

# **THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SURVEY**

Senior Action Committee  
American Planning Association, Washington Chapter  
2006

**The Status of Comprehensive Plans in 2005  
In the Cities and Counties of the State of Washington**

**By**

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## **Introduction**

This project of the Senior Action Committee of the American Planning Association, Washington Chapter, was initiated in 2001. Originally the idea was to invite planners from different jurisdictions to present the process used in the development and implementation of their comprehensive plan.

### **Phase One.**

#### **Project Design**

Although each presenter was given a similar set of questions around which the presentation was to be based, it soon became clear that they varied too widely for the SAC members to analyze in a systematic manner. To rectify this, the procedure was changed to a questionnaire format for all cities, counties and COGs in the state.

The first step in the new process was to obtain e-mail addresses of all the planning directors for all jurisdictions. Here we obtained the assistance of Dave Williams and Dave Catterson, municipal government analysts with the Association of Washington Cities. County planning director addresses were provided by the Washington State Association of County and Regional Planning Directors.

### **Phase Two.**

#### **Data Gathering**

The questionnaires were mailed to all jurisdictions and tabulation of the six questions began by use of MSExcel. Not all jurisdictions responded. Table 1A and 1B identify the cities responding to the questionnaire. In addition to these we received responses from counties including Benton, Clark, King, Klickitat, Mason, Spokane, and Whatcom.

### **Phase Three.**

#### **Analysis**

1. The tabulations of the responses to the CP survey questionnaire were distributed to all SAC members by Keith Maw.
2. It was decided to analyze the responses by population size, as suggested by Raj Joshi.
3. The six questions were divided among three members as follows:
  - Joshi questions 1 and 6
  - Cornish questions 2 and 3
  - McChesney questions 4 and 5
  - Maw comments on state planning office.

### **Phase Four**

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Comments by Dueker and Maw.

## Summary

The intent of the survey was to search for patterns in the scope of the planning profession in the State of Washington. We asked respondents to tell us if there were comprehensive plans on hand and if the public had easy access to them; if the planning process was inclusive and pertinent to the problems facing their jurisdictions; how planning staffs were organized and how they related to the elected and appointed officials; how planning staffs worked cooperatively with other planning bodies; how the staff coped with long range planning obligations while wrestling with current planning emergencies.

The Senior Action Committee found that the planning profession in the state of Washington appears individually and collectively to be flourishing quite well with thoughtfully researched plans not collecting shelf dust but rather down loaded and kept current by up-to-the-nanosecond planning staffs. Comprehensive plans are available for view or replication. For nominal fees plans will be sent to requesters. The relationships among staffs, planning commissions and elected officials is consistently identified by responders as being 'close' and effective.

Given the broad quilt of public jurisdictions over the landscape one might expect to find a lot of jagged edges between planning authorities. While not perfect, there do not appear to be very many cases of abrupt differences or feuds between areas. The lines of possible tension between governmental entities are most likely to occur at the edges of the Growth Management Areas. Part of the reason for this relative smoothness is the ease of information exchange nowadays but much of it rests upon the earnest attempts by planners and local governments to be accommodating to the general public's insistence upon rational, open decision-making in the planning game with extensive public input. We were looking for gaps in planning coverage. We asked questions more about how planning staffs were organized and how they functioned rather than what specific planning issues they faced. We were asking, in short, if all was well with the current state of affairs in the planning profession. We found the planning profession in the state of Washington to be in remarkably good running order.

## Background

The onset of the modern planning movement may conveniently be marked by the 1939/40 NY Worlds Fair with its theme of 'The World of Tomorrow' and its many exhibits (GMC, Ford, Chrysler) which pointed toward a future of limited access highways, regionally spaced urban centers and safe, carefully planned residential areas with schools, libraries, parks and other amenities in which to raise happy, healthy families away from the smoky squalor of cramped industrial cities. The specter of urban sprawl would not be seen as a problem until a decade later.

The 39/40 Worlds Fair also featured two significant other aspects of the coming new world: 1) the modern electronic industry (IBM, GE, and Westinghouse Exhibits) and 2) a burgeoning plastics industry (DuPont Exhibit). Since that seminal fair the country has endured several cycles of war, boom years and recession years, great changes in the fabric of industrial activity. This includes major relocation of significant elements of the industrial base from north to south and overseas. The country now faces not only the

threat of 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorism but natural disasters of increasing severity as the earth is defoliated, oceans warm and populations continue to ignore the underlying fault lines over which enormous new structures are being built in our ever rising cities.

In that six decade plus period (from '39 to '06) the planning profession has matured from a somewhat esoteric under-funded visionary attempt to impose order on urban development at a distance to a fully integrated position of strength and respect within the fabric of state and local government. Comprehensive plans were optional at the local level. Those agencies that did plan did so without relating to neighboring cities or counties. This all changed after a fiery debate in 1990 when the State Legislature passed and Governor Booth Gardner signed the Growth Management Act. The Federal agencies which once played necessary nurturing roles have gradually diminished in relevancy but some national economic planning and development issues continue to get media coverage.

In that same 39-06 time span a significant demographic change has taken place. The average life span has grown. The biblical three score and ten which once measured a man's life span from wild-eyed youth through the productive years and into appreciated wise old age has lengthened dramatically. It has become for most a marvelous boon (more active retirement years) but for some an unforeseen burden. A life-time spanning a century is becoming a realistic norm with personal and public planning implications.

The once conventional city plan of about twenty years into the future has long since given way to a seamless on-going planning and permitting process in which planning goals and objectives become the operating principles of the current planning process. In the process a new kind of planning/acquisition imperative is being felt. If the old style long range plan called for greenbelts and nature reserves, the new planning ideal is to obtain the key land parcels now before opportunities fade.

### **Recommendations**

The Senior Action Committee urges planners in Washington to continue what has been successful in the past such as good recruitment of professional staff and effective self-education including seminars, sabbaticals, personnel exchanges, retreats and attendance at regional and national meetings. Planners are advised as always to maintain continued vigilance of emerging trends some of which may be troublesome in the near term and all of which will bear in varying degrees to the practice of planning in the future.

One clear rallying point is the disturbing trend of the 'property rights movement' which had such significant ramifications in Oregon in recent years. Comparable activities are underway in Washington. This will directly affect the pride of Washington planning – the Growth Management Act. It cries out for a state-wide 'summit' of interested parties.

Fundamental economic trends are coming to light. As anticipated, the comparable advantages of rail traffic over highway hauling (unit trains carrying a hundred containers v a long haul truck pulling no more than two) is leading to a renewal of private rail

transportation investments. Not so evident but comparably inevitable is the advent of point to point air traffic which will lead to more first class high usage airports near mid sized cities.

There are significant currents and under currents of concern to planners. In addition to the property rights movement promoted by few but sympathized with by many there is a long standing anti-government bias at large within the general population. Lawyers, environmentalists and planners also feel some of this residual heat. While planners are not vilified as raucously as they once were there is still a low level hum of general displeasure with any rules and regulations laid down upon a populace.

Some underlying trends need to be resisted. Other trends need to be encouraged and exploited. Among those to be restrained are the continued dismemberment and relocation of the industrial/manufacturing/ administrative base of the country. Such trends may appear inevitable and planners may have little say in how these things pan out, but certainly planners in their role as protectorate of their assigned territory need to be aware of such trends.

Just a few decades ago urban planners were aware of environmental issues but admonished to mind their own business. Once a prominent state planner had difficulty just being heard at legislative meetings regarding strip mining practices. Now the cover of the APA magazine 'Planning' (August/September 2005) shows the terrible destruction of West Virginia at the hands of coal mining interests and asks pointedly 'Can We Keep Doing This?'. It is clearly seen as a local land use problem requiring the attention of the local real estate development participants and the community planners near these devastations. Like the disasters at Libby, Montana and the Donora, Pennsylvania, public health is found to be the province of community planning bodies – when heavy industry is permitted under the zoning ordinance, what dangerous health issues are involved?

Other sociological and economic trends need to be exploited. The significant trend of interest in living downtown plays directly into the objectives of growth management. If one is serious about wishing to curb the excesses of urban sprawl one must recognize the inevitability of higher inner city density. This, of course, calls for diligent and intelligent urban design and need for careful and creative in-filling to develop livable urban communities.

Some changes appear promising – gasohol and wind farming among them. This leads to the obvious admonishment to stay abreast of the times and seek to exploit opportunities as they arise. While these matters for the most part are principally the province and responsibility of state and federal government, local planners who are mindful of economic development issues can assist their communities by helping to develop necessary facilities at the local level.

