

A SHORTCOURSE

ON LOCAL PLANNING

**Comprehensive  
Planning under the  
Growth Management Act**

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Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**

# Contents

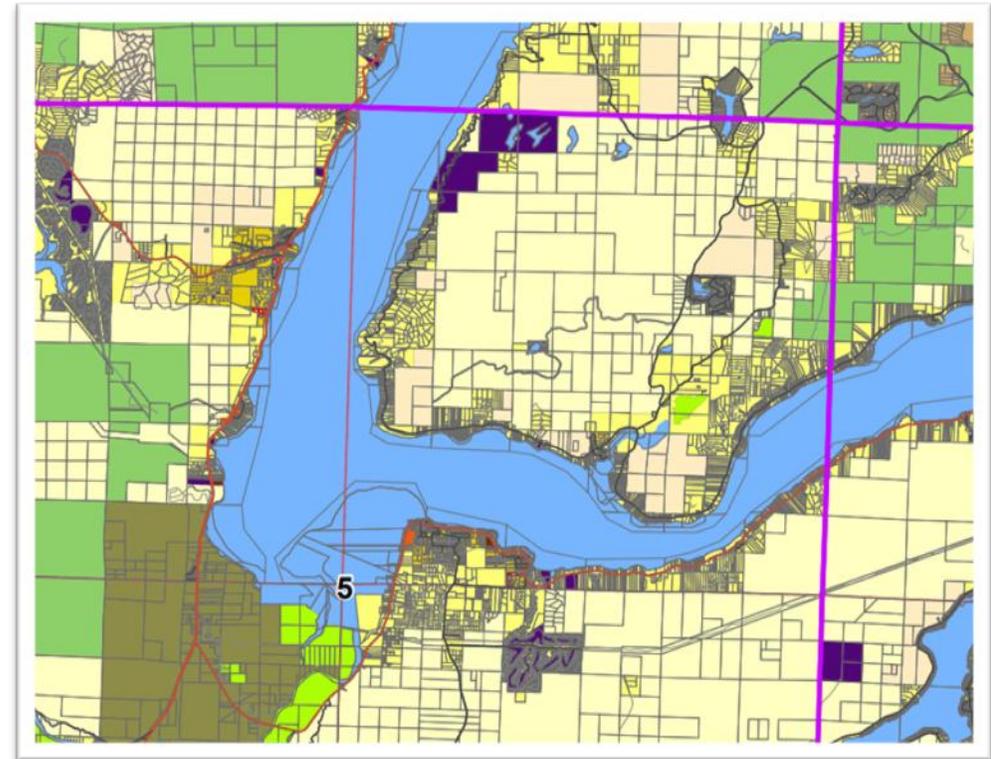
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- Why Plan?
- GMA Framework
- Implementing the Plan
- Questions



# Components of Planning

1. **Comprehensive Plan**
  - Vision, goals, policies
  - Adopted and amended with public participation
2. **Development Regulations**
3. **Local Project Review**



*Clip of Mason County  
Development Areas Map*

# Why Plan: Values in Tension

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



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



# What Makes a Good Plan?

## Disciplined Imagination

### Realistic:

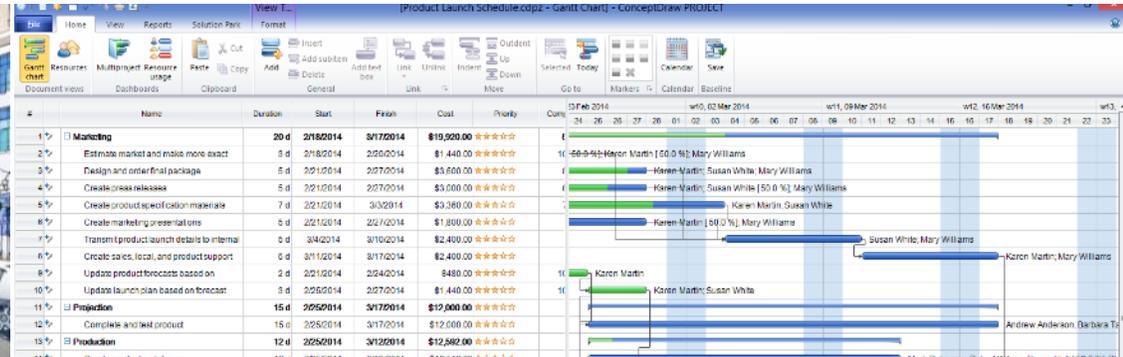
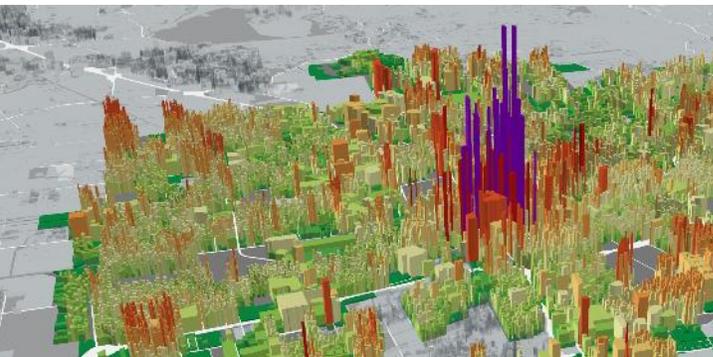
- Forecast
- Inventory
- Analysis

