural resource lands and protect critical areas;
- partially planning local governments

### July 1992

- Adopt county-wide planning policies

### October 1993

- Adopt interim urban growth areas

### July 1994

- Adopt comprehensive plans

### July 1995

- Adopt development regulations, with six-month extension available

# Growth Management Accomplishments

## Early Local Government Work

When the Growth Management Act was passed, the 12 fastest growing counties and the cities within them were required to fully plan under the act – Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Island, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima.

These counties and the cities are required to develop comprehensive plans and development regulations. They and 17 additional counties are referred to as fully planning local governments. The ten counties and their cities planning only for resource lands and critical areas are called partially planning. See the map below.

Later on Lewis, Grant, and Spokane counties were also required to fully plan under the act due to population growth.

Fast growing smaller counties, with a population of less than 50,000, were also required to fully plan. However, the legislative authority of a county could adopt a resolution removing the county and the cities located in it from the requirement. Jefferson, Mason, and San Juan counties met this population requirement and didn't decline the requirement to fully plan.

Klickitat County, with a population of 19,300, met the rate of population growth requirement in 1992 under the Growth Management Act, but declined the requirement to fully plan.

Skamania County, with a population of 10,100, meet the population growth requirement in 1995-2000 and also declined the requirement to fully plan.

Eleven counties choose to plan under the act – Benton, Columbia, Douglas, Franklin, Ferry, Garfield, Kittitas, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Walla Walla. Some of these, particularly those in Eastern Washington and rural parts of the state, saw growth management planning as a step to obtain needed services or to attract economic development.

When the Growth Management Act was passed, it had many new requirements and tight deadlines. See Appendix B for an overview of the act.

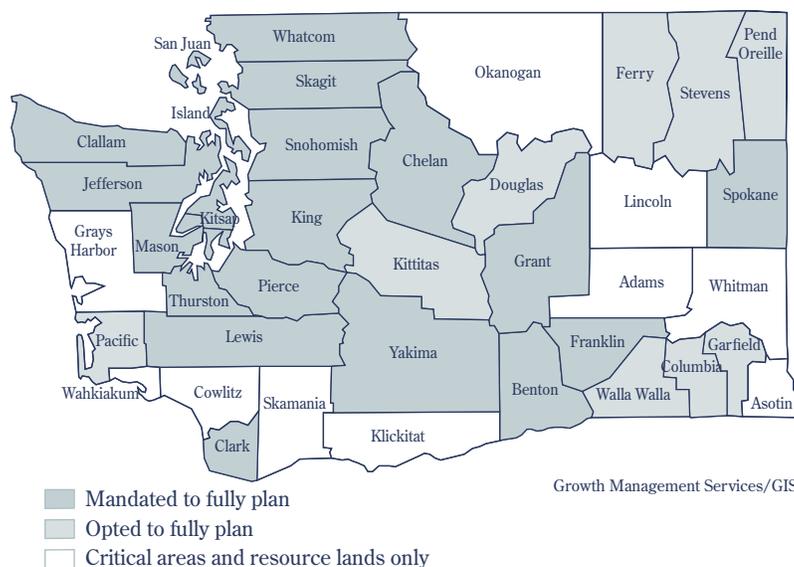
Taking effect in July of 1990, it required all local governments to designate natural resource lands and protect critical areas on an interim basis (see timelines above).

Fully planning local governments were required to adopt ordinances on an interim basis to protect critical areas and to designate and conserve natural resource lands by September 1, 1991. Partially planning local governments needed to adopt interim ordinances to protect critical areas and designate natural resource lands by March 1, 1992.

Tom Campbell said it was important to address natural resource lands and critical areas first. “With the pressure that we had for growth during that time, we wanted to make sure that those most sensitive lands were protected at least on an interim basis.”

Most local governments had completed early critical areas and natural resource lands work by March 1992.

FIGURE 3  
Counties Planning Under the Growth Management Act



“This has been a very difficult and time consuming task for all local governments, and many of them have had to rely strictly on volunteers to do the work,” said Mike McCormick, assistant director of the Department of Community Development’s Growth Management Division in a news release dated March 2, 1992.

County-wide planning policies for fully planning jurisdictions were due July 1, 1992.

By October 1, 1993, interim urban growth areas needed to be adopted. Urban growth areas are areas designated by a county, with input from towns and cities, where urban development is to occur. The urban growth areas adopted in Yakima County are shown below.

The first set of comprehensive plans under the Growth Management Act was to be completed by July 1, 1994. Development regulations to carry out those plans were due one year later, with a six-month extension available.

About 37 percent of the state’s population lived in a jurisdiction that completed its first comprehensive plan under the act by the July 1, 1994, deadline. Fifty local jurisdictions had submitted draft plans to the department and 21 of those plans had been adopted as final plans.

“Washington’s growth management is working,” said Steve Wells, former assistant director for growth management, about the comprehensive plan deadline. “Large and small communities are meeting the challenge, and they are making good progress despite the challenges of tight deadlines and budgets.”

Wenatchee, Bellevue, Tacoma, and Olympia submitted adopted plans while Seattle and Everett sent in draft plans. Smaller cities with adopted plans included Anacortes, Bothell, and Sumner. Pierce, Island, Skagit, and Snohomish counties submitted draft plans by the deadline.

Mary Margaret Haugen thinks the time frames under the act were unrealistic. “It caused some of the conflict to occur because decisions had to be made in order to meet the timeline. I think if we’d been more realistic on time, it would have been better for everybody involved.”

The Growth Management Act also had public participation requirements that needed to be met and communities began devising ways to gather information from citizens and local organizations.

Joe King said a lot of local governments set up pretty elaborate public involvement processes. “I know in Clark County they had hundreds of people involved in study commissions on this leading to the adoption of the first comprehensive plan. So, it was a lot of public involvement in this. Again, it’s a very bottom-up process – that’s not necessarily where we started out, but it was where we ended up and that probably makes sense looking back.”

Busse Nutley, former chair of the House Housing Committee, Clark County commissioner, and director of the Washington State Office of Community Development, said in the early process of beginning growth management work at the local level, citizen participation was one of the most challenging things. In Clark County, the county met with all the mayors in the county about how they would work together. The county worked closely with the cities to make sure that all the plans were coordinated.

Nutley said when Clark County adopted its plan in 1994 more than 20 public hearings were offered by the planning commission and the board. “So, we had a lot of input,” she said, adding it was very intense.

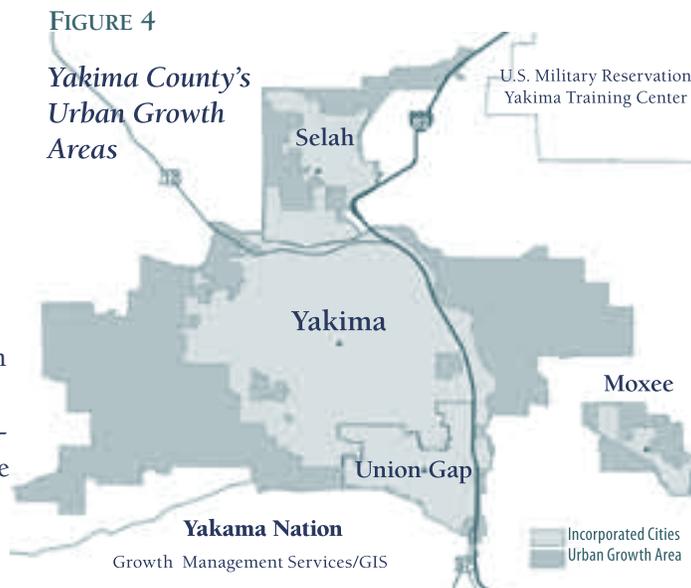
Dave Williams, municipal policy associate for the Association of Washington Cities, said most cities had plans, regulations, and zoning codes on the books already and re-formatted what they had to meet

growth management requirements. Many others started from scratch and did public involvement under the act, he said. “I think one of the nice things that we’ve seen with GMA is there are jurisdictions that actually used it as a tool to try to create their vision and get there.”