Long range comprehensive land use planning by its very nature requires a strong state interest. Matters of wide-spread local community interest include not only transportation, energy development, agricultural, industrial and port development, natural resource

conservation, education and the like but almost every community depends to a certain extent upon tourism for local job generation. For some tourism is absolutely vital.

How well represented local planners are in these matters appears to be less of an obvious right than a matter of gubernatorial style. Fortunately, for a long time beginning in 1970 with Governor Dan Evans who promoted the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and continuing with Governor John Spellman and Governor Booth Gardner who signed the Growth Management Act into law in 1990, down to today where the present Governor Christine Gregoire, residents of the state of Washington have been blessed with Governors attentive to the inter-relationship between state-wide issues and local land use planning responsibilities. Clearly there is a need for regional planning in the state and the logical place to look for leadership is at the state level. Governor Booth commented that although the SMA and SEPA were models they weren't very good ones because everything had to be settled on a case-by-case basis. "The purpose of the Growth Management Act was to have a system where you could anticipate growth, set standards, and be ahead of the game."

There was agreement among the group that State Planning had declined in stature in recent years despite excellent staffing (Mike McCormick being highly praised for his efforts). It was thought there ought to be a state planning department and planning board in the governor's office and that the state planning department should not be part of the business expansion development as it is now. The functions of the current CTED are a mixture. It was also mentioned that the state planning office should provide more assistance to small local communities. Arthur Grey recalled being on the state planning board under Governor Evans which was highly placed, met frequently and was very effective in furthering state planning goals.

Finally, state and local planners are advised to continue to support the organizations (university planning schools, APA, PAW, etc) which have proven so successful in the past in keeping the planning establishment the effective part of society that it is and helping to continue the respect and prestige it currently enjoys.

*Sample questionnaire*

SENIOR ACTION COMMITTEE  
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

July, 2003

The Senior Action Committee of American Planning Association designed this letter to assist planners in preparing a statement on current practice of comprehensive planning in Washington State. It will become part of the Committee's report to the Chapter Board on the current status of comprehensive planning in early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Information on six topics is requested. We ask that your e-mail response be limited to five pages or less. Please send your replies to either

Bob Cornish [rsc@foxinternet.net](mailto:rsc@foxinternet.net)

Raj Joshi [rajjoshi@zipcon.com](mailto:rajjoshi@zipcon.com)

**I. What do you have in terms of a comprehensive plan for your jurisdiction?**

1. Do you have an adopted comprehensive plan or is one under preparation?
2. Was it prepared under the authority of the Growth Management Act or under some other State planning enabling legislation?
3. Is the comprehensive plan based on stated goals, objectives and policies?
4. Is this plan available to the public free of charge?
5. Is this plan available in print and also via the internet?
6. What comprehensive plan documents, including maps, are available at this time?

**II. How do you plan in your jurisdiction?**

1. Did you have public participation in the preparation of the initial comprehensive plan? If so how was it managed?
2. How do you coordinate with the power structure of your jurisdiction? (Power structure = merchants, elected officials, service clubs, property owners, etc.)
3. Do you have work/strategy sessions with abutting jurisdictions? If yes, how often? Please name them.
4. Are the policies of the legislative body (county council or commissioners or city council) influenced by the planning program and vice-versa?
5. What proportion of your department's budget and time is spent on long range planning?
6. How many staff members in the planning department? Is there a sharing of planning personnel with other departments?

**III. What does your comprehensive plan include?**

1. What functional elements (land use, parks & open space, schools, fire stations, transportation, utilities, disaster mitigation, etc.) are included? What techniques are used to coordinate these plan elements?
2. Does the comprehensive plan include any mid-range special area development plans?
3. Has there been a change in the thinking and approach to planning since the adoption of the Growth Management Act?

**IV. How is the comprehensive planning function organized?**

1. What is the relationship of the planning program to the legislative body?
2. Is the planning function directly under the mayor or chief executive or is it under a planning commission?
3. How is the planning staff organized? Are the long range and current development plans in separate sections?
4. Is zoning administration a separate function from planning?
5. What is the budget for the planning function? What percentage is it of the total budget? What is the per capita amount spent on planning?
6. How many planners are assigned to the comprehensive plan?

**V. How is the comprehensive plan implemented?**

1. Do you have a capital improvement program? If so, how often is it updated?
2. Is the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance based on the comprehensive plan?
3. What other ordinances and techniques are being utilized for implementing the comprehensive plan?
4. How many requests have been made for a copy of the comprehensive plan?

**VI. What are the current issues and challenges facing your planning efforts today?**

Thanks for participating in this inventory. The results will be posted on the Chapter's web site.

If you have any questions, please call either Bob Cornish at 425 822 7642 or Raj Joshi at 206 524 6304.

**Table 1A**

<b>Washington State Cities and SAC's Comprehensive Plan Survey Sample Cities</b>				
<b>(Mar 28, 2005)</b>				
<b>Population Group</b>	<b>WA STATE No. of Cities</b>	<b>SAC Sample</b>	<b>Total cities % Of Total</b>	<b>Sample Cities % Of Total</b>
Total- All cities	268	29	100.0	100.0
250,000 +	1	1	0.4	3.4
100,000-250,000	2	1	0.7	3.4
50,000-100,000	4	1	1.5	3.4
25,000-50,000	15	7	5.6	24.1
	21	9	7.8	31.0
10,000-25,000	19	7	7.1	24.1
	19	7	7.1	24.1
5,000-10,000	25	7	9.3	24.1
2,500-5,000	40	3	14.9	10.3
1,000-2,500	62	1	23.1	3.4
0-1,000	100	1	37.3	3.4
	227	12	84.7	4.5

**SAMPLE CITIES' DISTRIBUTION**

	>250,000	25,000-250,000	10,000-25,000	<10,000
	Seattle	Bellevue	Mercer Island	Woodinville
		Kent	Issaquah	Gig Harbor
		Kirkland	Bonney Lake	Steilacoom
		Auburn	Mill Creek	Pacific
		Lynnwood	Port Angeles	North Bend
		Lacey	Aberdeen	Washougal
		Burien	Sunnyside	Elma
		Marysville		Cheney
		Pullman		Clarkston
				Colville
				Leavenworth
				Selah
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>

It can be seen from the information in these two tables that the response was representative for cities with population of 5,000 and over and not so for cities with the population of less than 5,000.

The tabulation of questions was accomplished in the Spring and Summer of 2005.

**TABLE 1: APA-WA CHAPTER SENIOR ACTION COMMITTEE'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY - 2003-04 -- CIT**

<b>I:</b>	<b>What do you have in terms of comprehensive plan for your jurisdiction?</b>							
<b>I-1:</b>	Do you have an adopted comprehensive plan or is one under preparation?							
<b>I-2:</b>	Was it prepared under the authority of GMA or under some other State planning enabling legislation?							
<b>I-3:</b>	Is the comprehensive plan based on stated goals, objectives and policies?							
<b>I-4:</b>	Is this plan available to the public free of charge?							
<b>I-5:</b>	Is the plan available in print and also via the internet?							
<b>I-6:</b>	What comprehensive plan documents, including maps, are available at this time?							
<b>PUGET SOUND REGION CITIES AND TOWNS</b>								
<b>WA Part</b>	<b>Pop</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>I-1</b>	<b>I-2</b>	<b>I-3</b>	<b>I-4</b>	<b>I-5</b>	<b>I-6</b>
WW	571900	Seattle	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	1994. The Plan/Future Land use map/2003 Moni
WW	84210	Kent	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$ 21.76. Plan and maps are available for a fee.
WW	45630	Kirkland	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Costs. All documents and comp plan are availabl
WW	45446	Auburn	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$25. Entire doc is available.
WW	34500	Lynnwood	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Plan available for review at city hall, public library reports/maps
WW	32240	Lacey	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$72+\$8for each element. Entire doc with maps is
WW	31480	Burien	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	at cost. Goals/policies and LU map is free. Maps
WW	28370	Marysville	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	Cost is \$ 40 for plan. In process for internet. Com
WW	21840	Mercer Island	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$15 for comp plan. Comp plan including maps.
WW	15110	Issaquah	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	1995 and 2002 amendments. Printed plan at cos
WW	12950	Bonney Lake	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	costs. On web soon. All comp plan docs are avai
WW	12260	Mill Creek	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$ 20. Prepared in 1999. East UGA sub-area plan
WW	9905	Woodinville	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	All comp plan documents including maps are ava
WW	6655	Gig Harbor	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	at cost. Comp Plan and element plans plus maps
WW	6120	Steilacoom	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yp	Print free to res - non-res pay print cost. Comp pl
WW	5665	Pacific	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	
WW	107,000	Bellevue	Y	Y	Y	N		The GMA requires that a general review and upd specified new target for growth. This is a proble
WW	4680	North Bend	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Print at cost. 1995 comp plan and 2002 amendm
<b>OTHER WESTERN WASHINGTON CITIES AND TOWNS</b>								
<b>WA Part</b>	<b>Pop</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>I-1</b>	<b>I-2</b>	<b>I-3</b>	<b>I-4</b>	<b>I-5</b>	<b>I-6</b>
WW	18397	Port Angeles	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Comp plan and map is available.
WW	16320	Aberdeen	Y	N	Y	N	Yp	2001.Plan In print only but in process for internet
WW	9775	Washougal	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Costs \$ 10. On internet. Site plan
WW	3060	Elma	Y	N	Y	N	Yp	\$.15 per page. Comp plan and maps available.
<b>EASTERN WASHINGTON CITIES AND TOWNS</b>								
<b>WA Part</b>	<b>Pop</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>I-1</b>	<b>I-2</b>	<b>I-3</b>	<b>I-4</b>	<b>I-5</b>	<b>I-6</b>
EW		Spokane						
EW	25300	Pullman						
EW	14300	Sunnyside	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	Costs. All documents are available.
EW	9470	Cheney	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$20 for comp plan. Wall maps and zoning map a
EW	7290	Clarkston	Y	N	Y	N	Yp	\$ 10. Adopted Jun 29, 1999. Plan under RCW 35
EW	4965	Colville	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$ 22. All docs are available.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SURVEY  
 BY SENIOR ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON CHAPTER

