

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5558

As Passed Senate, March 5, 2025

Title: An act relating to timelines for growth management comprehensive plan and development regulation updates.

Brief Description: Concerning timelines for growth management comprehensive plan and development regulation updates.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Senators Goehner, Riccelli, Trudeau, Harris, Dozier, Boehnke, Gildon, Christian, Torres, Short, Holy, Warnick, Krishnadasan and Nobles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 2/03/25, 2/13/25 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/5/25, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Extends the next deadline for Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Kittitas, Skamania, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties, and the cities within those counties, to review and revise their comprehensive plans from June 30, 2026, to December 31, 2026.
- Requires counties and cities fully planning under the GMA to update development regulations related to clear and objective design review and accessory dwelling units at the same time as their next periodic comprehensive plan update.
- Requires certain cities fully planning under the GMA to authorize minimum development densities in residential zones and include specific provisions related to middle housing in their development regulations by the city's next periodic comprehensive plan update.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5558 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Salomon, Chair; Lovelett, Vice Chair; Torres, Ranking Member; Bateman and Goehner.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Growth Management Act. The Growth Management Act (GMA) is the comprehensive land use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. The GMA establishes land use designation and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities. The GMA also establishes a significantly wider array of planning duties for 28 counties, and the cities within those counties, that are obligated to satisfy all planning requirements of 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.

Comprehensive Plan Updates. Counties and cities are required to review and, if necessary, revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations every ten years.

The ten-year review and revision deadlines are staggered for different counties. King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, and the cities within those counties, the deadline was December 31, 2024. Clallam, Clark, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Thurston, and Whatcom counties, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of December 31, 2025. Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Kittitas, Skamania, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of June 30, 2026. Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Wahkiakum, and Whitman counties, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of June 30, 2027.

In 2022 and 2024 the Legislature temporarily amended the deadline to review and, if necessary, revise the comprehensive plans of King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, and the cities within those counties, and Clallam, Clark, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Thurston, and Whatcom counties, and the cities within those counties. These counties are required to review and revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations no later than December 31, 2024, and December 31, 2025, respectively. Following the 2024 and 2025 review cycles, these counties return to the regularly scheduled ten-year review dates.

Beginning six months after its next periodic comprehensive plan update, a fully planning county or city must ensure local development regulations apply only clear and objective design review standards to the exterior of new development, except for certain designated

landmarks and historic districts.

No later than six months after its next required comprehensive plan update, fully planning cities meeting population requirements must allow for the development of a minimum number of units on all residential lots, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies, as follows:

- cities with a population of at least 75,000 must include authorization for at least: four units per lot; six units per lot if at least two of the units are affordable housing; and six units per lot within one-quarter mile walking distance of a major transit stop;
- cities with a population of at least 25,000 but less than 75,000 must include authorization for at least: two units per lot; four units per lot if at least one unit is affordable housing; and four units per lot within one-quarter mile walking distance of a major transit stop; and
- cities with a population less than 25,000, within a contiguous urban growth area (UGA) with the largest city in a county with a population of more than 275,000, must include authorization for the development of at least two units per lot.

Beginning six months after its next periodic comprehensive plan update, a fully planning city or county must ensure local development regulations allow for the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within UGAs and comply with certain policies related to siting and permitting of ADUs.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Kittitas, Skamania, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties, and the cities within those counties are required to review and revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations no later than December 31, 2026. Following the extension provided for the 2025 review cycle, these jurisdictions will resume the regularly scheduled ten-year review cycle on June 30, 2036.

Counties and cities planning under the GMA must apply only clear and objective design review standards to the exterior of new development, except for certain designated landmarks and historic districts, at the same time as the jurisdiction's next periodic comprehensive plan update rather than six months after their update.

Certain cities planning under the GMA must authorize minimum development densities in residential zones and include specific provisions related to middle housing in their development regulations by the city's next periodic comprehensive plan update, rather than six months after the city's update.

Counties and cities planning under the GMA must ensure that local development regulations allow for the construction of accessory dwelling units within urban growth areas at the same time as the jurisdiction's next periodic comprehensive plan update, rather than six months after their update.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill provides consistency and allows the counties with comprehensive plans due by June 30, 2026, to extend their compliance date by six months. Moving this deadline from June 30th to December 31st will afford jurisdictions the time necessary to incorporate vital climate and housing data ensuring that the planning process benefits from public input and legislative scrutiny. The Legislature has passed many new requirements in recent years that require more work and coordination for cities and counties to adopt their comprehensive plans. The 2026 counties are asking for the same extension that has been granted for the 2024 and 2025 counties. This bill allows for a more thoughtful and thorough engagement process and will help ensure that comp plans reflect the needs of a diverse community. This bill will allow the public to provide additional input into the process so that when it is done, it is fully reflective of all the goals and interests of the citizens and meet the needs for the county for the next ten years. This comprehensive plan update is almost a clean sheet rewrite of the comprehensive plan. The six-month period will allow jurisdictions to put development regulations in place to implement the new GMA compliant plan.

OTHER: There is a two year lead time for GMA updates and the previous shifts were done because of legislation that passed. It is important to get the updates done. Other requirements are linked to the comprehensive plan update schedule. The deadline for these other requirements should not also be pushed out. There is a need for the bill but there is concern about the delay of those other requirements.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Keith Goehner, Prime Sponsor; Jacob Gonzalez, City of Pasco, Planning; Scott Chesney, Planning Director, Spokane County; Al French, Spokane County Commissioner; Paul Dillon, City of Spokane.

OTHER: Bryce Yadon, Futurewise; Morgan Irwin, Association of Washington Business.

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