

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1923

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Housing Stability & Affordability, April 1, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to increasing urban residential building capacity.

**Brief Description:** Increasing urban residential building capacity.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Fitzgibbon, Macri, Appleton, Doglio, Dolan, Santos and Frame).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/13/19, 66-30.

**Committee Activity:** Housing Stability & Affordability: 3/27/19, 4/01/19 [DPA-WM, DNP].

### Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Requires cities with a population of greater than 20,000, planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA), to take at least two actions to increase residential building capacity by December 31, 2022.
- Exempts amendments to development regulations that are made to implement actions to increase residential building capacity from appeals under the State Environmental Policy Act.
- Directs the Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington to produce a report every two years compiling housing supply and affordability metrics for certain cities planning under the GMA.
- Establishes standards for residential parking requirements for affordable housing units and housing units for seniors or people with disabilities.
- Authorizes a city complying with residential building capacity actions to be eligible for a one-time grant of \$100,000 from the Department of Commerce, subject to availability of funds.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING STABILITY & AFFORDABILITY

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.  
Signed by Senators Kuderer, Chair; Das, Vice Chair; Darneille and Saldaña.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Zeiger, Ranking Member; Fortunato and Warnick.

**Staff:** Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

**Background:** Growth Management Act. The GMA is the comprehensive land use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. The GMA establishes land use designations and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities. The GMA also establishes a significantly wider array of planning duties for 29 counties, and the cities within those counties, that are fully planning under the GMA.

The GMA directs fully planning jurisdictions to adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans. Comprehensive plans are implemented through locally adopted development regulations, and both the plans and the local regulations are subject to review and revision requirements prescribed in the GMA. In developing their comprehensive plans, counties and cities must consider various goals set forth in statute. These goals include:

- urban growth—encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner;
- housing—encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of Washington State, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock; and
- public facilities and services—ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development are adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

Counties that fully plan under the GMA must include a plan for different types of land use areas, including Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), areas within which urban growth must be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature. Planning jurisdictions must include within their UGAs sufficient areas and densities to accommodate projected urban growth for the succeeding 20-year period. In addition, cities must include sufficient areas to accommodate the broad range of needs and uses that will accompany the projected urban growth.

State Environmental Policy Act. The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) establishes a review process for state and local governments to identify environmental impacts that may result from governmental decisions, such as the issuance of permits or the adoption of land use plans. The SEPA environmental review process involves a project proponent or the lead agency completing an environmental checklist to identify and evaluate probable environmental impacts. Government decisions that the SEPA-checklist process identifies as having significant adverse environmental impacts must then undergo a more comprehensive environmental analysis in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Projects which undergo a SEPA review may be required to mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts to receive approval from the government entity performing the SEPA analysis. Project proponents may also choose to mitigate environmental impacts identified in the environmental checklist to receive a determination that the project does not have

significant environmental impacts, and therefore can avoid the process of completing an EIS for the project.

State Environmental Policy Act Subarea Plans. A city with a population greater than 5000 may adopt optional elements of its comprehensive plans and optional development regulations that apply within specified subareas of the cities that are either:

- areas designated as mixed-use or urban centers in a land use or transportation plan adopted by a regional transportation planning organization; or
- areas within 0.5 miles of a major transit stop that are zoned to have an average minimum density of 15 dwelling units or more per gross acre.

A city that elects to include subarea development elements into its comprehensive plan must prepare a nonproject EIS specifically for the subarea. At least one community meeting must be held before scoping the EIS. All property owners within the subarea and within 150 feet of the subarea must be notified of the community meeting. A person may appeal the adoption of the subarea or the implementing regulations if they meet the requirements for standing provided in the GMA.

In a large city with over 500,000 residents, community meeting notices must be mailed to all small businesses within the subarea and within 150 feet of the subarea. A large city must also analyze whether the subarea plan will result in the displacement or fragmentation of businesses, existing residents, or cultural groups. The analysis must be discussed at the community meeting and incorporated in the nonproject EIS.

Until July 1, 2018, project-specific developments cannot be appealed as long as they are within the scope of the EIS and the development application is vested within a timeframe established by the city not to exceed 10 years from the adoption of the final EIS. After July 1, 2018, project specific developments cannot be appealed as long as they are within the scope of the EIS, the final EIS is issued by July 1, 2018, and the development application is vested.

State Environmental Policy Act Categorical Exemptions Infill Development. Counties and cities planning fully under GMA may establish categorical exemptions from the requirements of SEPA to accommodate infill development. Locally authorized categorical exemptions may differ from the categorical exemptions established by the Department of Ecology by rule. Under the infill development categorical exemption, cities and counties may adopt categorical exemptions to exempt government action related to development that is new residential development, mixed-use development, or commercial development up to 65,000 square feet, proposed to fill in an urban growth area when:

- current density and intensity of the use in the area is lower than called for in the goals and policies of the applicable comprehensive plan;
- the action would not exceed the density or intensity of use called for in the goals and policies of the applicable comprehensive plan;
- the local government considers the specific probable adverse environmental impact of the proposed action and determines that those specific impacts are adequately addressed by other applicable regulations, comprehensive plans, ordinances, or other local, state, and federal laws and rules; and

- the applicable comprehensive plan was previously subjected to environmental analysis through an EIS according to SEPA.