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EW	2115	Leavenworth	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	Public must pay copying cost.
EW	730	Selah	Y	Y	Y	N	Yp	\$ 25 for comp plan. Comp plan and maps available

**Question 1      What do you have in terms of a comprehensive plan for your jurisdiction?**

**Question 1.1      Do you have an adopted comprehensive plan or is one under preparation?**

**CITIES**

All responding cities have an adopted comprehensive plan.

**COUNTIES**

All responding counties have an adopted comprehensive plan.

**Question 1.2      Was it prepared under the authority of GMA or under some other State enabling legislation?**

**CITIES**

Of the 28 responding cities all except three are preparing comprehensive plan under GMA. The three not preparing under GMA include Aberdeen, Elma, and Clarkston.

**COUNTIES**

All the responding counties plan under GMA.

**Question 1.3      Is the comprehensive plan based on stated goals, objectives and policies?**

**CITIES**

All cities' comprehensive plan was based on stated goals, objectives and policies.

**COUNTIES**

Except for Klickitat County, the rest of the responding counties' plans are based on stated goals and policies.

**Question 1.4 Is this plan available to the public free of charge?**

**CITIES**

In five cities public can get the comprehensive plan and maps free of charge. In other responding cities there is a charge for obtaining the plans. The charge varies from the nominal cost of reproducing to \$ 72 plus \$ 8 for each plan element in the city of Lacey.

**COUNTIES**

Except for Mason County, plans are available free of charge in other responding counties.

**Question 1.5 Is this plan available in print and also via the internet?**

**CITIES**

Seventeen responding cities have their comprehensive plan in print only. The remainder ten responding cities have them both in print and on internet. The size of the city is immaterial whether it's on line or not. For example, Gig Harbor, with a population of 6655 has its plans on-line, whereas Kent with a population of 84,210 does not have it on-line.

**COUNTIES**

Most responding counties' plans are available in print as well as on-line. Mason and Klickitat counties' plans are not available on-line.

**Question 1.6 What comprehensive plan documents, including maps, are available at this time?**

**CITIES**

In all the responding cities comprehensive plans, element plans and maps are available. Also available in some cities are sub-area plans.

**COUNTIES**

In all the responding counties comprehensive plans, element plans and maps are available. Also available in some counties are sub-area plans and Draft Environmental Impact Statements.

## **Question 2: How do you plan in your jurisdiction?**

### **Question 2.1 Did you have extensive public participation in the preparation of the initial comprehensive plan (CP)?**

#### **CITIES**

All responding cities cited extensive public involvement. In the larger cities it was necessarily more involved and usually extended over several years. A few cities made the distinction between their Initial CP and the one responding to the Growth Management Act. Responses from smaller cities were sometimes just a "yes".

Planning commissions were usually the focus of the public's involvement and were sometimes assisted by consultants and planning department staff members.

Various methods of involving the public were utilized including workshops, mailed flyers, newsletters, and cable TV broadcasts of both planning commission and council meetings. Occasionally newspaper articles and public notices were utilized for special proposals. In a few cities a Citizen Involvement Program was organized with emphasis on neighborhood meetings in schools. In others open house meetings received citizen feedback on proposals for plan drafts, with comments on data and maps. In one smaller city, a Citizen Advisory Committee was charged with updating the comprehensive plan. It was self-managed by an elected chair with planning staff used as a resource. In a small city a survey form was hand distributed by the planning commissioners and retrieved by them door to door. A draft plan was then prepared with help from a consultant.

The classic procedure used by smaller cities included a consultant hired by the planning commission to work with city staff. Public hearings lead to adoption.

#### **COUNTIES**

Due to the complexity, large "Core" counties relied on a combination of element-specific committees that provided research, data and information to a citizen advisory group that was responsible for directing plan development. In smaller counties all levels of the administration were involved plus the use of a consultant. Some counties chose to have the staff manage plan preparation, with open houses during formulation.

**Question 2.2      How do you coordinate with the power structure of your jurisdiction?**

**CITIES**

Often stake holders were identified at the beginning of each planning project. Coordination methods varied depending on the type of project. An attempt was made to gain the input of the power structure early and often.

The internet received growing use in contacting known interested parties and post background information, alerts to workshops and meetings. Citizen advisory committees would often meet with property owners, developers, environmentalists and citizen activists. Economic development committees included a wide range of the city power structure. "Movers and shakers" were invited to attend and comment throughout the public participation process.

In one instance, a city staff person served on the local Chamber of Commerce Executive Board. Groups with identified special interests were contacted individually. The planning director was used as a member of the board of directors of downtown groups such as the chamber of commerce, and as a speaker to service clubs.

**COUNTIES**

Counties coordinate with the power structure in a variety of ways. The county executive and council meet with developers, property owners and environmental groups. Although stakeholders meetings were held, many counties responded that more outreach is needed.

Two interesting methods of coordinating with the power structure were mentioned. The GIS system were used to tap into for mailing lists, notifying business and property owners of updates and proposed revisions. One county mentioned a series of "listening posts" in various regions of the county.

**Question 2.3      Do you have work/strategy sessions with abutting jurisdictions?**

**CITIES**

Although responses varied widely, most cities have continuing working meetings with not only abutting jurisdictions but with several agencies that naturally fall within their area of interest. A few respondents said that that they did not have working sessions with abutting jurisdictions. Some cities reported that they share documents and comments but not formal meetings. Several noted that they only meet when coordination is needed. Department staffs often meet informally. It seems that the Growth Management Act has

prompted some degree of intra-agency coordination. City Councils meet monthly at intergovernmental meetings, and planning directors meet monthly.

The Eastside Planning Directors meet occasionally as needed. Some cities have county planning commission liaisons that sit with its planning commission. Coordination is often obtained through membership in regional advisory groups and through meetings with neighboring cities and regional organizations such as Sound Transit and the Puget Sound Regional Council.

In previous years the planning directors of cities in the county have served as the technical committee for the county's GMA steering committee and as issues come up they discuss how to deal with them.

It was also reported that planning staffs met irregularly with neighboring cities during formulation of the plan to tackle immediate planning concerns.

In some instances, as an interim strategy, memoranda of understanding required that city and county notify each other about all impending land use and development proposals in the interim Urban Growth Area.

## **COUNTIES**

The counties do not have regularly scheduled meetings with adjoining counties unless they are members of a regional consortium as noted above. These councils discuss transportation issues, and regional planning for natural resources including water and salmon recovery. It was reported that cities with counties may meet on a monthly basis with the county.

Counties adjacent to Oregon have meetings regularly with county commissioners from the Portland Area Metropolitan Planning Council. It was also noted that county to county work sessions do not happen frequently enough.