Ron Main said King County had very detailed, good comprehensive plans and general sewage plans and facilities plans prior to the passage of the Growth Management Act. The county adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1964 and followed that with the adoption of a second one in 1985.

### Early State Work

The state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development has a primary role of providing growth management technical and financial assistance. It



**The state provides information to help cities and counties designate resource lands and protect critical areas.**

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON



assists and guides in planning and carrying out effective solutions for growing communities, natural resources, a healthy environment, and economic vitality.

An additional role for the department's Growth Management Services staff is to coordinate other state agencies' review of local growth management plans and regulations.

The unit acts as a problem-solver, helping communities figure out solutions to problems or assisting them in locating mediators for controversial issues. Growth Management Services is also a reviewer and advisor, reviewing and commenting on community plans and regulations.

The work of state agencies is an important part of carrying out the Growth Management Act, said Leonard Bauer, AICP, managing director for the Growth Management Services unit. "The Legislature made growth management state policy and gave local governments a maximum amount of flexibility in deciding how to do it. Although local governments have most of the responsibility in carrying out the GMA, the state's role is to help them manage growth wisely."

In carrying out the act, state and regional interests are addressed as well as local interests, Bauer said. "The state's role is to help local governments address the larger interest as well as specific interests in the community."

In 1990 the department began hiring staff to provide local assistance and guidance for growth management. Mike McCormick, who had been the department's assistant director for the Local Government Assistance division, was asked to be the first assistant director for the Growth Management Division. He said the staff was "literally running" to try to keep ahead of the deadlines and to put together a small staff. The first year, growth management had a staff of ten to 12 employees.

"We basically started with nothing, with very short deadlines and had to get rules published and adopted," McCormick said. "We had to get workshops set up. We had to get guidance documents out. We had to meet with people who wanted to meet and had issues."

Grant funds also had to be dispersed. McCormick said the agency decided to go to local governments to negotiate on how the money was going to be distributed.

Dick Ford said the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development did a phenomenal job helping local agencies figure out how to get the planning process started. "It was a change in the process."

There were some "outliers" who didn't want to do anything, Ford said. But it was, on balance, extraordinarily well-done considering what a huge change it was for people.

Steve Hodes, a former policy advisor to Governor Gardner and Governor Lowry, said a lot of the role that the state decided to play was as a technical assistance provider and funder. "So you had this enormous funding stream to be able to build local staffs – local planning staffs – and a tremendous amount of hands-on technical assistance. And I would say that much of the local government work happened – from the state level – in that hands-on sort of way."

In 1994 when the first set of comprehensive plans began to pour in, Growth Management Services had a staff of 19. The workload was intense, said Shane Hope, AICP, planning director for the City of Mountlake Terrace and former growth management unit manager, but reviewing the documents was exciting. "The plans were the real beginning of implementing the GMA. All the laws, all the discussions were now bearing fruit."

The plans set the stage for developing in a different way in the state, Hope said. Communities had set out how they

were going to actually manage growth, direct growth into urban growth areas, and protect the environment.

The new comprehensive plans were innovative because they were based on county-wide planning policies and needed to be internally consistent. New requirements also had to be met for a housing inventory, a capital facilities plan, transportation, environmental protection, and 20-year population forecasting.

Development regulations to carry out the plans needed to be prepared by 1995, one year after the comprehensive plan deadline. Since local governments were struggling to meet the deadline, a six-month extension was granted by the Legislature.

## How the Growth Management Hearings Boards Function

In 1991 the Growth Management Act was amended to create three growth management hearings boards to hear and rule on disputes regarding the act rather than have disputes go directly to Superior Court.

To reflect regional diversity in Washington, the Legislature chose to create three boards rather than a single statewide board. See the map at right. In partially planning counties – Grays Harbor, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, Klickitat, Okanogan, Lincoln, Adams, Whitman, and Asotin – appeals go to Superior Court rather than a growth management hearings board.

The functions of the boards, as described in “GMA: State of Washington Growth Management Act,” a brochure prepared by Washington’s growth management hearings boards, are:

The boards hear and determine claims that a city, county, or state agency hasn’t complied with the goals and requirements of the act and related provisions of the Shoreline Management Act and State Environmental Policy Act.

The act provides for state review by a growth management hearings board when a person or organization that participated files a petition for review. The boards are quasi-judicial panels, reviewing local actions when a petition is filed. The boards interpret the act, clarifying ambiguities and reconciling apparent internal conflicts.

A board is required to issue a final decision and order within 180 days of a petition filing. The parties may request additional time.

The state, counties, cities, groups, or individuals who have participated on the matter being appealed may file a petition. Those who have been certified by the Governor to file an appeal also have standing.

The local government action is presumed valid upon adoption. The petitioner role is to prove otherwise. A board

bases its decision on the record developed by the local government or state, supplemented with additional evidence if necessary.

Sanctions may be imposed if a board makes a finding that a county, city, or state agency has failed to comply with a board order and submits a recommendation to impose sanctions to the Governor. The Governor may, without prior hearings board review, impose sanctions for failure to meet a GMA deadline.

Incentives, penalties, and sanctions for counties and cities out of compliance with the Growth Management Act can be applied through state grants, loans, and taxing authority.

Sanctions have been imposed on local governments twice, once on Chelan County in 1995 and once on Snohomish County in 2004.

See Appendix C for a listing of past and current growth management hearings boards’ members.

## Growth Management After 10 Years

### Local Government Accomplishments

By 2000 most of Washington cities and counties had adopted their first growth management comprehensive plan and set of development regulations under the act.

To commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Growth Management Act in 2000, the department awarded a Growth Management Achievement Award to 22 projects undertaken by local governments and organizations. Of the award winners, Shane Hope, managing director for the Growth Management Program at the time, said, “They have worked hard to plan for their communities and to put their visions in place. They are protecting the environment

FIGURE 5  
Washington State Growth Management Hearings Boards



**Citizens coming together and discussing how their communities should grow is one of the most important parts of growth management.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WASHOUGAL



and keeping the economic climate strong.” A publication describing the excellent projects that received awards, *Achieving Growth Management Goals: Local Success Stories*, is available from the department.

Nan Henriksen, former mayor of Camas and member of the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board, said it’s a huge step that all but a few local governments have a plan and ordinances to carry it out, adding that wasn’t true in many of counties before the act became law. “People do have a vision for the 20 years. They have had to show how they plan to pay for it and, therefore, make their vision more real. . . It used to be 20-some years ago that you developed a comprehensive plan that was just a vision that you’d love to see.”

Ordinances were then passed that actually determined what would happen, Henriksen said, adding the ordinances might not be like the plan. “The Growth Management Act actually required those to be meshed and melded and I think that’s extremely important.”

The one remaining local government that has yet to adopt its initial Growth Management Act plan is scheduled to do so in 2006. All other fully planning local governments have completed that first phase in growth management planning.

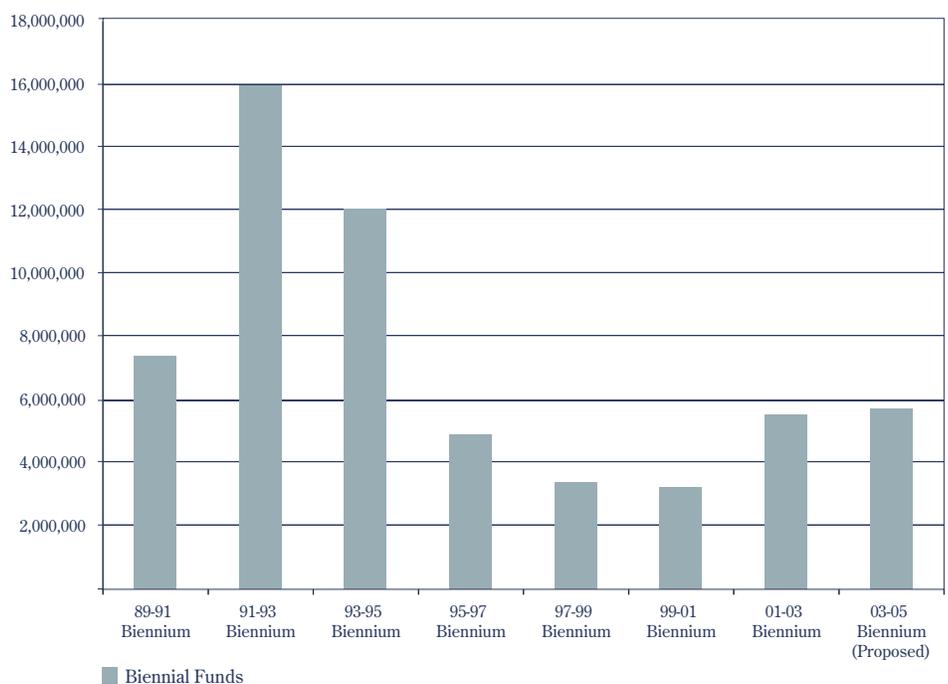
### State Efforts

By 2000 the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development’s Growth Management Services unit had 22 staff. Staffing has remained at that level through 2005.