### Compelling:

- Vision
- Goals and policies

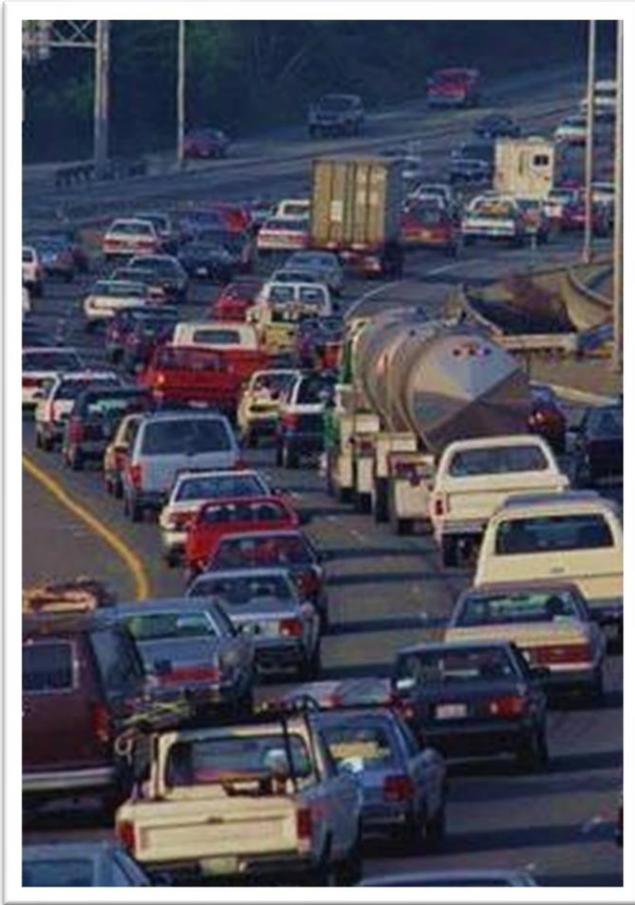
### Specific:

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



# The Growth Management Act (GMA)

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- **Adopted in 1990 to:**
- Address urban sprawl
- Manage threats to quality of life in WA
- Establish statewide planning framework

See **RCW 36.70A** (state law) & **WAC 365-196** (advisory recommendations)