## **QUESTION 2.4 Are the policies of the legislative body (county council or commissioners or city council) influenced by the planning program and vice-versa?**

### **CITIES**

Some of each. The answers indicated that the legislative policies are indeed influenced by the planning program with i turn influences the council's policies. Based on data collection and public input, staff strategies, through the planning commission and/or citizen commissions, influence the city council's decisions affecting growth management.

City councils have a direct impact on the planning program through its control of department budgets. As councils adopt a plan, it contains its policies and proposed actions.

It was observed that legislative policy tends to drive planning policy.

## **COUNTIES**

County legislators are influenced by the comprehensive plan and attempt to keep other legislative matters in accordance with the CP.

Federal policies have a big impact on the state and regional economy and on the environment. Federal court cases impact natural resource issues of county-wide policies. These filter down to areas of local government.

County staff may initiate issues not otherwise covered in the annual budget cycle where the county executive and commissioners establish the priorities for the next fiscal year.

## **QUESTION 2.5 What proportion of your department's budget and time is spent on long range planning?**

### **CITIES**

Larger cities tend to spend about 7 percent of the department budget on long range planning in contrast to medium size cities that allocate around 25-40 percent. Some medium cities use up to 50-70 percent. These tend to be in fast growth suburban areas. Some small cities spend as little as 5 percent when there is no incentive for planning provided by the county or where there are no development pressures.

### **COUNTIES**

Counties spend between 12 to 35 percent of the department budget on long range comprehensive planning.

## **Question 2.6 How many staff members in the planning department? Is there a sharing of planning personnel with other departments?**

### **CITIES**

As one might expect, the range is large, from zero to 350. Where large staffs exist, about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the total staff are assigned to long-range planning. Medium sized cities have a wide range from around 20 to 100. Small cities usually have one planner and sometimes

an administrative assistant. Frequently small cities have no planning department at all and use public works and/or administrative staff on development projects, with no long-range planning. Very little mention of long range planning is made in small cities. Sharing planners with other departments and within sections of a planning department is sometimes used when special development pressures occur.

Large city departments often have their own planners that cooperate with planning department staff planners on a project by project basis. These interdepartmental teams function without formally sharing personnel.

## **COUNTIES**

Within the Puget Sound core, county planning departments can have more than 100 staff members. No mention was made of the number of planners assigned to long range planning.

County planners make use of part-time planners and interns.

Generally, there is no direct staff sharing with other county departments. However personnel sharing does occur and can become significant for transportation planning, but rarely for other needs.

### **Question 3      What does your comprehensive plan include?**

#### **Question 3.1      What functional elements (land use, parks & open space, schools, fire stations, transportation, utilities, disaster mitigation, etc.) are included?**

##### **CITIES**

The cities responded that they include all required elements as per the Growth Management Act. Some include special elements such as shoreline management, and an emergency management plan. It was also mentioned that a few agencies were signatories in the Regional Disaster Plan. Several responses indicated that where lacking, emphasis is now being placed on an economic development element.

Several responses were simply yes, or no.

Although the questionnaire did not ask, it was interesting and surprising that nearly all of the respondents included a statement about how the comp plan is coordinated. The techniques varied. One agency uses a planning team that works closely with subject matter with several units of government. This approach seemed suitable for larger cities.

Often, particularly in small cities, coordination of the CP project is the responsibility of the long range planner.

Although not mentioned, a hearing examiner is sometimes involved.

The Capital Improvement Plan is used to coordinate the proposals of the land use element.

One agency reported that *element committees* are chaired by planning commissioners who regularly meet at Planning Commission workshops.

Another agency reported that coordination was effected by "annual CP review every 5 years".

Drafts of proposed elements are routed to different departments for review.

Coordination of plan policies occurs within the Comp Plan Division of the planning department. Techniques vary depending on the element. Often planning staff heads up interdepartmental teams to implement plans.

## COUNTIES

The counties surveyed indicated that they contain all elements required by the Growth Management Act. Some include additional elements such as rural and critical areas.

Coordination was again mentioned. Coordination efforts were included at the time of writing the comp plan. For example, citizen advisory panels staffed by planners were used. Other counties relied on SEPA (the State Environmental Protection Act) to coordinate the Comprehensive Plan. Coordination can occur by county-initiated monthly meetings with all service providers, and monthly meetings with elected officials of the county and cities within the county. Public and professional review is also used to coordinate the comp plan.

### **Question 3.2 Does the comprehensive plan include any mid-range special area development plans?**

## CITIES

Again, some responses were simply yes or no.

Most cities had special area or district plans, but these were not always deemed to be mid-range. Some were long range and in one case extra-long range in dealing with transit and railroads. Often downtown or business district subarea plans are detailed most frequently. Occasionally the documents of non-municipal agencies such as school districts, and water districts were adopted by reference.

Some cities have specific plans for each neighborhood. Others have sub-area plans for college districts, redevelopment areas, urban forestry plans (which may be an overlay element).

Colville reported that:

*much of the planning under GMA has been reactionary. It's inherently more difficult for smaller communities to quickly adapt to all the new changes in the legislation, therefore we tend to spend more time catching up than we'd like. Given time, money, and resource, I believe the potential exists to do good proactive planning under GMA provided that the local jurisdictions can apply local circumstances to make better decisions.*

## COUNTIES

County comp plans may include many subarea components. These are combined with six year capital improvement programs.

It was mentioned that a county comp plan contains a Community Plans Element that calls for the development of area-wide community plans. Each of these is consistent with the county comp plan while allowing cities to address issues unique to the municipal level.

**Question 3.3      Has there been a change in thinking and approach to planning since the adoption of the Growth Management Act?**

**CITIES**

Yes, city departments now are more likely than pre-GMA to consider consistency with the city's comp plan as they administer their codes, ordinances, policies and applications for grants.

City councils are more mindful of the comp plan when it adopts its annual budget.

Cities are experiencing an emerging interest in infill and low impact development techniques.

There is a more widespread recognition among elected officials and the public that planning in this region needs to focus on accommodating growth, rather than just on preserving the status quo.

An unintended consequence of the GMA requirement for consistency between the comp plan and zoning, is that very long-range (more than 20 year) planning cannot be incorporated into the plan. Therefore portions of subarea plans had to be changed to become *less* visionary.

Capital facility planning has improved and more realistic funding sources identified.

An increased emphasis on the need to maintain a healthy downtown was coupled with the requirements to become more urban rather than maintaining a suburban form. More interest in protecting environmental resources was noted.

The general climate and public demand for responsible planning has greatly improved.

**COUNTIES**

In cases where counties were near metropolitan areas, comprehensive planning was already underway although the GMA provided targeted guidance.

Prior to the Growth Management Act county planning was often area and issue specific. Some counties lack joint planning agreements with local jurisdictions.

Protection of natural resources, especially water, is far more integrated than in previous plans. Much more integration is expected in the future. One county reported that its Natural Resources Integration Project links the needs of Water Resource Planning, ESA, Watershed Planning (quality, quantity, in-stream flow and wildlife) together with shoreline management, open space and long-term mitigation management efforts. In some counties the changes have been superficial in the sense that planners still struggle for compliance on all fronts. Example: public works are still building new roads in rural areas. Also substantial difficulty has been experienced in educating developers and staff on regulatory interpretation in accordance with policies.

**Question 4      How is the comprehensive planning function organized?**

**Question 4.1      What is the relationship of the planning program to the legislative body?**

**CITIES**

All of the programs in all of the cities are designated to be advisory to the elected bodies. Most operate through a Planning Commission. At least one city (Bonnie Lake) said the City Council is distrustful of the Growth Management Act and suspicious of planning in general. For the most part Cities described their relationships between Planning Commission and staff and the legislative bodies as close.

**COUNTIES**

All of the studies and recommendations made by the Planning Commission and staff are advisory. The relationship between elected officials and Planning Commission and staff are close.

**Question 4.2      Is the planning function directly under the Mayor or Chief Executive or under a Planning Commission?**

**CITIES**

Typically the planning staff is located in a major department of the government working under the general guidance of the Planning Commission with scheduled meetings and reporting functions to the Mayor, City Manager and City Councils and the Planning Commission.

**COUNTIES**

The planning staffs are typically under the County Executive with sections of the planning department working closely with the Planning Commission and other sections working exclusively with the County Council. Coordination among the various sections is close.

**Question 4.3      How is the planning staff organized?**

**CITIES**

There is wide spread recognition that the long range planning function differs from current planning activities. Accordingly, there are usually separate divisions handling these two tasks. In smaller cities there is naturally staff overlap with individual staffers undertaking more than one function.