Impact Fees. Counties and cities that are obligated by population or choice to fully plan under the GMA may impose impact fees on development activity as part of the financing of public facilities needed to serve new growth and development. This financing cannot rely solely on impact fees and must provide a balance between impact fees and other sources of public funds. Additionally, impact fees:

- may only be imposed for system improvements, a term defined in statute, that are reasonably related to the new development;
- may not exceed a proportionate share of the costs of system improvements; and
- must be used for system improvements that will reasonably benefit the new development.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Increased Residential Building Capacity and Housing Affordability. Cities planning under the GMA with a population greater than 20,000 must take at least two of the following actions to increase residential building capacity by December 31, 2022:

- authorize development of an average of at least 50 residential units per acre that include one or more train stations served by commuter rail or light rail;
- authorize development of an average of at least 25 residential units per acre that include one or more bus stops served by scheduled bus service;
- authorize at least one duplex, triplex, or courtyard apartment on each parcel in zoning districts that permit single-family residences unless a city documents a constraint that would make this requirement unfeasible for a particular parcel;
- authorize cluster zoning or lot size averaging in all zoning districts that permit single-family residences;
- require no more than one on-site parking space per two bedrooms in the portions of multifamily zones that are located within 0.5 miles of a fixed guideway transit station;
- authorize accessory dwelling units on all lots located in zoning districts that permit single-family residences, subject to certain restrictions;
- adopt a planned action pursuant to the subarea plan provisions of SEPA;
- adopt a planned action pursuant to the planned action provisions of SEPA, except that an EIS need not be prepared for such a planned action;
- adopt increases in categorical exemptions pursuant to the infill development provisions of SEPA for single-family and multifamily development;
- adopt a form-based code in one or more zoning districts that permit residential uses;
- authorize a duplex on each corner lot within all zoning districts that permit single-family residences;
- identify questions in the SEPA checklist that are adequately covered by a locally adopted ordinance, development regulation, land use plan, or other legal authority;
- form or joining existing subregional partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to implement and promote affordable housing programs; or
- authorize a 20 percent density bonus for all residential development projects when at least 10 percent of the total units within the project are provided as affordable housing.

Cities with a population of 20,000 or less are encouraged to increase residential building capacity. A city may rely on actions that take effect on or after January 1, 2012, for purposes of compliance with the requirements to increase residential building capacity.

A city may adopt a housing action plan to encourage additional affordable and market rate housing as an alternative to adopting two action items to increase residential building capacity. The goal of the housing plan must be to encourage construction of additional affordable and market rate housing in a greater variety of housing types and at prices that are accessible to a greater variety of incomes. The housing action plan must quantify existing and projected housing needs for all income levels and develop strategies to increase the supply of housing. The plan must consider strategies to minimize displacement of low-income residents resulting from redevelopment and review and evaluate the current housing element.

The actions taken by a city to implement the residential building capacity elements are exempt from administrative or judicial appeal under SEPA.

A city that is subject to the residential building capacity requirements must certify to the Department of Commerce (Commerce) once it has satisfied the requirements. A city that has complied with the requirements by December 31, 2022 is eligible to apply for a one-time grant of \$100,000 from Commerce to support planning and outreach efforts.

A city may not prohibit permanent supportive housing in areas where multifamily housing are permitted.

State Environmental Policy Act Transportation Elements. A project action evaluated under SEPA by a city, county, or town planning fully under the GMA is exempt from appeals under SEPA on the basis of the evaluation of or impacts to transportation elements of the environment. To qualify for the SEPA exemption, the project must not present significant adverse impacts to state highways as determined by the Department of Transportation. In addition, the project must be consistent with a locally adopted transportation plan or a transportation element of a comprehensive plan, and either a project for which traffic or parking impact fees are imposed pursuant to, or a project for which traffic or parking impacts are expressly mitigated by, an ordinance adopted by the city, town, or county.

State Environmental Policy Act Subarea Plans. The requirement that cities with populations greater than 500,000 take certain actions regarding notice of scoping for a nonproject EIS related to subarea plans is eliminated. The requirement that cities with populations greater than 500,000 analyze whether an adopted subarea plan will result in displacement or fragmentation of certain populations is eliminated. Until July 1, 2029, a proposed development that meets the criteria described below is exempt from appeal under SEPA as long as a complete application for such a development is submitted to the city within a time frame established by the city, not to exceed 19 years from the date of issuance of the final EIS for projects that are consistent with an optional element adopted by a city as of the effective date of this section, or 10 years from the date of issuance of the final EIS for projects that are consistent with an optional element adopted by a city after the effective date of this section.

