

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5790

As of February 16, 2017

Title: An act relating to the economic development element of the growth management act.

Brief Description: Concerning the economic development element of the growth management act.

Sponsors: Senators Short, Sheldon, Angel and Wilson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 2/14/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Encourages jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to evaluate economic growth and adopt comprehensive plans and development regulations that promote economic development.
- Permits modifications of comprehensive plans and development regulations to reduce restrictions on economic development in cases of economic stagnation or deterioration.
- Allows rural counties and cities to approve development that deviates from the GMA upon finding there has been economic deterioration.
- Requires the Growth Management Hearings Board and courts to show deference to local elected officials' choices that prioritize economic development when experiencing economic deterioration.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: The GMA is the comprehensive land-use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. Originally enacted in 1990 and 1991, the GMA establishes land-use designation and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities, and a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, by mandate or choice, to satisfy all planning requirements of the GMA.

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.

Jurisdictions that fully plan under the GMA must adopt comprehensive land-use plans to express the general land-use policies of the county or city, and development regulations to implement those plans. Each comprehensive plan must include a number of planning elements, including an economic development element that establishes local goals, policies, and objectives for economic growth, vitality, and a high quality of life. The economic development element must include a summary of the local economy, a summary of that local economy's strengths and weaknesses, and policies, programs, and projects to foster economic growth, development, and future needs.

The Growth Management Hearings Board, composed of seven appointed members, hears allegations that a city, county, or state agency has not complied with the goals and requirements of the GMA and issues orders determining compliance.

Summary of Bill: Each jurisdiction that fully plans under the GMA should adopt comprehensive plans and development regulations that promote economic development in urban and rural areas. These jurisdictions should also evaluate the economic performance of the prior eight years to determine if there has been economic growth in the local economy, including whether the jurisdiction's median household income is above or below the state average. If there is stagnation or deterioration of economic development, the comprehensive plan and development regulations may be modified to reduce restrictions on economic development opportunities.

Rural counties planning under the GMA, and the cities within those counties, may approve development that may deviate from the GMA upon finding that there has been economic deterioration in the jurisdiction. Economic deterioration includes, but is not limited to:

- incomes that are at least \$10,000 less than the statewide median household income;
- a decrease in the county's household median income during any year within the past eight years;
- inability of the jurisdiction to add new full-time jobs in sufficient quantities to provide for population increases;
- decreases or stagnation of economic startups for multiple years within the past eight years;
- unemployment rates higher than the national and statewide averages for multiple years within the past eight years; and
- decreases or stagnation in issuance of commercial building permits for multiple years within the past eight years.

If the goals of the GMA restrain economic development in jurisdictions that are experiencing economic deterioration, the Growth Management Hearings Board and courts must afford deference to local elected officials' allocation of resources and development choices that prioritize economic development.

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: PRO: There should be an allowance to mitigate if planning creates hardship on an entity trying to create jobs and support their citizens. Localities work hard to attract family wage jobs and business, and the planning process shouldn't be an impediment to that. The way the GMA has been implemented destroys rural communities around the state. It has been used to drive negative outcomes. This bill provides the opportunity for elected officials to mitigate the damage the GMA does in many communities. This is a good way to improve economic opportunities. The GMA is an urban development act and it doesn't work for rural counties. Every business is sited in a UGA and they take the taxes. Economic development needs to be allowed in these rural areas.

CON: Futurewise can't support the removal of the prohibition on urban development in rural areas. This goes against the main goals of the GMA. There is a need for economic development in rural areas, so Futurewise is willing to work with this to see what can be done.

OTHER: Counties appreciate the flexibility and rural communities want more options when it comes to planning for economic development. Each county's geography is different, the economies are different, and counties would like to use planning options differently. The new section should include "may" instead of "must" to provide these options.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shelly Short, Prime Sponsor; Glen Morgan, Citizens Alliance for Property Rights; Wes McCart, Stevens County Commissioner.

CON: Bryce Yadon, Futurewise.

OTHER: Laura Berg, WA State Assn. of Counties.

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