Now local governments are involved in updating their first plans and regulations developed under the act. Many local governments are working on the best available science requirement and other updates to critical areas ordinances. Visioning, downtown revitalization, housing, and design review are among the other topics being addressed. Some notable public participation programs have been undertaken as part of the update process.

Growth Management Services continues to work with local governments in providing technical and financial assistance for the updates. A planner is assigned to assist each jurisdiction in the state. Planners provide assistance as needed and contact each jurisdiction at least quarterly and visit at least once a year.

**FIGURE 6**  
*Historical GMA Planning Grant Funding*





# Achieving Growth Management Goals and Requirements

The original Growth Management Act had 13 goals. The 14th goal, shoreline management, was added in 1995. When state leaders were debating how growth management in the state would be shaped, the 13 goals were carefully scrutinized.

As part of our Growth Management Oral History Project, we asked the leaders who made the act a reality what their views are on how the state's growth management goals are being achieved.

We also asked local governments and state leaders for their comments on how growth management is working in their communities or from the perspective of their organization.

The growth management goals they commented on are listed in italics below followed by quotes from those interviewed for the oral history project, then local government and state leaders.

## Capital Facilities

**Goal: *Public Facilities and Services*** — *Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy*

*and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.*

Under the Growth Management Act, communities need to make plans to provide services as they grow. In the Capital Facilities Element of the comprehensive plan, the types of facilities and how they will be financed are listed.

Ron Main thinks the act is about directing public investment in a smart way. "Requirements that capital plans must match land use plans were a very key issue. And, as part of the Growth Management Act, some additional financing tools were brought to the table," Main said.

Mark Hinshaw, FAIA, FAICP, director of urban design for LMN Architects, said 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. "Prior to the GMA, public investments in infrastructure – including parks and community facilities, as well as streets and utilities – were often scattered, on the edge of a community, and unrelated to each another.

"The GMA is providing cities with a great tool to use to focus public investments," Hinshaw said. "For cities that do this aggressively, the results are dramatic. Seeing the financial commitment, the private sector comes to the table

**In Kennewick, growth management planning provides a framework for Kennewick's community vision to be realized, including providing adequate infrastructure for a growing community.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF KENNEWICK





**Attractive new living areas in Seattle's Belltown are drawing people back to the city.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE

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."

Capital facilities planning under the Growth Management Act is helping the City of Kennewick realize its community vision, said Rick White, Kennewick planning director.

Growth management planning provided the framework for staff to shape the community's vision into goals and policies and then provide an array of mechanisms to carry out that vision.

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

"During GMA early stages, our appointed and elected officials didn't fully embrace the planning model that the GMA provided," White said. "Our community leaders now view GMA differently; it's being viewed as a means to achieve an end."

In Richland, a number of significant achievements are occurring due to growth management planning, said Rick Simon, Richland development services manager.

"The city has seen the development of Columbia Point – a city-owned, mixed-use project located on the Columbia River," Simon said. "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."

## *Compact Urban Development*

**Goal: Urban growth.** *Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.*

**Goal: Reduce sprawl.** *Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.*

The Growth Management Act encourages urban growth to occur in urban areas where public services are available or where they can be provided at less cost.

Busse Nutley said the act has allowed communities to grow differently. "It certainly changed the dynamics – it's made cities vital and has changed the role of the counties... It's a major, major impact on how we live in urban areas, I think in a very positive way."

Joe King said the act is having an impact because more dense communities are being built. "I think the resurgence of [Seattle's] Belltown and the higher densities are really a reflection of growth management." As you limit urban sprawl, which is very expensive, you force local governments to recognize the true cost of urban sprawl and higher density occurs, he said.

Nan Henriksen said she's seeing more infill in urban areas. "More infill development is helping to conserve agricultural lands even though it's been more difficult because of all the preexisting lots," Henriksen said.

In Kirkland, the Growth Management Act is requiring the city to accommodate growth, said Mary-Alyce Burleigh, councilmember and former mayor. "Attention was directed

to creating compact, mixed-use urban activity centers with extensive pedestrian and transit-oriented amenities... The act gave us the opportunity to consciously shape our community to create an attractive, vibrant, and inviting place to live, work, play, and visit.”

Olympia is starting to see the results of its growth management work as new subdivisions and old business corridors adopt new forms. “Infill is happening in long-overlooked older, close-in neighborhoods,” said Mayor Mark Foutch, adding the downtown is attractive, people have new transportation choices, and voters have approved tax increases for transit, parks, and sidewalk construction.

The Growth Management Act is forcing communities to rethink the value of cities and the costs of sprawl to our infrastructure and our society, said King County Executive Ron Sims.

“Before the GMA, we took our urban areas for granted – we looked at cities as places of the past and not the future,” he said. Fifteen years after the act became law, many urban areas are bustling communities, with vibrancy and a mix of housing choices, he added.

## Environmental Quality

**Goal: Environment.** *Protect the environment and enhance the state’s high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.*

The Growth Management Act links land use planning and protecting environmental quality. By requiring communities to develop policies and ordinances to protect their most sensitive lands, progress can be made in protecting important environmental resources including wild salmon.

Tom Campbell said one of the decisions that was made came as close as anything to overturning the Growth Management Act, the original interim protection of critical areas. “Essentially, we required every local government to go right into the teeth of the private property rights movement and adopt something quickly... With the pressure that we had for growth during that time,

**One of the first actions local governments needed to take under growth management planning was to protect critical areas on an interim basis.**

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON

we wanted to make sure that those most sensitive lands were protected at least on an interim basis.”

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, said Jay Manning, director, Washington State Department of Ecology. “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.’

“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.”

Using tools of up-front environmental review, the City of Mill Creek is creating compact, mixed-use developments in the city’s core rather than continued outward expansion. “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,” said Bill Trimm, AICP, planning director, City of Mill Creek. Planned actions allow for up-front environmental review for an area that reduces these costs to developers for individual projects.

## Parks and Recreation Planning

**Goal: Open space and recreation.** *Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.*





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

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF TACOMA

Planning for parks, recreation, and open space is an important part of growth management planning as communities grow.

In Issaquah, residents cherish the unspoiled, natural environment, the wildlife corridors, streams, and permanent open space that characterize the city and neighboring areas. As the city has grown, it has worked with developers to preserve open space.

“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,” said Mayor Ava Frisinger.

## *Economic Development*

**Goal: Economic development.** *Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state’s natural resources, public services, and public facilities.*

Growth management planning offers local governments the opportunity to address economic development as they develop plans for how their communities will grow or how they want to attract new businesses or industries to their area.

“More local governments are making economic development an important part of their comprehensive plan,” said Juli Wilkerson, director, state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. “The GMA is making a tremendous difference in Washington State on how we plan for the future in our communities.”

Pierce County had an obsolete comprehensive plan and inconsistent regulations before the Growth Management Act was passed, but the act changed all that. “Today, Pierce County has adopted a comprehensive plan that can be characterized as a business plan for the county’s future,” said Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg. With the establishment of the urban/rural line, growth is now directed into urban areas, which stops sprawl in rural areas. “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,” Ladenburg said.

