

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6192

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As of February 1, 2012

**Title:** An act relating to defining terms under the growth management act.

**Brief Description:** Defining sprawl and low-density sprawl under the growth management act.

**Sponsors:** Senator Ericksen.

**Brief History:**

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

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### 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 counties and cities in Washington. Originally enacted in 1990 and 1991, GMA establishes land use designation and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities, and a significantly wider array of planning duties for the 29 counties and the cities within that are obligated to satisfy all planning requirements of GMA.

GMA directs jurisdictions that fully plan under GMA to adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans that are generalized and 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.

GMA establishes planning goals in a nonprioritized list that must be used exclusively for guiding the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations. Examples of planning goals include the following:

- Urban growth – encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner;
- Transportation – encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans;
- Housing – encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage the preservation of existing housing stock; and

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- Environment – protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

**Summary of Bill:** Definitions for low-density sprawl and sprawl are added to GMA. Low-density sprawl means development taking place outside of urban growth areas that does not conform to the county's adopted rural element and that hinders a county's ability to achieve the goals of GMA. Sprawl means growth taking place outside of established urban growth areas because city or county comprehensive plan approaches, development regulations, or other factors hinder the ability of the county's urban growth areas to adequately capture growth that would otherwise be attracted to the urban growth areas of the county.

**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: Sprawl is one of those things that is discussed, but it is not defined in the GMA. This is first stab at adding a definition of what that sprawl would be. In this situation, low density sprawl is when housing that would normally go into the urban growth areas is forced out because there is not adequate room available in the GMA.

OTHER: The long standing interest in making the GMA work better stems from making the cities' development regulation, the counties development regulation, and the development pattern all work. There are some concerns about the language in the bill. 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. Adding definitions of sprawl and low-density sprawl would provide much needed clarity to the GMA. One of the goals of the GMA is to prevent sprawl and low-density sprawl. The GMA lacks any specific metrics as to what is or is not sprawl. It has become a commonly litigated issue. There is opposition to these definitions.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Ericksen, prime sponsor; Clayton Petrie, citizen.

OTHER: Carl Schroeder, Assn. of WA Cities; Bill Clarke, WA Realtors Assn.; April Putney, Futurewise.