

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6190

As of February 1, 2012

Title: An act relating to urban growth areas.

Brief Description: Addressing the designation of urban growth areas.

Sponsors: Senator Ericksen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/30/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Growth Management Act (GMA) is the comprehensive land use planning framework for county and city governments in Washington. Enacted in 1990 and 1991, GMA establishes numerous planning requirements for counties and cities obligated by mandate or choice to fully plan under GMA. It also establishes a reduced number of directives for all other counties and cities.

GMA includes numerous requirements relating to the use or development of land in urban and rural areas. GMA directs jurisdictions that fully plan under GMA to adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans that are generalized, coordinated land use policy statements of the governing body. Comprehensive plans are implemented through locally adopted development regulations, both of which are subject to review and revision requirements prescribed in GMA.

Additionally, counties that fully plan under GMA (Planning Counties) must designate urban growth areas (UGAs) or areas within which urban growth must be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature. Planning Counties and the cities within these counties must include areas and densities within their UGAs that are sufficient to permit the urban growth projected to occur in the county or city for the succeeding 20-year period.

Summary of Bill: Designation of an UGA generally establishes certainty that:

- the development of the land within it will be urban in nature;

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- the land will ultimately be provided with adequate urban facilities and services within the planning horizon; and
- the land will ultimately be developed at urban densities and intensities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In Whatcom County, many people are being forced out to the county because there is not enough available land in the urban growth areas. This bill is designed to address this situation. By adding this language to the GMA, there is certainty of urban levels of growth into the urban growth areas within the timeframe, so that people can start moving into those areas. This bill provides certainty and predictability. UGAs are designed to fill cities out over a 20-year period. The language in this bill almost exactly mirrors a Hearings Board decision. This bill is an important tool that ensures growth be within UGAs where is growth is highly encouraged. One of the core concepts of the GMA is that growth will occur in certain areas and not have that growth spread out into other areas.

OTHER: There is a frustration that there have been more buildable lots outside the City of Bellingham than within the city limits. The notion under the GMA that there are large growth centers in cities that should receive the majority of growth is not happening everywhere. In those UGAs, cities are intending to take on infrastructure and take on growth. It would be helpful to understand why this bill is necessary and what the issue is that the bill is trying to resolve. There is confusion about what the GMA means. Cities need to grow in a manner consistent with the GMA and their desires without allowing some cities to escape the requirements under the GMA. It is important to exclude critical areas from the expectation that they will become urban in nature as they are currently excluded in this manner.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Ericksen, prime sponsor; Clayton Petrie, citizen; Dan Wood, WA Farm Bureau.

OTHER: Bill Clarke, WA Realtors Assn.; Scott Hildebrand, Master Builders Assn., King, Snohomish counties; Carl Schroeder, Assn. of WA Cities; Josh Weiss, WA Assn. of Counties; April Putney, Futurewise.