Bruce Kendall, president and chief executive officer of the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County, said the Growth Management Act is working reasonably well in Pierce County. When the board works with an individual company, it hardly ever runs into a growth management-related problem.

While Deborah Knutson, president of the Economic Development Council of Snohomish County, thinks the density and open space goals of the Growth Management Act are working, further work on economic development is needed. “I have been pushing for economic development planning to be included in growth management for a long time.”

Patrick Jones, executive director, Washington Public

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

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF TACOMA

Ports Association, also said more needs to be done in the state on economic development.

“The occasion of the 15th birthday of the Growth Management Act is an excellent time to reflect on this important law,” said Jones. “On the positive side, the GMA has catalyzed a large amount of beneficial planning between special districts and local general-purpose governments,” he said. 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, Jones added.

More needs to be done on economic development and the siting of essential public facilities, such as airports and marine terminals, he said.

### Historic Preservation

**Goal: Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.**

Growth management planning encourages communities to consider preserving historic properties as they develop and carry out their plans and regulations. Through public participation and planning, growing communities can restore and preserve historic buildings and cultural sites, which adds to the quality of life in the community.

“The GMA has heightened public awareness and discussion of local preservation issues,” said Allyson Brooks, Ph.D., state historic preservation officer, Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. “A significant increase in the number of National Park Service-recognized historic preservation commissions, known as Certified Local Governments, has occurred since 1990. Certified Local Governments administer local preservation programs that carry out public preservation policies. The GMA has also fostered the inclusion of preservation principles into comprehensive planning and development regulations.”



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 rezoning reform, greatly improving the protection of historic properties in Tacoma,” said Reuben McKnight, historic preservation officer, City of Tacoma.

Walla Walla’s outstanding historic preservation efforts have won state and national awards. The vibrancy of the downtown was threatened when the city’s largest retail store, the Bon Marche (now Macy’s), was being recruited to relocate to a mall. The Downtown Walla Walla Foundation used the development of a 20-year downtown plan to convince them to stay, said Timothy Bishop, director, Walla Walla Downtown Foundation.

The plan was funded in part by two growth management grants from the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. The plan helped link historic preservation and economic development.

“Without growth management, our downtown would have lost its last department store,” said Bishop. “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.”

### Public Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

**Goal: Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process**

and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

## Public Participation

Although involving the public in planning wasn't new in 1990, the Growth Management Act re-emphasized the importance of public participation and required early and continuous participation throughout growth management planning.

Mary Margaret Haugen thinks public participation is one of the most important successes of the Growth Management Act. "I think it was a really good opportunity for the community to feel like they were taking control of their own destiny. Before the GMA was created, public meetings were generally held after the plans were created. The GMA turned the process around, and the public meetings are now held before the plan is developed – that is the bottom-up process that was so important to many."

Tim Trohimovich, planning director, Futurewise, a citizen-based organization, agrees public participation is an important part of growth management planning. "Public participation has been called the 'very core of the GMA,'" Trohimovich said. "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 act provides a framework that communities can use to fashion an effective and economical public involvement process that fits the issues and the community."

The act's public participation opportunities are also important to elected officials.

"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," said Pam Carter, president, Association of Washington Cities and councilmember, City of Tukwila. "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."

In Richland, the act is raising the level of awareness of planning issues among city officials and residents, said Rick Simon, Richland development services manager.

The requirement that local governments must carry out their plans has moved planning from a behind the scenes operation into the forefront in Richland, Simon said.

Because the City of Bainbridge Island was incorporated in 1991, the state's 1990 Growth Management Act adoption was timely for the city's citizens because it assisted them in preparing the island's first comprehensive plan, said Larry K. Frazier, AICP, Bainbridge Island director of Planning and Community Development.

Bainbridge Island undertook surveys in 1992 to understand residents' vision for the future. Another survey was completed in 2002 to update the city's comprehensive plan.

"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," said Frazier.

In Olympia, perhaps the most valuable aspect of the city's response to the act has been the conversation with our residents, property owners, and businesses, said Olympia



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

PHOTO / COURTESY OF PSRC

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

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON



Mayor Mark Foutch. “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.”

## Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Growth Management Act requires counties to work cooperatively with cities within their boundaries to develop county-wide planning policies that address housing, urban growth areas, urban services, capital facilities, and economic development. Local comprehensive plans are based on these policies.

This is the most important part of the Growth Management Act, said Mike McCormick. It requires local governments to get together and coordinate and to fine-tune priorities based on local needs and local expectations. “I thought that was pure magic, the way it worked the first go-around.”

Mary Margaret Haugen said a lot of people didn’t realize that before the Growth Management Act was passed there wasn’t much communication between cities and counties. “There was a great deal of conflict between the two.”

Haugen thinks that one of the best things to come out of the act was to get cities and counties to sit down and start talking together.

Jorge Vega, former Bellingham planning director, believes the act’s most important function is its requirement that communities plan for growth in a coordinated and thoughtful manner.

“All the cities in Whatcom County and the county came to consensus on the population projection approved by the county,” Vega said. “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.”

## Housing

**Goal: Housing.** *Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.*

Although most of housing in the state is built by the private sector, the Growth Management Act requires local governments to conduct a housing inventory and include a Housing Element in their comprehensive plan. The element sets out how the community plans to provide housing for its citizens.

Dick Ford said despite the fact that housing issues were debated when the Growth Management Act was being developed and are addressed in the act, housing problems have not gotten better.

Bryan Wahl, government affairs director, Washington Realtors Association, agrees. For 15 years, the act 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.

“Because Realtors® are in the business of selling communities – not just homes – quality of life is their major concern,” Wahl said. “Like others who live and work in our communities, Realtors® want good schools and parks,

safe neighborhoods, a strong economy, and good transportation choices.”

A critical component of the Growth Management Act 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, said Arthur Sullivan, program manager, A Regional Coalition for Housing. “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.”

## Natural Resource Lands

**Goal: Natural resource industries.** *Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.*

The Growth Management Act requires all counties to designate natural resource lands. In addition, all fully planning counties need to develop policies to conserve these lands. This is the state’s attempt to keep these lands in production.

Nan Henriksen believes the intent of the act was to conserve farmland. “I think that our farmland was under intense pressure of development.”

Mary Margaret Haugen said she gives her Skagit County commissioners a lot of credit for their work to conserve farmland. “They really drew a line in the sand and said, ‘This is going to remain farmland and this is not going to be encroached upon.’ And they’ve been very proactive in preserving that farmland through a lot of tools that have been

passed since that time. I do think the Growth Management Act did preserve the farmland. As much as farmers have problems with it, most of them acknowledge that had it not been for those plans – for the ability to draw those growth boundaries – we’d have lost farmland in Skagit County.”

Two organizations report that growth management is helping them in their efforts to conserve the state’s agricultural lands.

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

Don Stuart, Northwest field director, American Farmland Trust, agrees the Growth Management Act is helping conserve farmlands. “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.”

The act’s tools for conserving agricultural lands also are important for county officials, such as the commissioners in Grant and Franklin counties.

Grant County is well known for its agricultural products. The county has adopted goals, policies, and regulations that promote agricultural land use and conservation, said Richard Stevens, LeRoy Allison, and Deborah Moore, Grant County commissioners.

“We believe a proactive approach to the long-term stew-



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

PHOTO / CASCADE LAND CONSERVANCY

**The Puget Sound Regional Council, a regional transportation planning organization, works cooperatively in new ways under growth management.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF PSRC



ardship of our agricultural lands will poise Grant County to continue to be successful and economically sustainable well into the future,” said the commissioners.

In Franklin County, the goals, policies, and strategies of the comprehensive 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, said Frank H. Brock, Neva J. Corkrum, and Robert E. Koch, Franklin County commissioners. A result of the recent growth management planning process to update the plan was the designation of 62,000 additional acres of agricultural land previously designated for other land uses.

## Transportation

**Goal: Transportation.** *Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.*

The Growth Management Act requires that land use planning and planning for transportation facilities be linked.