**COUNTIES**

Depending upon the size of the county, planning staffs are usually divided into long range and current planning divisions. Smaller counties may have both functions within one small staff but their purposes are understood to be different and are treated in that manner.

**Question 4.4      Is the zoning administration a separate function from planning?**

**CITIES**

Zoning is considered a tool of planning and is administered as a part of the planning program. Communities large enough to have separate long range and current planning divisions within the planning department typically place zoning administration within the current planning division unless the area in question is so large that it deserves long range planning analysis and consideration.

**COUNTIES**

Counties are careful in considering the size of the zoning request and assign the task either to the long range division or to current plans. For the most part the respondents felt that zoning is not a separate function from planning.

**Question 4.5      What is the budget for the planning function? What percent is it of the total budget? What is the per capita amount?**

**CITIES**

Costs vary according to size and conditions within the city. Seattle with an overall budget in the billions (2.5 B including City Light and Seattle Water) reports the annual per capita cost at \$6.00. Gig Harbor (\$230.00) is at the high end.

## **COUNTIES**

Clark County reports a low per capita annual cost of \$3.65. Most counties report costs at less than \$16.00.

### **Question 4.6      How many planners are assigned to the Comprehensive Plan?**

## **CITIES**

Even in large cities like Seattle and Bellevue the number of planners assigned to the Comprehensive Plan is relatively small, e.g. Seattle has 3 planners assigned to the 10yr update.

## **COUNTIES**

Counties typically have more land to be developed and accordingly have somewhat more planners assigned to the task of updating or developing new long range plans. In Pierce County, for example, the function is located in the Advance Planning Division which has a staff of 16 including 10 planners.

**Question 5      How is the Comprehensive Plan implemented?**

**Question 5.1      Do you have a Capital Improvement Program? If so, how often is it implemented?**

**CITIES**

All cities have Capital Improvement Programs which are updated periodically. In general, larger cities update their CIPs biannually. Smaller cities update annually. A few cities are on 5 or 6 year update cycles.

**COUNTIES**

Counties endeavor to update their Capital Improvement Programs annually to fit the annual budget process. Dovetailing with other programs (open space, rural development funding, etc.) places special burdens on counties seeking to take advantage of special programs.

**Question 5.2      Is the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance based upon the Comprehensive Plan?**

**CITIES**

All cities are either now in conformance with the concept of zoning and subdivision ordinances being in conformance with each other or are in the process of getting into conformance. The cities within Growth Management Areas are especially aware of this objective and are making special efforts to upgrade accordingly.

**COUNTIES**

As with cities, counties are updating and upgrading to be in compliance especially in GMA areas.

**Question 5.3      What other ordinances and techniques are being utilized for implementing the Comprehensive Plan?**

**CITIES**

A wide range of special plans and programs are incorporated and appropriately meshed with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan including programs to save historical buildings and areas, park & recreation trails, programs for special housing for low and moderate income groups, the homeless and the elderly as well as special programs for economic development, shoreline management and critical areas programs (wetlands, steep slope areas, etc.).

## COUNTIES

The number of special programs affecting counties includes those affecting cities and then some. Coordination in implementation of these programs is a major part of the work implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Those involving the successful implementation of the Growth Management Act are especially important. Budgeting for all of the special programs is a major work item for county planning staffs.

### **Question 5.4      How many requests have been made for the Comprehensive Plan?**

## CITIES

Most cities don't track requests since the information is available over the internet. Those cities which do keep track report no more than a hundred a year at most. The real estate industry is the main user of the Comprehensive Plan. Demand for parts of the planning and/or zoning map are the usual requests.

## COUNTIES

Counties experience large numbers of requests for sub parts of the county but few requests for the full published official Comprehensive Plan. Demand is in the low hundreds for most counties.

### **Observations and reflections upon Questions 4 & 5 (with specific references to Seattle).**

It is clear from the answers to these two questions and personal observation that the 'planning movement' as it was once called has shifted from playing the role of 'wishful thinker/outsider' to 'big-time player'. It is like an actor going from amateur status to summer stock to Broadway. The land use planning program is now a major, integrated function of urban and metropolitan (county) governance.

Moreover it is clear that modern planning tools (aerial mapping, computerized mapping and data input coupled with internet accessibility) have changed the dynamics of the profession and its service to the public. Planning adherents are being aided and abetted by activists in matters as diverse as tent-city encampments, public housing, environmental concerns, physical fitness and so on. There are dog walkers seeking freedom from leash laws, skate boarders wanting skateboard slopes, bikers seeking trails and neighborhood activists seeking local neighborhoods with charm and character (Fremont, Ballard, Alki Beach, etc.)

Planners are not only coping with these types but are pushing the envelope through effective programs like the Growth Management Act. Alas, the GMA has brought forth into the open a new class of adversarialists under the property-rights banner. The

Monorail land sales will bring that issue to a group of very disgruntled ex-property owners close to a neighborhood near you shortly.

Planning has come a long way in the State of Washington. In the very early days of development of Seattle, for example, urban planning guidance was usually in the form of consultant plans in the manner of Daniel Burham. These were often very bold proposals such as the Bogue Plan (1913) which was essentially a list of wishful thoughts by a far reaching imaginative engineer (save Mercer Island as a park ala Stanley Park in Vancouver, create an in-city 'Commons' with a stream running through it). The Bogue Plan was fostered by do-gooders for lofty ambitions mostly from the upper classes who saw the need for well located cultural land uses such as zoological gardens, libraries, waterfront parks, historical museums, art galleries, botanical conservancies, walking, hiking, driving trails and boulevards as well as practical projects such as improved ports, hill regrading and the tunneling of rail traffic. The plans were bold. They inspired the civic minded. They came from the City Beautiful era. Still, implementation (except for a few huge bond issues for lowering Lake Washington) was difficult and spasmodic. In those early days, there were large inputs from consulting planners, engineers and landscape architects. The idea of a permanent planning staff dealing with plans on a daily basis was slow to emerge.

In the post-war (WWII) era significant engineering endeavors were taken and completed by Seattle without significant local planning review (Highway 99 viaduct, I-5, I- 90). John Spaeth the City Planner for Seattle would try in vain to get express bus lanes included in the multi-lane state of the art freeway which would be known as I-5.

A few years later local review of public projects was mandatory and intensive. The Burke-Gilman Trail, for example, was reviewed section by section by local citizenry in public meetings held in the field where every single attendant was systematically asked for comment. Urban Renewal activities were similarly reviewed locally in great detail.

At the same time that planning activities reflected great local review, a cry was heard from the business community that the planning process had become too bureaucratized. A strong business-lead attack on the 'planning process' lead responsible officials to speed up the process. Now the 'planning process' has become more of a one-stop permitting process meeting the need for swift action in a field which has become more and more complex as the competing demands for up-scale growth, help to the needy, the elderly, the young (it is not just schools) have expanded. At the same time planners are recognizing environmental pressures, the changing employment scene with large medical establishments replacing mixed urban neighborhoods and the demands for better mass transportation being expressed loudly and clearly.

## **Question 6      What are the current issues and challenges facing your planning efforts today?**

**Most of the responses in this question (issues and challenges) can be summarized by the following categories:**

### **GMA Issues and Challenges---Cities**

1.      Complying with GMA mandates and update schedules.
2.      Accommodating growth targets, managing redevelopment and protecting critical areas.
3.      Maintaining density requirements will be difficult.
4.      Developing a compact urban form is difficult where people want high end housing on large lots.
5.      Challenge is to meet GMA requirements while preserving some semblance and flavor of historic lifestyle and sense of place.
6.      Integrating infill development into an established town.
7.      Provide for density (higher density?) while ensuring that new development is compatible with existing neighborhoods.
8.      Ensure that we comply with GMA's update provisions by 2007.
9.      Small communities would benefit from clear direction from GM hearing Boards when they render a decision. Too much is left at the discretion of others.
10.    Ensuring the relevancy of GMA on rural communities.
11.    Accommodation of future growth may not be in the interest of every community.
12.    There are too many interests fighting for room under the rubric of GMA. The original intent has been lost.
13.    GMA's relevancy will be increasingly challenged by the planning establishment as well as city leaders.
14.    The lack of adequate funding for State & Federal mandated programs and the lack of leadership at the state level.