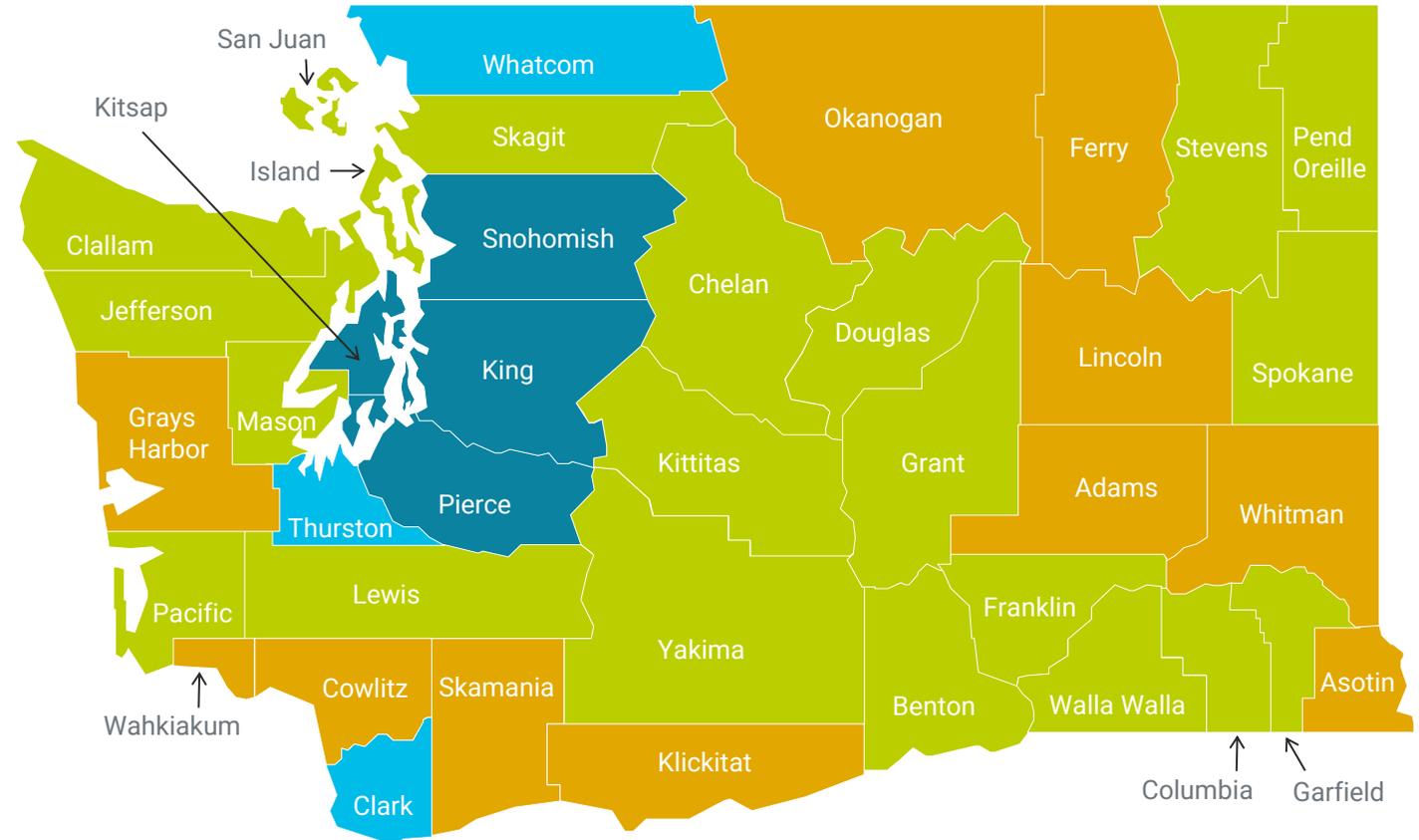
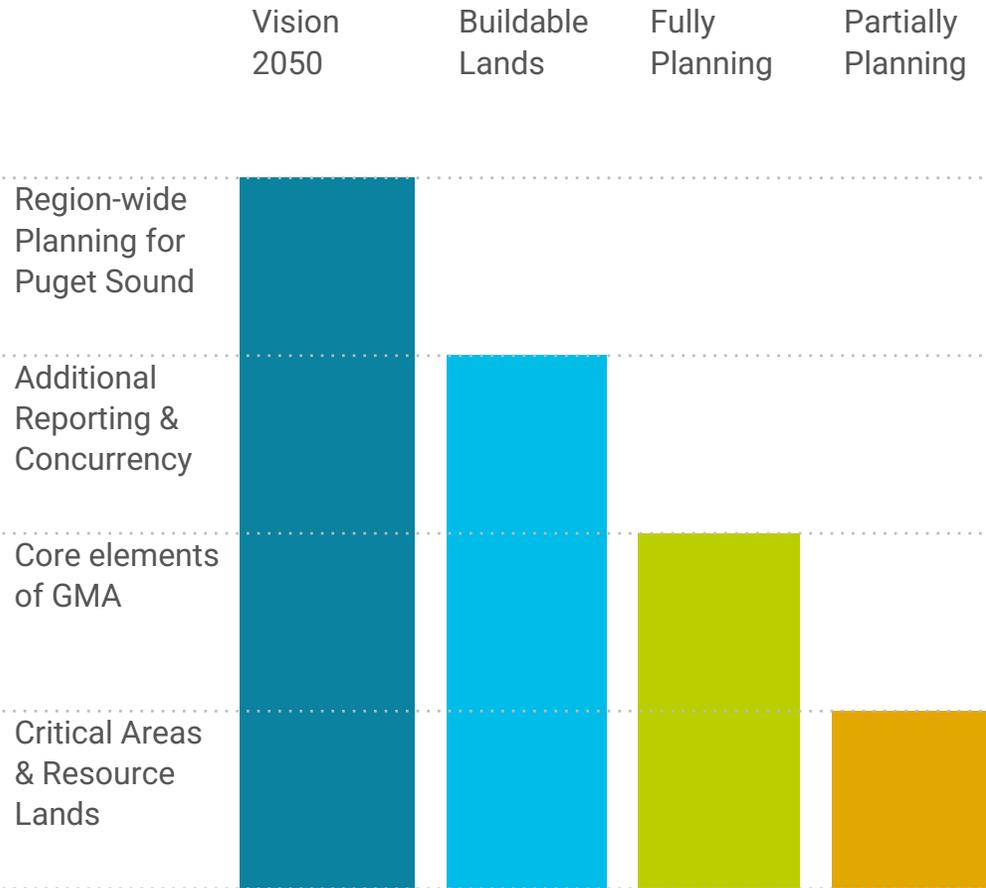
# GMA: Planning Goals