“Before you had the GMA, there was no connection between the land use plans and the Transportation Element [of the comprehensive plan],” Charlie Howard said. “And the Transportation Element often was an unconnected series of projects. So the GMA’s structure requires that you have a land use plan... Then it requires you to understand the relationship and the implications to transportation and to create a balancing system.”

The most important outcome of the Growth Management Act for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) over the past 15 years is the restructuring of local and regional transportation planning, said Elizabeth Robbins, transportation planning office manager for WSDOT. The act also authorized 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...” Robbins said.

In addition, the act requires that jurisdictions allow for essential public facilities in their planning, specifically, from the department’s perspective, transportation facilities and services of statewide significance, she added.

Mary Margaret Haugen said lack of funding for transportation was a real weakness in growth management planning. “We didn’t really fund the infrastructure like we should have.”

## Growth Management Requirements

In addition to the Growth Management Act’s goals, the act sets out certain requirements for local governments to accomplish.

One is consistency. The elements of local comprehensive plans need to be consistent with one another and the plans of a community may not conflict with a neighboring jurisdiction’s plans.

Keith Dearborn, attorney and planner, believes consistency is one of the act’s most important contributions. “All three growth boards have said repeatedly that a develop-

ment regulation must implement a comprehensive plan. Prior to 1990 this wasn't 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."

Steve Franks, City of Spokane planning director, believes Spokane's consistent, unified, and relatively succinct comprehensive plan will not sit on a shelf and collect dust. "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," he said. "... Growth management is helping Spokane achieve its desired future by providing us with a realistic, useable, and pragmatic tool to help it get there."

Regional planning is another requirement of the Growth Management Act. When local governments work together, problems that cross jurisdictional boundaries, such as traffic and pollution, can be addressed.

Regional planning is helping local governments work together on regional issues. One example is the collaborative effort to designate an urban growth area in King County, said Roberta Lewandowski, former planning director, City of Redmond. "It's had a huge, beneficial impact on urban quality... 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."

Bob Drewel, executive director, Puget Sound Regional Council, believes that over the last 15 years, the Growth Management Act has been instrumental in advancing regional 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," Drewel said.

The most significant benefit from carrying out the act is better regional coordination – working together with other cities and counties to accommodate growth and keep our community livable, said City of Mountlake Terrace Mayor Jerry Smith.

"In 1993 and 2003, we joined with other cities and Snohomish County to develop county-wide planning policies," Smith said. "That gave us a framework to plan for future population and jobs in our urban growth areas and to work out transportation issues."

Charlie Howard thinks regional planning is helping the Growth Management Act goal of compact urban development become a reality as the Puget Sound Regional Council updates its Vision 2020 regional growth strategy. "The idea of a centers-based approach – having growth concentrated in urban growth centers and then tying your infrastructure investments to supporting those centers... It's all GMA-based."

Local governments throughout the state are benefiting from the Growth Management Act because it offers new ways to create workable, livable communities.



**Redmond is among the suburban communities creating vibrant town centers to carry out their growth management plans.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF REDMOND

# Carrying Out the Growth Management Act

## Changes Over Time

Since the passage of the Growth Management Act 15 years ago, local governments have made tremendous strides in their ability to develop plans for communities and carry them out in a way that meets the needs of citizens.

In the early days of growth management planning, local governments introduced new planning steps – including extensive public participation efforts – to manage expected growth. Now many growth management communities are experienced in how to work closely with citizens to achieve the goals and policies set out in their plans.

Many changes are occurring in Washington State due to growth management planning.

Mary Margaret Haugen said one of the things that legislators heard from the building and construction industry when growth management legislation was being considered was predictability was what they wanted. “And what the Growth Management Act really hoped to achieve was some predictability – we knew where growth was going to occur, how much it would cost you to build in those growth areas.”

People have different opinions about whether predictability is being achieved, said Haugen. “I really do think it’s

working. I think we’re finally seeing some success, certainly within the urban growth boundary. We are seeing higher density – people grumble about that – we knew this would happen – but there are greenbelts around developments to help mitigate some of the concerns. The idea was not to totally limit the growth – but to grow from the center out. This makes providing services much more cost effective.”

Steve Lundin, former senior counsel for the House Office of Program Research, thinks the requirement for local governments working together and the requirement for urban growth areas have helped growth management planning evolve at the local level. “...Clearly less density has occurred outside of urban growth areas than would have occurred if there was no such thing as urban growth areas. That’s probably had the greatest impact...”

On how growth management planning has evolved, Dave Williams, municipal policy associate for the Association of Washington Cities, said changes have been proposed yearly, two commissions have been appointed to look at changes, and a property rights initiative was proposed.

In 1995 Initiative 164 was proposed which would have expanded the definition of property rights to define any government action that erodes the value of land in any way as a “taking” requiring monetary compensation. The

**In Vancouver, the predictability of neighborhood planning is attracting developers who are building condo and apartment buildings for downtown living.**

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON





**Cottage homes on private lots arranged around garden courtyards are being well received by homeowners.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

measure was presented as an initiative to the Legislature, and once it passed both the House and Senate in the Legislature, it wasn't subject to the Governor's veto. Washington voters defeated Referendum 48, a measure that brought the law before the voters. The vote was 59 percent to 41 percent to repeal the law.

"We've had to fight back and respond to those kinds of initiatives that failed, but it was kind of nasty," said Williams. "There've been a lot of battles, battle lines drawn. At the same time, there are environmental, business, good government interests that have learned to kind of listen to one another, hear each other's perspectives, figure out ways to compromise, make some changes, improve the act, be a little bit nimble on how we deal with it."

Currently, Governor Chris Gregoire's Land Use Initiative is looking at growth management issues, he said. "So, it's kind of a living, breathing thing and I don't think that's bad. It's not always fun, but overall, if there was a scorecard, I think the basic tenets of the act that are important to cities have been maintained, and we, as much as anybody, want to make some tweaks to things."

In 2002 Washington was one of six states singled out in *Planning Communities for the 21st Century*, a report by the American Planning Association (APA), as having the best and most comprehensive planning laws in the nation. The other states recognized were Oregon, Rhode Island, Maryland, Tennessee, and New Jersey.

Of the 50 states, nearly half operate under land use laws that originated in the 1920s and don't reflect complex changes in society since then, a *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article, dated July 31, 2002, stated about the APA report.

"In large measure, states like Oregon and Washington are so advanced in comparison to the rest of the country," said Stuart Meck, one of the report's authors.

David Bricklin, environmental and land use attorney, said one of the biggest successes in growth management is in the change in mindset. "There really is, in some communities, a recognition now of the need to accommodate more dense growth inside our cities. I live over on Bainbridge Island and you see it there with these higher density cottage developments – and you see these all around the community now."

Bricklin said you also see the change in mindset in Seattle with greater density in the Denny Regrade and other parts of the city and in the transfer of development rights program between Seattle and King County.

People recognize that to protect the rural areas of the state, communities need to accept higher densities in urban areas and make the higher density pleasant so people want to live there and enjoy living there, said Bricklin. "I think we're seeing a lot of that happen."

William Grimes, AICP, principal, Studio Cascade Inc., thinks innovation in planning is one of the most important results of the Growth Management Act.

"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," said Grimes. "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."

Jennifer Belcher thinks the state has benefited from having growth management planning. “I don’t think it’s worked as well as I would have liked and I don’t think we’re finished with it yet. But I do think we’ve made some changes...that would not have happened without it. So it’s a pretty incredible experience when you look at it from beginning to midpoint. I hope I’m around to see the endpoint.”

### *The State’s Work With Stakeholders*

Joe King thinks the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development has done an outstanding job in its growth management work. “I think they offer a lot of assistance to local government.” The department understood from the start that the Growth Management Act calls for responsible growth, that the intent of the law is to fund growth, to the extent that is possible, as growth occurs, King said.

Dave Williams of the Association of Washington Cities said the department has been instrumental in carrying out the act. “...We very much wanted CTED to be the one in charge of helping us do this work.” The department produced guidance documents on how to prepare a comprehensive plan and deal with neighboring jurisdictions.

