

Policy Topic 1

Urban Growth Areas

Overview of Growth Management Act Requirements

The Growth Management Act (GMA) encourages development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner. The GMA takes a phased approach to growth where growth should first be located in areas already characterized by urban growth that have adequate existing public facility and service capacities; second in areas already characterized by urban growth that will be served adequately by a combination of both existing public facilities and services and any additional needed public facilities and services that are provided by either public or private sources; and third in the remaining portions of the urban growth areas. Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) are one of the primary tools to meet the goals of the GMA.

Each jurisdiction must propose a UGA within which urban growth shall be encouraged. The Board of County Commissioners has the final responsibility for designating UGAs. 'Urban growth' is defined as "...growth that makes intensive use of land for buildings, structures and other impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural products or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources" [RCW 36.70A.030(14)].

UGAs will include sufficient land and densities to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the county for the next 20 years. Each city and town in the county is included within a UGA. Growth outside of the UGAs can occur only if not urban in character. UGA designations are a required element of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. UGAs must be adopted concurrently with each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan.

Overview of Countywide Planning Policies

The Countywide Planning Policies provide direction, process, and framework to analyze, propose, modify, and adopt or amend UGAs. UGAs must accommodate growth and may include greenbelts and other open space. Each jurisdiction must also protect sensitive environmental and wildlife habitat areas.

POLICIES

Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) are areas within which growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature. UGAs shall include areas and densities sufficient in area and location to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in Spokane

County for the succeeding 20-year period [RCW 36.70A.110] It is appropriate that urban government services be provided by Spokane County and its constituent cities, and urban government services should not be provided in rural areas [RCW 6.70A.110(3&4)]. Rural governmental services may be provided in rural areas.

Urban Growth Areas may be established independent of incorporated areas. Within these independent Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), urban governmental services may be provided by Spokane County and its constituent cities. Some areas may rely on contracts with Spokane County for provision of urban services.

All existing Spokane County cities, including cities in rural areas, are considered Urban Growth Areas.

Location of UGA growth may be planned based on emerging development patterns.

1. The location of critical areas and natural resource lands shall be a prime consideration in delineating UGAs. Whenever possible and practical, natural resource lands should not be included within UGAs unless used as open space. Spokane County and each city or town will recommend land capacity by that particular jurisdiction's ability to accommodate growth within current city limits. Jurisdictions shall use as primary criteria the availability and capacity of urban governmental services, and public facilities. Each jurisdiction shall submit UGA growth projections and proposed UGA boundary revisions to the Steering Committee at the time a jurisdiction is considering amendment of its Comprehensive Plan
2. The Steering Committee shall analyze each proposed UGA through the use of a multi-jurisdictional planning team and make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for UGA revision.
3. Jurisdictions may propose new commercial/industrial land uses within UGAs based on methodologies or criteria established by the Steering Committee. The Spokane County Comprehensive Plan will address expansion of existing commercial/industrial land uses which may be located outside of current UGA boundaries.
4. Each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan shall, at a minimum, demonstrate the ability to provide necessary domestic water, sanitary sewer and transportation improvements concurrent with development.
5. Comprehensive plans shall contain land use, development, and

redevelopment policies which provide protection for the continued viability of Fairchild Air Force Base, Spokane International Airport, Felts Field, Deer Park Airport and other publicly owned airports within Spokane County.

6. Spokane County comprehensive planning will protect natural resource lands outside of UGAs and protect critical areas and open space within Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).
7. Designated rural lands shall have low densities which can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements such as septic systems, individual wells, and rural roads, without altering the rural character, or creating the necessity for urban level of services.

Local Areas of More Intense Rural Development and clustering of rural development may be permitted as a tool for the preservation of rural open space as long as rural character of the area is maintained and that urban services are not required to serve the new development.

Urban Growth Area Revisions

Mandated Review of County-wide UGA

8. The Urban Growth Area boundaries shall be reviewed to accommodate the succeeding twenty years of projected growth, as required by RCW 36.70A.130. The County Commissioners shall initiate the review process approximately three years prior to the required review deadline. This process shall re-evaluate population allocation, land quantity analysis and urban service delivery. Any jurisdiction through its representative on the Steering Committee of Elected Officials may request that the Board of County Commissioners initiate a review of the Urban Growth Area boundaries prior to the scheduled time.

Triggers for Review of the UGA

9. Review of the Urban Growth Area shall be required when:
 - a. Population growth within the UGA (cities plus unincorporated UGA combined) equals or exceeds fifty percent of the additional population capacity estimated for the UGA at the start of a twenty-year planning period; or
 - b. Population growth within a city and its assigned, unincorporated UGA equals or exceeds fifty percent of the additional population capacity estimated for the city and its assigned UGA at the start of a twenty-year planning period; or

- c. Population growth within all UGAs that have not been assigned to cities equals or exceeds fifty percent of the additional population capacity estimated for the unassigned UGAs at the start of a twenty-year planning period.

The start of the twenty-year planning period is defined as the adoption date of the comprehensive plan or the adoption date of a UGA update as required under RCW 36.70A.130(3).

The above review shall be consistent with the requirements of RCW.36.70A and the Countywide Planning Policies, and shall incorporate:

- an updated population capacity and land quantity analysis using the most recent residential capacity estimates and assumptions; and
- an evaluation of land use and capital facilities to determine land use and capital facility needs within the existing UGA and any proposed UGA expansion area.