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- Encourage compact urban growth
- Reduce sprawl
- Encourage efficient multimodal transportation
- Plan for and accommodate affordable housing for all economic segments
- Encourage economic development
- Protect property rights
- Timely and fair permit processes to ensure predictability
- Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries
- Retain open space, enhance recreation
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Encourage citizen participation and ensure coordination
- Ensure availability of public facilities and services
- Identify and encourage historic preservation
- Climate change and resiliency - Ensure comprehensive plans adapt to and mitigate effects
- Manage shoreline development (per SMA set forth in RCW 90.58.020)



# GMA: Regional Variation



# GMA: Periodic Update Cycle – Every 10 Years



\*Many state grant and loan programs require periodic update completion (and no active appeals)

# Fully Planning or Partially Planning?

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## Fully Planning

### Counties:

- Higher population and faster-growing; or
- Smaller/slower but chose to “opt-in”

### Periodic Update:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Land Use Map
- Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)
- Resource Lands Designation
- Critical Areas Ordinance
- Etc.

## Partially Planning

### Counties:

- Smaller population; and
- Slower growing

### Periodic Update:

- Resource Lands Designation
- Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)

**Whitman County is partially planning under the GMA**

# GMA: The Land Speaks First...

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## Natural Resource Lands

All **counties** must **designate natural resource lands** of long-term commercial significance.

- Agricultural lands
- Forest lands
- Mineral resource lands

RCW 36.70A.170



## Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)

All **jurisdictions** must **designate and protect environmentally critical areas**. “Best available science” must inform regulations that protect the functions and values of:

- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas
- Critical aquifer recharge areas
- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Wetlands

RCW 36.70A.172

WAC 365-195-900 through 925 - best available science

# Periodic Update: Resources

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- [Periodic Update Checklist for Partially-Planning Jurisdictions \(Word\)](#)
- [Checklist for Critical Areas \(PDF\)](#)
- [Periodic Update for Partially Planning Jurisdictions \(PDF\)](#)

# GMA: Required Plan Elements (fully planning)

**Land Use:** Land uses, stormwater planning, ground water, physical activity

**Housing:** Identifies the character of residential areas, inventories existing and projected housing needs and types, identifies sufficient land for all types of housing

**Capital Facilities:** Inventory, assessment of current and future needs, coordination of planning affordability analysis of serving the land use plan