### **GMA Issues and Challenges: Counties**

1. What is concurrency? Are we doing anything differently than we did before the adoption of the comprehensive plan? There is no true concurrency as we now mandate these items to be in place prior to issuance of a building permit.
2. Urban Growth Area planning for existing cities and future cities.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Issues and Challenges - Cities**

1. Coordination of transportation projects with adjoining jurisdictions.
2. Coordination of housing policies with adjoining jurisdictions.
3. Annexation issues.
4. Inconsistent development standards in the unincorporated lands within the city's Urban Growth Area.
5. Lack of coordination between State agencies – DOT water rights vs. OFM population edicts.
6. Maintain a sustainable supply of potable water from region's aquifer.
7. Impact of SEATAC airport expansion.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Issues and Challenges - Counties**

1. How dedicated are Public Works and other county departments to the policies and goals of the comprehensive plan and how much is business as usual.

### **Budget and Implementation Issues and Challenges - Cities**

1. Major redevelopment projects in sub areas not in conformance with city policies.
2. Ongoing effort to have CIP's advance strategies outlined in the comprehensive plan.

3. On going code enforcement.
4. City is seeking a balance between the code requirements for development with market demands and what the community vision is.
5. Implementing new shoreline regulations.
6. Community-wide reluctance to plan because it is seen as regulatory – “the long arm of the government” telling people what they can’t do with their property.
7. Citizens do not want to pay for services they demand and have expressed such sentiment thru their enactment of tax limitation initiatives.

### **Budget and Implementation Issues and Challenges ---Counties**

1. Zoning code implementation – is it consistent with the policies of the comprehensive plan and how much is business as usual.
2. Funding shortfalls for public facility improvements and maintenance in face of rapid development.
3. Continued trend from State and Federal governments to create unfunded mandates that require counties and cities to implement.
4. Capital planning and funding of capital facilities.
5. Natural resource integration.
6. Sub-area planning administration and on-going programming.
7. Open space planning and implementation.
8. Adoption of new zoning ordinances.
9. Adoption of new short plat and subdivision ordinance process.
10. Adoption of new shoreline ordinance.
11. Budget shortfalls.

### **Other Issues and Challenges ---Cities**

1. Major transportation projects such as the Alaskan Way viaduct; monorail; light rail; SR 520 etc.
2. Long range planning unduly being influenced by short term economic goals.
3. Working with economic cycles.
4. Downtown revitalization/ city center plan.
5. Finding the most reasonable and acceptable future for old mobile home parks.

**Other Issues and Challenges ---Counties**

1. Rural economic development.
2. Unsolved environmental issues.
3. Water resources planning.
4. Economic development.
5. Sustainability.
6. Park and Recreation planning
7. Yakima Watershed Plan and an integration of Yakima Sub-basin and Salmon Recovery Plan.

## Appendix A

### Density Challenges for Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive planning faces new challenges. Comprehensive planning is no longer an exercise that has little immediate impacts. Long-range planning in the context of the Growth Management Act (GMA) increases its importance and its need for accuracy. No longer can planners be content with forecasts and plans that may be off by five or ten years.

The Growth Management Act has been an important impetus to a renewed level of activity of Comprehensive Planning in the State of Washington. The GMA establishes new parameters for CP, such as defining, implementing, and refining Growth Management Areas, concurrency requirements, and density mandates to accommodate population targets. Consequently, these new GMA parameters often impose difficult to balance and competing objectives for the comprehensive planning process. The CP needs to be carefully crafted to accommodate growth, but without sprawling or distorting land markets in ways that produce unexpected or undesired outcomes.

A growth management area that is too large might result in densities lower than expected, or vice versa. Similarly, under-provision of infrastructure might result in concurrency non-compliance. Although these issues were not addressed in the SAC survey, they are central to the review and monitoring of growth, leading to updating comprehensive plans.

If an urban growth area (UGA) boundary is drawn too tightly or not expanded soon enough, it may lead to the imposition of unachievable or undesirable densities in existing neighborhoods that may increase conflicts in neighborhoods between development interests and existing residents. It would also lead to a lack of housing opportunities on the urban fringe and drive households desiring affordable new housing on the urban fringe to nearby towns and into rural areas. In addition, some existing residents in close in neighborhoods will be gentrified out, also to nearby towns and rural areas causing an imbalance of jobs and housing and longer commuting distance for many.

In addition, some existing residents in close in neighborhoods may be gentrified out, also to nearby towns and rural areas thereby increasing the jobs-housing imbalance. Service worker in particular are often forced to commute longer distances because they cannot afford to live near where they work.

If a plan over-supplies land at the urban fringe the urban area may continue to sprawl, and not meet the GMA mandate to manage growth. A boundary that is too loose may result in too much sprawl with more need for infrastructure, and not enough infill to better utilize existing infrastructure and to increase densities.

On the other hand, if a plan under-supplies land at the urban fringe and over estimates the amount of infill and redevelopment in the central areas it may lead to higher land prices and push too much growth to rural areas or nearby small towns, resulting in an urban

growth area not complying with the GMA mandate to accommodate its share of regional growth. A too tight boundary may also inhibit the development of larger mixed-use developments and planned communities that are an alternative to sprawl-like smaller developments.

The comprehensive planning process, in the context of the Growth Management Act, is highly dependent on a land supply analysis methodology that is too imprecise to use as justification for restricting development to the tightly drawn boundaries. More research is needed on land absorption rates that are land use and location specific. This would provide support for or against the amount of land and the densities that are proposed for development or redevelopment. The GMA Buildable Lands Program, required in six other western Washington counties (Clark, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston) is a positive step in building data and knowledge of development experience under the GMA. These counties are measuring anticipated growth against actual growth over time to answer two basic questions: 1) Is there enough suitable land to accommodate growth over 20 years, and 2) Are expected urban densities being achieved and how are they being achieved?. Answers to these questions are needed to inform the comprehensive planning process. In particular, this latter question poses challenges and the need for innovations in architecture, urban design and site planning to accommodate the uptick in required densities.

Although the SAC survey did not address these challenges and cross-cutting issues directly, the survey identified the baseline from which comprehensive planning will progress to meet the need for updating CPs to meet the difficult mandates of the GMA.

## Appendix B

*Include sample page of tabulations here*

**For a complete view of the tabulations of agency responses please see the copies at CTED, the university libraries and the office of the Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association.**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **PLANNING LAW IN WASHINGTON STATE <sup>1</sup>**

Until the passage of the Growth Management Act in 1990 local jurisdictions in Washington State could elect to plan under any one of three different authorizations, the Planning Commission Act, The Planning Enabling Act or the Optional Municipal Code. General planning authority has existed since statehood for counties and cities to adopt ordinances regulating conduct and activities. These laws did not require certain actions to be taken but merely granted counties and cities the authority to take a wide variety of actions.

Several planning enabling acts were enacted authorizing counties and cities to plan and zone, and these included procedural steps that had to be taken if a county or city exercised its option to adopt a comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance. In addition, in 1935 legislation was enacted establishing direct state regulatory control over construction activities in areas susceptible to flooding. This may have been the first intimation of state growth management legislation enacted in the nation. The state Supervisor of Hydraulics was required to designate flood control zones and restrict construction activities in these areas. This law was ignored for decades, but the Department of Ecology began enforcing it in the late 1960's.

#### **THE PLANNING COMMISSION ACT**

The 1935 Act allowed a city or county for the first time a clear legal basis to enter the planning field directly. The Act allowed the creation a planning commission. This commission had the power to act as the research and fact finding agency of the municipality.

This Act also allowed those cities and counties to form or join regional commissions, receive state and federal funds for such purposes, and develop zoning regulations. This Act did not require the adoption of a comprehensive plan. However, the preparation of such a plan is a necessary condition for preparation and implementation of zoning regulations.

This Act was followed shortly (1937) by legislation that precluded certain divisions of land without the review and approval of the county or city in whose planning jurisdiction the land was located. Prior to approving a proposed division of land, the county or city governing body had to determine if adequate provisions were made for streets, water supply, sewage systems, parks, and other public places. This legislation was the predecessor of the modern Platting and Subdivision act that was enacted in 1967.

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<sup>1</sup> The full version of planning legislation can be found on the Chapter Web site, then click on Senior Action Committee with a link to "Planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Washington State".

## **THE PLANNING ENABLING ACT**

The Planning Enabling Act was passed by the State in 1959 in reaction to the tremendous growth of suburban areas starting after World War II. Prior to adoption of this act, the counties in the state were developing plans under the 1935 Planning Commission Act or did not prepare comprehensive plans. This act allowed counties to provide for the establishment of a planning agency, the development of a comprehensive plan (with land use and circulation elements as mandatory but all else as optional), participation in regional planning commissions, development of zoning program and establishment of a board of adjustment.