The association worked closely in the early years with the department in putting on workshops around the state, helping people figure out how to do growth management. Williams said the association has had close, ongoing

communications with the department over the years about what the needs of cities are and what kinds of products are needed.

It appreciates the department’s advocacy for finding money to do basic planning and more creative planning, work on getting coordinated responses from the state to local governments on plans, and a policy that every letter that goes to a city to comment on a plan starts out with things they’re doing well, Williams added. “... That just sets a tone that I think is incredible.”

Jennifer Belcher thinks the department was overly cautious when the act was passed. “It put an incredible workload on the department to try to monitor what was happening, to try to manage this process. We did not fund huge numbers of increased staff, though there were a lot of extra people who were designated to work on this, and so I think the department was very cautious.”

Belcher wanted the department to be more aggressive, to take a leadership role in achieving a set of goals. “I wanted them to provide a greater leadership by coming back to the Legislature and being able to say, ‘This isn’t working and here’s why it isn’t working, and if we don’t do this, it isn’t going to work.’” Belcher thinks the department saw its role as managing the process of planning.

### **State agencies are providing technical assistance on new pedestrian and bicycle policy requirements.**

PHOTO/CTED/TOURISM



Because growth management is a work in progress, there are many opinions on how it's being carried out. The system that state leaders in Washington devised gives local governments the authority to determine how they will plan for growth and make those plans a reality under a set of state goals. The department and other state agencies assist local governments in these efforts by providing financial and technical assistance.

## *How the Growth Management Hearings Boards Are Working*

Opinions vary on the growth management hearings boards' role under the Growth Management Act. Many think the boards are carrying out their functions well. Some believe that their role is either too strong or too weak.

Following are comments on how the hearings boards are working from people interviewed in our Growth Management Oral History Project:

Jennifer Belcher thinks the growth management boards are a great addition to the act. "They give the people a direct place where they can present their case and get decisions made. And I think the boards, by and large, have done a good job."

Tom Campbell said he has been pleasantly surprised that the decisions of the hearings boards have been strong and that the courts have upheld their decisions.

"I think they've done a remarkable job on ... providing guidance, which at least gives those who have good administrators, those on the ground, a pretty good framework," said Dick Ford. "It's taken a number of years to get there, but now you have a pretty good body of determination."

Dave Williams thinks the experience of cities with the growth management hearings boards has been not as significant or contentious as the counties' experiences have been. "The main issues that seem to have caused a lot of rancor that have been before the boards have been about things happening in the more rural, environmentally-sensitive areas outside of urban growth areas."

Busse Nutley said she thinks the hearings boards have had a hard time doing their job. "I think it's been extremely difficult for them. I think that the reason that it's been so hard is that when you're here as policymakers at the state level, you don't realize how difficult it is to politically implement laws locally."

Mary Margaret Haugen said the original growth management bill did not have the growth hearings board in it. "I think if there's a flaw, that's probably what the flaw would be. I was not involved in putting together that particular process. That was done through leadership, and there were

a lot of negotiations that went on to appease the different areas of the state. But I really think we'd have been better off if we had one court of law to deal with it instead of having three sets of hearings boards."

The following local leader also had comments about how the growth management hearings boards are working:

Bill Lotto, executive director of the Lewis County Economic Development Council, believes that the Growth Management Act can be an effective planning tool if used by local governments as originally intended. However, since the interpretation and application of the act has been left to an appointed board, rather than to local government, a growing number of jurisdictions have encountered serious implementation problems. Lotto thinks that most of these problems can be traced to the numerous appeals that occur from individuals and outside interest groups.

Lewis County and its citizens, through volunteer committees, have spent millions of dollars and thousands of hours on growth management issues, said Lotto. Even when the county undertakes appropriate planning, appeals are still certain to occur. Because an appeal can be filed by anyone with little financial investment and no liability, the county has seen almost every action under the GMA appealed.

Washington's three growth management hearings boards are recognized throughout the state for their decisions on how local governments are carrying out the Growth Management Act in their communities. Whether people think the boards are working well or not, the boards are an important part of carrying out growth management in the state.

# Changes in the Growth Management Act

When the Growth Management Act was passed, it was seen as a living, working law that would be amended as needed to meet local and state needs.

Joe King said growth management didn't come in a bolt of lightning. "It came in a political process, it was born in a political process and I think that it ought to be continually reevaluated, proved, added to. I have never taken the position it was written and we can't change any of it. I think we have to change with the change of the economy and change with the times."

In the early days of the act, the law was amended annually, usually in minor ways. The chart below lists major changes that are discussed in this publication.

## Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform

In 1995 amendments to the Growth Management Act were made based on the recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform. The task force was established because confusion was occurring about how

growth management and environmental regulations should work together. Also, developers thought that it was taking too long to get local development permits in some areas and that the application procedures required by some local governments were too complex. The 1995 changes included streamlining the local permit process and consolidating the state's separate environment and land use laws. In these amendments, the Legislature recognizes that growth management planning is a fundamental building block of regulatory reform and it should serve as the integrating framework for all other land-use related laws.

Steve Lundin said the most significant amendments to the act were made in 1995 in response to task force recommendation. Among other changes, the 1995 legislation: (1) attempted to coordinate the Shoreline Management Act and State Environmental Policy Act with the Growth Management Act; (2) created the local project review law; (3) created uniform requirements for judicial review of land use decisions; and (4) authorized growth management hearings boards to invalidate local comprehensive plans and development regulations.

To help fund projects that would allow local communities to streamline environmental review, the Planning and Environmental Review Fund was established. Grants totaling \$2.85 million were provided in the 1995-97 biennium to 24 jurisdictions. Cities such as Everett and Mill Creek used the funds for up-front environmental review for a specific area in their cities. That allowed developers to reduce or eliminate environmental review for individual projects as they were proposed in these areas of the city.

What exactly should be done in developing critical areas ordinances has been hotly debated since the early days of the Growth Management Act. Some wanted state standards for wetland buffers and other critical areas protections. Others wanted local governments to be able to continue to make these decisions. In 1995 a new section was added to the act that clarifies the state's goals and policies for protecting critical area functions and values. Legislators decided that local governments should continue to make decisions about what standards to use. They required local governments to include the "best available science" in developing critical areas' policies and regulations and to give special consideration to preserving or enhancing anadromous fisheries. Anadromous fish, such as salmon and char (bull trout), spawn and rear in fresh water and mature in the marine environment.

### Major Amendments to the Growth Management Act

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1995 | Streamlines the local permit process and consolidates the state's separate environment and land use laws. Growth management planning seen as a fundamental building block of regulatory reform that should serve as the integrating framework for all other land-use related laws. |
| 1995 | Adds the best available science requirement to the development of critical areas ordinances and requires local governments to give special consideration to preserving or enhancing anadromous fisheries.  |
| 1997 | Offers guidance for all counties to identify and protect rural character and tools for allowing limited areas of more intensive rural development and economic development. Requires counties to provide for a variety of rural densities.   |
| 2002 | Update deadlines extended.   |
| 2005 | Update deadlines extended for critical areas ordinances for some local governments.  |
| 2006 | Update deadlines extended for small, slow-growing local governments.   |

## Land Use Study Commission

As counties were developing their first growth management plans and regulations, they were having difficulty figuring out how to deal with rural lands. The act provided little guidance and the growth management hearings boards hadn't yet ruled on rural lands. Governor Mike Lowry appointed the Land Use Study Commission in 1995, which recommended changes to the act that were adopted by the Legislature in 1997. See Appendix A for a list of commission members.

These changes included steps and guidance for all counties to identify and protect rural character. Counties must provide for a variety of rural densities. Tools and procedures are also included for allowing limited areas of more intensive rural development and economic development. Another goal of the commission was to develop a statewide land use code. Tom Campbell, who was deputy director for the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development at the time, served as the agency representative on the commission. "I think what we tried to do at the Land Use Study Commission was, 'Can we take a few layers out?'" That code was not adopted.