**RCW 36.70A.070 & WAC 365-196-400**



# Required Plan Elements (fully planning)

**Utilities:** Inventory, assessment of current and future needs, coordination between providers and land development

**Rural (counties only):** Protect rural character with limited development and a variety of rural densities

**Transportation:** Inventory, assessment of current and future needs, bicycle and pedestrian component

**Climate Resilience:** Must enhance resiliency to and avoid the adverse impacts of climate change

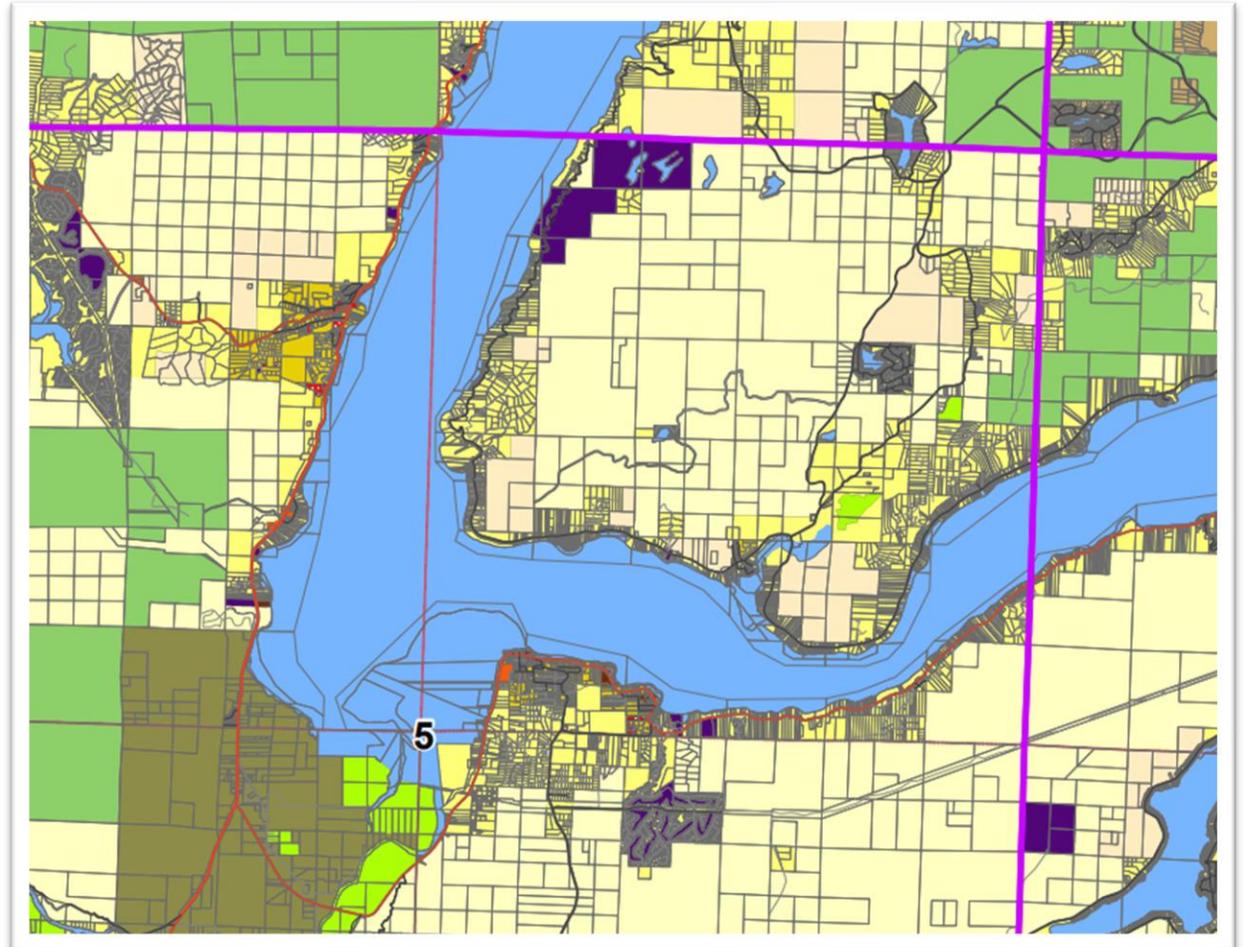
**RCW 36.70A.070 & WAC 365-196-400**



# Development Regulations

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

*Clip of Mason County  
Development Areas Map*



# Best Practices: Land Use Considerations

## Urban areas absorb most development

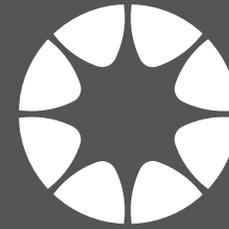
- Human-centered design
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Housing options at all income levels
- Diverse local economy
- Efficient use of costly infrastructure, including transit

## Rural character is maintained

- Low-density development
- Rural service levels
- Natural resource lands



# Questions?



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