The act states: "The comprehensive plan shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles and standards used to develop it, and shall include each of the following elements:

1. A land use element which designates the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land for agriculture, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, education, public buildings and land, and other categories of public and private use of land, including a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various areas in the jurisdiction and estimates of future population growth areas in the area covered by the comprehensive plan, all correlated with the land use element of the comprehensive plan;
2. A circulation element consisting of general location, alignment and extent of major thoroughfares, major transportation routes, trunk utility lines, and major terminal facilities, all of which shall be correlated with the land use elements of comprehensive plan;

## **THE OPTIONAL MUNICIPAL CODE**

The Optional Municipal Code was enacted by the 1967 legislature. Under its provisions any city or town with 10,000 population or more, regardless of population, may elect to become a non-charter code city and to be governed under the 1967 code rather than the existing statutes relating to the class of municipality to which it now belongs. A charter code city in effect abandons its classification as a first, second, third, or fourth class municipality.

The legislative body of a charter code city can establish a "planning agency." Once the planning agency is established it must develop a comprehensive plan

All the state enacted planning enabling acts prior to the enactment of the Growth Management Act were optional rather than mandatory. There was considerable leeway in the interpretation of the comprehensive plans that were adopted by the local municipalities. Strong local and state personalities played major roles in how municipal comprehensive plans were implemented. The system of implementing comprehensive plans was weak because the political pressures could be brought to allow powerful individuals to do what they wanted regardless of citizens' wishes.

Planners were often faced with land use plans that did not always take into consideration, the plans of the adjacent communities. There was no state land use authority to coalesce the local plans.

These three early authorizations permit adjacent counties, cities and towns to form jointly "regional" planning bodies, but there is no authority to form regional planning bodies along natural regions, such as watersheds.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS**

### **The National Background:**

In the 1960's, citizens in many areas, and particularly those in the Pacific Northwest, became increasingly sensitive to emerging environmental issues. Concerns were multiple and wide ranging. The issues were brought into sharp focus with the founding of Earth Day on April 22 in 1970 when 20 million people demonstrated concern for the natural environment. Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, a Senator from Wisconsin, pointed out on that first Earth Day that "the real wealth of the nation is in its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, biodiversity, and wild life habitats".

These concerns and a heightened environmental awareness were recognized at the federal and state levels of government, resulting in a number of statutes and acts intended to protect the environment, promote stability of appropriate development, and generally improve quality of life. These actions included at a federal level the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) sponsored by Washington's powerful Senator Henry Jackson. NEPA, together with related implementing regulations which were established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), requiring that all Federal departments and Agencies fully and carefully evaluate and document the effects on the natural and human environment of all proposed actions, including the issuance of permits for proposed actions by others. Consideration and evaluation of several alternatives is required for proposed actions which are deemed significant, all for the purpose of informed decision making. Decisions on major actions that are found to have a

significant effect on the environment are subject to the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement EIS, with full public participation.

During the 60's and 70's, other environmental matters, resulted in some government reorganization and, over time, preparation and adoption of an array of environmental legislation and programs. These included the Endangered Species Act in 1966, declaring a national policy to protect species threatened with extinction. Initially limited to native fish and wildlife, in 1969 the act was broadened to cover non-native species and the habitats of listed species. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service administered the Act. Congress also passed the Marine Mammals Protection Act of 1972 and the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1973, both administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Environmental Protection Agency now administers nine comprehensive environmental laws, including: the Clean Air act of 1970/77, The Clean Water Act of 1977, The Toxic Substances Control Act, the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Compensation and Recovery Act (Superfund) and the Noise Control Act of 1979.

### **Washington State Response.**

The State Environmental Policy Act is the primary legal mechanism for the State to protect the natural environment. It is a powerful instrument, since any governmental or private action may be conditioned or denied pursuant to the Act.

Although there was much interest in environmental protection issues in Washington State throughout the late 1960s, it was the passage of NEPA that stimulated State legislative action. NEPA was passed in 1969 and became law on January 1, 1970. This Act required that environmental issues be exposed and environmental values be considered in decisions made by federal agencies. The State of Washington quickly adopted the same principles. The State Environmental Policy Act of 1971 (SEPA) required that all state and local government agencies develop procedures to ensure that environmental concerns and values were appropriately considered in decision-making. When SEPA was adopted, the legislature identified three primary purposes: "To declare a state policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts that will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; and to enrich the understanding of ecological systems and natural resources important to the state and the nation."

Because SEPA contains a number of broad policy statements, it was written in quite general terms and required a considerable amount of administrative refinement before it could be applied in practical circumstances. To accomplish

this the Legislature created the Council on Environmental Policy (CEP) in 1974 and instructed CEP to write rules to interpret and implement SEPA.

### **Procedures and New Powers-**

Among other important procedural requirements, SEPA mandated that a "detailed statement" be prepared before any government decision was made on a major public or private action that significantly and adversely affected the quality of the environment. That "detailed statement" was called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Guidelines provided procedures to determine whether or not an EIS was required and who made that decision; when, how and by whom it should be prepared; what it had to disclose, and when a federal EIS or previously prepared state EIS might suffice to meet the requirement. They also included methods to assure that the public was fully informed about proposals affecting the environment.

### **Guideline Revisions**

In 1981 the Legislature created another committee, the Commission on Environmental Policy, to evaluate and suggest possible amendments to SEPA and the SEPA Guidelines.

These changes became codified in a set of SEPA Rules in April 1984 replacing the previous SEPA Guidelines. The first amendments to the SEPA Rules occurred in 1995 when the Department of Ecology added procedures to integrate SEPA with the Model Toxics Control Act and attached provisions to integrate SEPA into the planning process defined in the Growth Management Act.

In November 1997, a second set of amendments implemented the requirements of ESHB 1724, passed by the Legislature two years earlier. The goals of this bill were to establish new approaches to make government regulation more effective and to make it easier to understand and comply with development and land use requirements. ESHB 1724 amended a number of laws, including the Growth Management Act, SEPA, and the Shoreline Management Act. The bill also created the Local Project Review Act, the Permit Assistance Center and the Land Use Study Commission.

The Washington State Environmental Policy Act contained a number of innovative ideas. These ideas were not necessarily "new"; professional planners had been discussing most of them for a number of years. But they were incorporated into planning legislation for the first time. The major innovations are discussed briefly below.

Unfortunately, the SEPA process is often triggered too late to be fully effective. Agency and private sector planning processes usually begin long before the SEPA process. By the time an environmental impact analysis is begun alternatives and strategic choices are often foreclosed. On the other hand, it appears that some agencies have learned to use SEPA properly and have found that it makes their job easier and makes the agency more effective. The Act's requirements that alternative proposals be formally considered, that the public be involved early in the process and that other agencies with expertise be included can make it easier to discourage poor proposals and reduce the documentation.

SEPA envisioned that State and local government agencies would use the Act as a planning tool but this has seldom happened. SEPA is virtually ignored in formulating specific policies and is ignored often in developing programs. Usually, agencies use SEPA to place project level environmental impacts under close scrutiny. SEPA has significantly increased public information and input into agency decision making. The extent to which public agencies now routinely take into account the views of a surrounding community and other interested members of the public during its planning and decision making has proven to be a tremendous positive contribution to increased accountability that is important to good governance. As a direct benefit of this increased openness, public knowledge of and sophistication about environmental issues have increased greatly. This public understanding and involvement has in turn fostered better government responsiveness. By most accounts, interagency coordination under SEPA has avoided or resolved many conflicts, reduced duplication of effort and improved the permitting process. But it has not always operated smoothly. Coordination is often hampered because agencies have different timetables, requirements and formats for public participation. When this happens, agencies – and the public – are often placed in adversarial positions.

## **SHORELINE MANAGEMENT ACT**

This Act preceded the growth management act and gives preferences to uses that (1) protect the quality of water and the natural environment, (2) depend on proximity to the shoreline, and (3) preserve and enhance public access or increase recreational opportunities along shorelines.

The legislature, in responding to a successful citizen initiative, prepared and adopted the Shorelines Management Act (SMA) of 1971, which also preceded the GMA, a unique kind of land use planning program that involves the State and local governments as partners in its application and administration. Over a dozen other states (mostly coastal) have adopted special coastal or shoreline programs to protect marine values and regulate development on their shorelines, but none are as detailed and comprehensive as Washington's SMA.