A heated debate between the environmental community and the building industry about how the act was being carried out resulted in the adoption of a program to measure growth management progress. The Buildable Lands Program was adopted as an amendment to the act in 1997. It's a review and evaluation program aimed at determining if the six most populated Western Washington counties have an adequate amount of residential, commercial, and industrial land to meet the growth needs spelled out in their comprehensive plans. If the analysis indicates land supplies

aren't adequate, local governments are to remedy the matter without changing urban growth boundaries. Methods such as zoning changes, permit streamlining, and development incentives are to be used.

Dave Williams said AWC had to respond to pressures from the development and real estate communities for the Buildable Lands Program. "It's extraordinarily expensive and it's good data to keep."

As the deadline approached for local governments to complete the update of their first growth management plans and regulations, they found again that the deadlines were tight and it was a struggle to meet them. In 2002 the act was amended to extend the September 1, 2002, deadline for review of plans and plans for jurisdictions. The review deadlines also are extended for local governments planning only for resource lands and critical areas. The new deadlines established for local governments vary.

In 2005 the Legislature provided an additional year for completion of critical area ordinances for many jurisdictions. Another amendment addressed increasing the physical activity of Washington's citizens by requiring the Transportation Element of a comprehensive plan to contain a pedestrian and bicycle component.

In 2005 Governor Chris Gregoire launched a Land Use Initiative. Comments, suggestions, and testimony were solicited and received from stakeholders and citizens on amendments to the Growth Management Act. Four bills and one budget item were proposed. The 2006 legislative session concluded with passage of a budget item for a pilot project of approaches to conserving agricultural operations and two priority bills for the Governor: Growth Management Act timelines and accessory agricultural uses.

The timelines law provides a time extension to small



**Kent's new multimodal transportation center is part of its downtown plan. The plan was funded in part through a \$150,000 Planning and Environmental Review Fund grant.**

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON

**Growth management amendments in 1995 address how to identify and protect rural character.**

PHOTO / CTED/RITA R. ROBISON



and slow-growing jurisdictions for updates to their comprehensive plans, development regulations, and critical areas ordinances.

The accessory agricultural uses law amends the Growth Management Act to clarify that cities and counties have authority to allow or limit accessory activities on agricultural lands. It provides policy guideposts, framing the extent of accessory uses allowed on agricultural lands, and limiting conversion of agricultural lands to one acre. The bill does not limit agricultural production on designated agricultural lands.

“Counties and cities deserve clarity on how to meet the act’s requirements and the tools to help them be successful,” said Nancy K. Ousley, assistant director for the Local Government Division of the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. “As state agencies we’re committed to working with our local partners to promote that success and when it’s needed, work with them to propose common sense refinements to the act. One example is acknowledging that smaller, slow-growing jurisdictions may not need to update their plans as often as large, faster growing cities and counties.”

A number of bills that would have gutted the Growth Management Act were vetoed over the years. Steve Hodes said there were two mandates under governors Gardner, Lowry, and Locke. “First, preserve the GMA, the core of the GMA, its most important provisions, but don’t sweat the small stuff. If there’s too much pressure building that there’s a fear it will destroy the GMA, reduce that pressure. Try to pass laws that will make the act more workable for local governments, for business, for ordinary people. Don’t focus on rigor to the exclusion of the main provisions of the law... Second, if any bill appears to threaten those main provisions or a key environmental law, governors were willing to veto.”

Tom Campbell said it was intended that the act should be amended over the years. “So, I’m glad it’s the planning law of the land... It should be amended and hopefully they made it more efficient and more effective [with the amendments that have been made].”

Dave Williams said the Association of Washington Cities has spent most of the last 15 years fighting back changes to the act that were detrimental to the interests of cities. “I wish I could say we spent more time figuring out how to improve it, but most of what we need to improve it is cash.”

David Bricklin thinks most of the amendments to the act over the years have weakened it. “While there’s a rising level of public and political acceptance for GMA’s core values, at the same time, it’s been a declining path in terms of the actual law.”

Bricklin also believes the way the act is being construed by the courts is unfavorable. “So it’s kind of ironic and sad that at the same time that I think we are slowly changing the consciousness of the region and the state as to what needs to be done and there’s a greater and greater acceptance of GMA principles, that the state Legislature and the state Supreme Court are sort of in a time warp. They’re still looking at it from 10 or 15 or 20 years ago and are trying to whittle it away and not being very useful.”

Many amendments have been made to the Growth Management Act in its 15-year history. The state leaders who created Washington’s unique system foresaw that it would be changed over the years to meet the needs of communities and their citizens. The healthy debate that helped to spawn growth management in the state has continued over the years so the law can work better for citizens. These discussions are ongoing as many parts of the state continue to grow rapidly.

# Growth Management Challenges

While the accomplishments made by many local communities under the Growth Management Act are significant as reported in this publication, many challenges remain.

Some local elected officials, planners, members of the development community, and citizens have concerns about growth, or the lack of it, in their areas.

Bill Lotto believes the growth management process is an enormous effort for rural counties, particularly those like Lewis County 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.”

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

Providing affordable housing for all segments of the population remains a significant challenge, especially as the demand for new housing continues to rise in many parts of the state. Providing for this housing in urban areas can be particularly difficult, but some cities and towns are worried about too much density affecting long-established neighborhoods. In other communities where density is desired downtown to revitalize the economy, the market isn’t strong enough to draw development to the area.

Sam Anderson, executive officer, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, thinks that while the growth management goals about containing sprawl and building more densely are very successful, this is occurring at the cost of other goals – housing affordability and, to some extent, the timely permitting goal.

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

Anderson said 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, he said. “We do a lot of work talking to people about the jobs-housing balance.”

Critical areas work under the Growth Management Act, including how to determine and carry out the act’s best available science requirements, continues to be a challenge in many communities.

Ron Main said one of the issues that Governor Booth Gardner really cared about was the issue of protecting wetlands and sensitive areas. He had tried prior to 1990 to pass legislation to do that and had been unable to do so. Main said Governor Gardner played a significant role in the requirement that all counties plan for natural resource lands and critical areas. “That was Booth Gardner’s contribution to this thing...,” said Main, adding that in his opinion, it’s one of the most significant parts of the act.

Another growth management issue, Main said, is that the role for counties under the Growth Management Act to be regional service providers has been thwarted by annexations. “Unfortunately, in King County rather than have existing cities annex unincorporated area that was included within an urban growth boundary, too often those areas decided to incorporate themselves. And that has created, I think, a stumbling block towards implementing the main policies of the GMA because, in many cases, those were defensive incorporations, intended to frustrate the density goals of the act.” And in addition, Main said, counties haven’t received the needed additional revenue to perform those regional roles.

The vision for managing growth in Washington as set out by state leaders in 1990 and 1991 offered a far-reaching framework for local governments to use to determine how they want to shape their communities. Many challenges remain as local governments continue their efforts to reach their goals for development in their communities.

# Conclusion

Growth management is working in local communities throughout Washington State. It offers tools that they can use to achieve their vision for the future.

In Kennewick, growth management means capital plans are being realized. In Kirkland, it offers a way to create compact urban centers with places for pedestrians and transit. In Issaquah, it means open spaces are being saved and parks created.

For Walla Walla, historic preservation and economic development are teaming up to enhance a vibrant downtown. For Mill Creek, growth management tools are helping the city create an urban center rather than continue its outward expansion.

In Bellingham, cooperating with the county on population projections is leading to coordinated, thoughtful preparation for growth. In Olympia, infill is happening in long-overlooked older, close-in neighborhoods.

For the City of Spokane, a consistent, unified, and succinct plan provides a practical tool to help the city achieve its desired future. After years of having an obsolete

plan and inconsistent regulations, Pierce County now has a comprehensive plan that is the county's business plan for its future. In King County, urban areas that had been taken for granted are becoming bustling, vibrant communities with a mix of housing choices.

All around the state, growth management requirements for citizen participation are producing positive results. In Richland, city officials and residents are more aware of planning issues and have an understanding of growth management tools. On Bainbridge Island, growth management is helping citizens define the future livability of their island. In Olympia, conversations with the community are helping city officials make the right choices for the future and assisting the city in determining how to pay for them.