10. Review of the Urban Growth Area to consider additional commercial or industrial land shall be required when:
 - a. Commercial or industrial land consumption within the UGA (cities plus unincorporated UGA combined) equals or exceeds fifty percent of the developable commercial or industrial land supply within the UGA at the start of the twenty-year planning period; or
 - b. Commercial or industrial land consumption within a city and its assigned, unincorporated UGA equals or exceeds fifty percent of the developable commercial or industrial land supply within the city and its assigned, unincorporated UGA at the start of the twenty-year planning period; or
 - c. Commercial or industrial land consumption within all UGAs that have not been assigned to cities equals or exceeds fifty percent of the developable commercial or industrial land supply within the unassigned UGAs at the start of the twenty-year planning period.

The start of the twenty-year planning period is defined as the adoption date of the comprehensive plan or the adoption date of a UGA update as required under RCW 36.70A.130(3).

The above review shall be consistent with the requirements of RCW.36.70A and the Countywide Planning Policies, and shall incorporate:

- the most recent commercial/industrial capacity estimates and

assumptions; and

- an evaluation of land use and capital facilities to determine land use and capital facility needs within the existing UGA and any proposed UGA expansion area.

11. Individual jurisdictions may consider UGA revisions as a part of their annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment process. All proposed amendments will be reviewed in the following sequence:

- Conditionally approved amendments must be forwarded to the Steering Committee of Elected Officials. The Steering Committee shall consider the amendments at a public hearing and then forward a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The Steering Committee shall consider cumulative effects of all UGA proposals in making their recommendation.
- The Steering Committee of Elected Officials will review Urban Growth Area changes resulting from adoption of subarea plans and/or Comprehensive Plan Amendments for all jurisdictions once a year.
- The Board of Commissioners will consider the Steering Committee's UGA recommendations at a public hearing. The Board of County Commissioners shall consider cumulative effects of all UGA proposals in making their decision. Urban Growth Area revisions must be approved and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Policy Topic 2

Joint Planning within Urban Growth Areas

INTRODUCTION

Overview of GMA Requirements

The GMA requires the establishment of Urban Growth Areas and policies for joint county and city planning within UGAs. A goal of the GMA is to encourage citizen involvement in the planning process and to ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts. The Spokane County Comprehensive Plan defines Joint Planning Areas as “*areas designated as Urban Growth Areas assigned to a city or town for future urban development but located in the unincorporated county where a coordinated planning process between the cities, towns and the County will be conducted.*”

Overview of Countywide Planning Policies

The Countywide Planning Policies recognize the need for joint planning in the unincorporated UGA, and generally for planning issues that are interjurisdictional in nature.

POLICIES

1. The joint planning process should:
 - a. Include all jurisdictions adjacent to the Urban Growth Area and Special Purpose Districts that will have a role in current or future provision of governmental services.
 - b. Recognize that Urban Growth Areas adjacent to incorporate areas will be potential annexation areas for cities.
 - c. Ensure a smooth transition of services amongst existing municipalities and emerging communities.
 - d. Ensure the ability to expand urban governmental services and avoid land use barriers to expansion; and
 - e. Resolve issues regarding how zoning, subdivision, infrastructure, and other land use approvals in designated joint planning areas will be coordinated.
 - f. Promote collaboration for effective design standards for development within the unincorporated UGA.

2. Joint planning may be accomplished through a memorandum of understanding, pursuant to an interlocal agreement Consistent with the Interlocal Cooperation Act (RCW 39.34), or an agreement established by resolution of both jurisdictions.
 - a. The absence of such an agreement between the County and Cities should not preclude coordination or consultation between them.

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Policy Topic 3

Promotion of Contiguous and Orderly Development and Provision of Urban Services

INTRODUCTION

Overview of GMA Requirements

The Growth Management Act requires the adoption of Countywide Planning Policies concerning the promotion of contiguous and orderly development and the provision of urban services. The GMA requires that adequate urban governmental services and public facilities be available at the time growth occurs, commonly known as concurrency.

Overview of Countywide Planning Policies

The Countywide Planning Policies address these general areas.

1. The planning for utilities, open space corridors, critical areas, natural resource lands and water management.
2. The provision of urban governmental services and public facilities.
3. The distribution of future growth and population within the county.

In order to coordinate population and the distribution of services, the County and each city and town should accommodate its fair share of housing and essential public facilities needed for the region. Small cities, and towns will serve as the focal point and function as a center of activity for the surrounding area.

Fairchild Air Force Base is recognized as an urban center.

POLICIES

1. Each jurisdiction shall include policies in its comprehensive plan to address how urban development will be managed to promote efficiency in the use of land and the provision of urban governmental services and public facilities.
2. Each jurisdiction shall include policies in its comprehensive plan to ensure sustainable growth beyond the 20-year planning horizon.
3. Spokane County shall include policies in its comprehensive plan to

provide open space corridors within the expanding urban landscape.

4. All jurisdictions shall coordinate plans that classify, designate and protect natural resource lands and critical areas.
5. Wellhead protection plans should be coordinated with water purveyors and implemented and updated as needed, by local jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction should encourage and pursue strategies within its jurisdiction for water resource management, which will sustain projected growth rates and protect the environment.
6. Each jurisdiction shall include provisions in its comprehensive plan for distribution of essential public facilities.
7. Each jurisdiction in its comprehensive plan should provide policies that support the compatible incorporation of utilities, greenbelts and open space within common corridors.

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