In more than a quarter century of use by all levels of government the SMA has proven to be a workable and effective tool in protecting and enhancing the States'

shoreline resource. Unlike most previous land use and environmental legislation, SMA regulations are direct, specific and unambiguous, leaving a minimum area for interpretation. In general, local jurisdictions have found it quite easy to administer shoreline "overlays" in their zoning ordinances and this approach has been very effective in protecting the lands adjacent to the major waters of the State.

## **THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is, in reality, several separate acts enacted in 1990 and 1991 and significantly modified by the Land Use Regulatory Reform Act of 1995. The GMA was created as a result of recommendations made by the Growth Strategies Commission, appointed and charged by Governor Booth Gardner in 1989.

The Act establishes an extensive set of requirements for jurisdictions planning under the Act and a few requirements for all others. Included are 13 planning goals to guide the 'development' and 'adoption' of comprehensive plans and development regulations. In general, these goals discourage sprawling development and encourage development in urban areas with adequate public facilities. They further encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems, provide for the protection of property rights, and require that adequate public facilities and services necessary to support new development be available when such development is ready to be occupied.

The extent of local control, as compared to state control, is being clarified and evolving over time as Growth Planning Hearings Boards render decisions and courts interpret the Act.

The Department of Community Development (CETD) provides technical assistance and financial grants to counties and cities and adopts 'procedural criteria' to assist in the adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations that meet the goals and requirements of the Act. In order to encourage compliance, the Governor is given the authority to impose sanctions on a county or city that fails to meet the requirements of the Act. These sanctions are in the form of withholding certain moneys that the state normally distributes to local governments. The Act also encourages compliance by restricting eligibility for certain state grant and loan moneys if a county or city has not adopted its comprehensive plan or development regulations. The third, and perhaps most significant, measure to encourage compliance with the Act is that growth management counties and cities are granted additional sources of revenue to finance capital facilities, including the authority to impose an additional excise tax on real estate sales and impact fees on development activities.

## **GMA Updates**

source: Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington.

Since passage of the GMA in 2000, several requirements have been added from time to time.

A review of the comprehensive plan and its development regulations is required every seven years. Attention is paid to reviewing and possibly amending policies and regulations for critical areas and natural resource lands. Special consideration is given to fisheries.

A staggered schedule for updates of comprehensive plans was established by the Legislature in 2002. Also, a new park and recreation element and an economic development element were added to the list of mandated elements.

In 2005 the Legislature allowed an additional year for updating.

## **BUILDABLE LANDS PROGRAM**

This Program is part of a bill signed in May 1997 which added the Buildable Lands Program to the Growth Management Act.

This program is required for six Western Washington counties (Clark, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston) and the 97 cities and towns within their boundaries. It is optional for all others. These local governments compare anticipated growth against actual development over time to answer two basic questions: (1) Do local governments have enough suitable land to accommodate expected growth for 20 years?, and (2) Are urban densities being achieved in urban growth areas.

The Buildable Lands Program was initiated because many public officials assert that urban growth areas are restricting the supply of available land and, therefore, increasing the cost of housing, while other responsible officials argue that many urban growth areas contain far more than the 20 year supply of urban land

In the decade since its inception and use as the principal land planning process in our State, the Growth Management Act has been controversial, subject to amendment and even threats of outright repeal. The actual meaning and extent of requirements under the Growth Management Act are still evolving as Growth Planning Hearings Boards render decisions on different aspects of the Growth Management Act and courts interpret the Act.

Capital facilities planning under GMA has proven to be a challenging task for many local governments. While some jurisdictions have been able to prepare detailed, effective plans, others have been unable to collect the information about capital needs that will allow them to support the land uses set out in their 20-year comprehensive plans. One study of adopted comprehensive plans indicates that

local governments are assume state loan and grant funding for capital facilities to a far greater extent than there is likely to be resources available.

In general, the comprehensive plans prepared under GMA have paid much greater attention to issues of housing affordability than had previous planning activities throughout the State. Communities are refining their development regulations to better provide for affordable housing. A long list of housing strategies could be derived from a review of the current set of plans but in general they tend to encourage a wider variety of housing options than previous measures and allow greater development densities.

In virtually all GMA counties and cities there has been a comprehensive review and rewriting of development regulations, and most local governments are monitoring those regulations to determine if they provide sufficient detail to carry out the adopted comprehensive plan. These regulations include ordinances that address new concepts in GMA planning such as how permits are issued in urban growth areas as well as revisions to previously existing ordinances for subdivision, zoning, grading, etc.

Under a 1977 amendment to the Growth Management Act, counties planning under GMA are required to include a section on planning for rural lands. Although all counties contain some rural areas they have traditionally received short shrift in county planning and the planning staffs have found themselves wrestling with rural development issues – including a contextually and operationally appropriate definition of "rural". Although the 1977 GMA amendments provide counties with some helpful tools to address rural development issues (e.g., definitions of rural character, rural development and rural government services), the rural-urban dichotomy in the GMA still presents considerable problems to planners that must operate in a real world of gradations.

The Act is not without flaws, nor is it beyond criticism, and we must continue to identify problems in its standards and procedures and promote appropriate changes in the statutes and rules. With or without legislative consolidation, the Growth Management Act should and will be the primary vehicle for land use and environmental planning for the foreseeable future.

## **THE LAND USE REGULATORY REFORM ACT**

The Land Use Regulatory Act of 1995 is commonly referred to simply as ESHB 1724. This Act made significant changes in SEPA, GMA and the Shoreline Management Act. The Land Use Regulatory Reform Act created the Land Use Study Commission, authorized and funded an expanded State Permit Assistance Center and mandated coordination of SEPA and GMA activities through the Local Project Review Act.

## **LAND USE STUDY COMMISSION**

The Growth Management Act, and the broad array of land use and environmental issues that it addresses, have been the subject and focus of several investigative reviews and studies. One was by the Land Use Study Commission, chaired by T. Ryan Durkan, which submitted its final report to Governor Locke on December 29, 1998. The primary purpose and objective of the study was to explore the feasibility of a consolidated land use code in order to simplify and streamline the fragmented and accreted land use regulatory system. Based upon two years of in-depth study, including numerous public meetings across the State, the Commission concluded that such a consolidation was achievable and had the potential for many benefits, but that the sweeping changes necessary to do so made it politically impossible at this time.

### **PERMIT ASSISTANCE CENTER**

The Permit Assistance Center offers services to assist businesses, local government permit staff or any interested persons understand the permitting process and general permit requirements in Washington State. The staff can advise on which federal, state and local permits may apply to a particular project proposal; brief clients on relevant laws and requirements; identify key staff in the Department of Ecology and other agencies and arrange appointments with technical experts who make permit decisions; estimate how much time and effort will be needed to obtain permits; and clarify how permit requirements will affect the client's business or other interests. The Permit Assistance Center does not issue permits, but helps clients get started in the permit process.

The Permit Assistance Center was initiated within the Department of Ecology in May 1995 after a year of planning. It was later expanded into a multi-agency center with Ecology as the lead agency. Special funding was provided by the legislature. In 1996 the Permit Assistance Center began offering a "coordinated permit process" service that allows businesses to enter into a formal agreement with permitting agencies reviewing a particular project. The agreement includes timelines that must be met by all participants.

### **LOCAL PROJECT REVIEW ACT**

This Act requires all counties to consolidate permit review and environmental review and to affiliate permit appeals with appeals to SEPA decisions.

Since the GMA establishes that comprehensive plans and associated development regulations are the building blocks for land use regulatory reform, it does not make sense to reexamine the land use decisions made under growth management planning each time a new project is proposed. Likewise, any environmental impacts that were considered during the growth management planning process should not be examined again and again as new projects are proposed. For these reasons and others, all counties and cities, regardless of whether or not they are planning under GMA, must develop an integrated project review process that combines both procedural and substantive environmental review with permit review. For counties and cities that plan under the Growth Management Act the

Local Project Review Act sets out a specific four-step process that must be adopted by ordinance or resolution. The Act allows other cities and counties to follow this process, but aside from that it is silent on how they are to carry out the integration.

CTED reports that a number of communities recount that their permit process has been streamlined. Forty-seven communities received grants to experiment with making more specific land use and infrastructure decisions after studying a sub-area of a county or city.

There have also been some problems in communicating to the public that combining planning and environmental review changes the steps in how permits are issued. Citizens are not yet always aware that they need to be involved early in discussions about proposed development rather than wait for individual permits to come up for public hearings.