The criteria that a proposed development must meet to qualify for the SEPA appeal exemption are:

- the development must be consistent with the optional comprehensive plan or subarea plan policies and development regulations adopted under the SEPA subarea plan provisions;
- the development must set aside or require the occupancy of at least 10 percent of the dwelling units, or a greater percentage as determined by city development regulations, within the development for low-income households at a sale price or rental amount that is considered affordable by a city's housing program, for projects that are consistent with an optional element of a subarea plan adopted after the effective date of the act; and
- the development must be environmentally reviewed through a nonproject EIS pursuant to the SEPA subarea plan provisions.

Housing Supply and Affordability Report. The University of Washington, through the Washington Center for Real Estate Research, shall produce a report every two years that compiles housing supply and affordability metrics for each city planning under the GMA with a population of 10,000 or more. The report must be a compilation of objective criteria relating to development regulations, zoning, income, housing and rental prices, housing affordability programs, and other metrics relevant to assessing housing supply and affordability for all income segments. The Washington Center for Real Estate Research shall collaborate with the Washington Housing Finance Commission and the Office of Financial Management to develop the metrics compiled in the report. The report must be submitted, to the Legislature by October 15th of each even-numbered year beginning in 2020.

Impact Fees. A local ordinance imposing impact fees may not charge a higher per unit fee for multifamily residential construction than for single-family residential construction. In addition, the local ordinance may not impose impact fees that exceed \$50,000 for any single-family residential unit.

#### **EFFECT OF HOUSING STABILITY & AFFORDABILITY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):**

- Requires, rather than encourages, cities over 20,000 in population to select at least two or more actions to increase residential density by December 31, 2022.
- Adds forming or joining existing subregional partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to implement and promote affordable housing programs as an action item a city may select to increase residential density.
- Adds a 20 percent density bonus for all residential development projects when at least 10 percent of the total units within the project are provided as affordable housing as an action item a city may select to increase residential density.
- Encourages cities under 20,000 in population to take one or more action items to increase residential density.
- Amendments to development regulations and other nonproject actions taken by a city to add residential density requirements are exempt from appeals under SEPA, rather than categorically exempt from SEPA.
- Directs the Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington, in collaboration with the Housing Finance Commission and the Office of Financial

Management, to produce a report every two years compiling housing supply and affordability metrics for each city planning under the GMA.

- A city that has complied with requirements to take at least two actions to increase residential density is eligible to apply to nCommerce for a one-time grant of \$100,000.
- Encourages cities to prioritize creating affordable, inclusive neighborhoods and consider displacement.
- Modifies parking requirements for certain affordable housing units that are affordable to very low-income or extremely low-income individuals near transit locations.
- Removes the requirement for cities over 500,000 regarding notice of scoping for a nonproject EIS related to a subarea plan.
- Removes the requirement for cities over 500,000 to analyze whether an adopted subarea plan will result in displacement or fragmentation of certain populations.
- A city may not prohibit permanent supportive housing in areas where multifamily housing are permitted.
- Authorizes a city to adopt a housing action plan to encourage additional affordable and market rate housing as an alternative to adopting two action items to increase residential building capacity.
- Limits impact fees to less than \$50,000 for any single-family residential unit.
- Modifies the null and void clause stating that if specific funding is not provided in the budget, including an amount not less than \$100,000 per city subject to residential density requirements, the act is null and void.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill:** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The original version of the bill is a more ambitious version than the bill in committee today. One of the more substantive aspects of the bill is exempting actions by cities to grow housing supply from the requirements of SEPA. While the bill does exempt certain actions from SEPA, the intent was to only exempt those actions from appeals under SEPA. The list of actions that cities may adopt were required in earlier versions of the bill. The goal is to provide a flexible menu of options for cities to choose that would grow the housing supply. It is important for cities to have the proper metrics that will help match incomes and needs of community members with housing. Cities need options to deliver more housing for all income levels. Encouraging rather than requiring actions will not adequately address the housing crisis. Many local governments would like to see increased densities, but they face many challenges and appeals. Affordable housing where for the middle class where jobs are is becoming out of reach for many workers. There is a supply problem in the housing market, and this bill helps to address that problem by increasing densities and building more housing.

Cities appreciate the optional approach in the bill that allows for a broad menu of items cities can choose from to meet their diverse needs.

CON: There are signs that the residential market is recovering and rents and prices have stabilized. The private market establishes house prices. The focus should be on people with lower incomes, the working poor and the homeless, so they can participate in the housing market. The state and federal government needs to play a larger role in helping address the subsidized sector and homeless.

OTHER: Cities should be required to take actions to increase density and affordability, not just encouraged. The bill contains both short term and long term actions that need to be done to increase housing supply and affordability. There should be increased affordability requirements and anti-displacement provisions added to the bill. Many local governments cannot increase their zoning densities because their community does not support it. The list of menu items that the city can choose from to increase density could be increased. Nonprofit developers have identified impediments to developing affordable housing including zoning restrictions and other barriers.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Joe Fitzgibbon, Prime Sponsor; Alex Hur, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties; Madeline Kovacs, Sightline Institute; Jeanette McKague, Washington Realtors; Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities; Joe Kendo, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

CON: Bob Jacobs, citizen.

OTHER: Michele Thomas, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance; Jan Himebaugh, Building Industry Association of Washington; Bryce Yadon, Futurewise.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.