Growth management has been instrumental in fostering the belief in the Puget Sound Region that many of the challenges that communities face on regional planning are best addressed together. Regional transportation planning organizations have been successful in creating forums for people in regions to get together, discuss transportation issues, and determine how to proceed cooperatively.

The act offers the tools local governments needed in Grant and Franklin counties to effectively designate agricultural lands.

Growth management means many things to many people in many communities.

"We're better off with growth management than without it," Bruce Kendall said, adding "Is it perfect? No."

Although challenges continue, 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. It affects every Washington citizen's quality of life. By offering effective tools for managing growth, the Growth Management Act is making a significant difference in Washington State.



**The Sounder Commuter Rail, which provides about 6,000 rides a day, is part of a regional strategy for transportation solutions.**

PHOTO / COURTESY OF GUY KRAMER

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Complete interviews from the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development's Growth Management Oral History Project can be found at: [www.secstate.wa.gov/oralhistory/](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/oralhistory/)

Growth management hearings board information: [www.gmhb.wa.gov](http://www.gmhb.wa.gov)

Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development Web site: [www.cted.wa.gov/growth](http://www.cted.wa.gov/growth)

Land Use Study Commission Web site: [www.cted.wa.gov/landuse/index.html](http://www.cted.wa.gov/landuse/index.html)

Washington State Department of Ecology's Web site: [www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov)

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# Appendix A

## *Growth Strategies Commission*

Dick Ford, Chair  
Representative John Betzoff  
Phyllis Campbell  
Representative Maria Cantwell  
Charlotte Chalker  
Jim Ellis  
Kelso Gillenwater  
Ed Hansen  
Larry Kenney  
Sanford Kinzer  
Judith Runstad  
Senator George Sellar  
Lucy Steers  
Senator Phil Talmadge  
George Walker  
T.A. Wilson

### *Ex-Officio Members*

Nan Henriksen, Association of Washington Cities  
Commissioner John McKibbin, Washington Association of Counties  
Chuck Clarke, Director, Washington State Department of Community Development

## *Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform*

The Honorable Anne Anderson, Senator, 42<sup>nd</sup> District  
Mark Brown, Director, Washington Department of Labor and Industries  
Rodney L. Brown, Partner, Morrison & Foerster  
Mayor Tim Douglas, City of Bellingham  
Robert J. Drewel, Snohomish County Executive  
Ruta Fanning, Director, Office of Financial Management  
Thomas Goeltz, Partner, Davis Wright Tremaine  
Ron Judd, King County Labor Council of Washington  
Ronald Kiracofe, ARCO  
Corey Knutsen, Puget Sound Power & Light  
Karen Lane, Senior Vice President, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center  
James J. Nelson, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group  
Cornelius Peck, Emeritus Professor, University of Washington Law School  
The Honorable Bill Reams, Representative, 48<sup>th</sup> District  
Mary Riveland, Director, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Susan Schmoll, Grainery & Farm

The Honorable Betti Sheldon, Senator, 23<sup>rd</sup> District  
The Honorable Jim Springer, Representative, 18<sup>th</sup> District  
Walter Toner Jr., Public Affairs Consultant  
Mike Williams, Kittitas County Action Council  
Cindy Zehnder, Brotherhood of Teamsters

*Note: The members here are those listed in the Final Report issued by the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform. Former task force members as listed in the report include: Elaine Davis, Andre Gay, Wallace Loh, Casey McKinney, Representative Ron Meyers, and Jim Worthington*

## *Land Use Study Commission*

T. Ryan Durkan, Commission Chair, Land Use Attorney, Hillis, Clark, Martin & Peterson  
Phil Best, Kitsap County Commissioner  
Sheila Collins, Spokane Neighborhood Communities Activist  
Tom Campbell, President of SnoNet  
Keith Dearborn, Land Use Attorney, Bogle & Gates  
Kathy Dietrich, Vancouver Architect  
Loren Dunn, Environmental Attorney, Graham & James/Riddell Williams  
Ed Hansen, Mayor of Everett  
David Moseley, City Manager of Ellensburg  
Kimberly Ordon, Policy Analyst, Natural Resources Department, Tulalip Tribes  
David Roseberry, Wheat Farmer and Past President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers  
James P. Toohey, Assistant Secretary, Planning and Programming Service Center at Washington State Department of Transportation  
Tom Fitzsimmons, Director, Washington State Department of Ecology

*Note: The titles of members of the task force and commissions are as they appeared in the final report of the group.*

# Appendix B

## *An Overview of the Growth Management Act*

In 1990 the Legislature found that “uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals... pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning.” (RCW 36.70A.010)

This is the foundation for the Growth Management Act. It requires all cities and counties in the state to:

- Designate and protect wetlands, frequently flooded areas, and other critical areas.
- Designate agricultural lands, forestlands, and other natural resource lands.
- Require evidence of potable water before issuing building permits.
- Determine that new residential subdivisions have appropriate provisions for public services and facilities.

In addition, 29 counties and the 219 cities within them have extra responsibilities in planning for growth. (These jurisdictions are the fastest-growing counties and the cities within them, as well as some others that chose to plan under the act.) The 29 counties with more extensive requirements contain about 95 percent of the state’s population.

Here are the basic steps that local governments planning under the act are to follow:

- Agree on county-wide planning policies to guide regional issues.
- Plan for urban growth within the urban growth areas that are adopted by each county.
- Adopt comprehensive plans with elements that fit together. The elements include land use, transportation, capital facilities, utilities, housing, shorelines, and (for counties only) rural.
- Adopt development regulations that carry out comprehensive plans.

Comprehensive plans and development regulations are to be guided by 14 goals that are summarized below:

- Focus urban growth in urban areas.
- Reduce sprawl.
- Provide efficient transportation.

- Encourage affordable housing.
- Encourage sustainable economic development.
- Protect property rights.
- Process permits in a timely and fair manner.
- Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries.
- Retain open space and habitat areas and develop recreation opportunities.
- Protect the environment.
- Encourage citizen participation and regional coordination.
- Ensure adequate public facilities and services.
- Preserve important historic resources.
- Manage shorelines wisely.

The comprehensive plans are to provide for 20 years of growth and development needs. They can be amended once a year. Local governments are to update their plans at least every seven years. These deadlines have been extended for certain smaller, slow-growing communities. Update deadlines have also been extended for critical areas ordinances for some local governments.

When plans and regulations are developed, they are submitted to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Development for review. However, the department doesn’t certify the plans or approve the regulations. Plans are valid upon adoption unless a growth management hearings board finds that they aren’t in compliance with the act.

Three hearings boards, one for each region of the state, resolve disputes about whether a local government is in compliance with the Growth Management Act. The board may send a plan or regulation back to the local government for changes, if necessary. In exceptional cases, where the plan or regulation would interfere significantly with the fulfillment of act goals, the board may invalidate all or part of a plan or regulation. A local government may amend its plan or regulation to come into compliance.

The department is charged with being the central coordinator for state government in carrying out the act. Through the Growth Management Services unit, it also provides technical and financial assistance to help local governments manage growth.

For a list of state publications on growth management, call 360-725-3000. General information is available on the Internet at [www.cted.wa.gov/growth](http://www.cted.wa.gov/growth).

# Appendix C

## *Members of Washington's Growth Management Hearings Boards*

### **Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Boards**

M. Peter Philley	1992-1996
Joe W. Tovar	1992-2004
Chris Smith Towne	1992-2000
Edward G. McGuire	1996-2008
Lois H. North	2000-2006
Bruce Laing	2003-2006
Margaret A. Pageler	2004-2010

### **Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board**

Graham Tollefson	1992-1995
Judy Wall	1992-2006
Tom Williams	1992-1996
D.E. "Skip" Chilberg	1995-2004
Dennis Dellwo	1996-2008
John Roskelley	2004-2010

### **Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board**

Nan Henriksen	1992-2004
Bill Nielsen	1992-2002
Dick Thompson	1992-1993
Les Eldridge	1994-2002
Holly Gadbaw	2003-2010
Margery Hite	2004-2008
Gayle Rothrock	2004-2006