

WAC 365-196-315 Buildable lands review and evaluation. (1) Purpose. The review and evaluation program required by RCW 36.70A.215 is referred to as the "buildable lands program." The buildable lands program is intended to determine if urban densities are being achieved within urban growth areas by comparing local planning goals and assumptions contained in the countywide planning policies and comprehensive plans with actual development and determining if actual development is consistent with the adopted plans. It also determines if there is sufficient commercial, industrial and housing capacity within the adopted urban growth area to accommodate the county's 20-year planning targets. If, through this evaluation, it is determined that there is an inconsistency between planned and built-out densities or there is insufficient development capacity, counties and cities must adopt and implement measures, other than expanding urban growth areas, that are reasonably likely to increase consistency between what was envisioned in adopted countywide planning policies, comprehensive plans and development regulations, and actual development that has occurred. These measures are referred to as "reasonable measures." Products derived through the program should be used as a technical resource to local policy makers for subsequent comprehensive plan updates.

(2) Required jurisdictions.

(a) The following counties, and the cities located within those counties, must establish and maintain a buildable lands program as required by RCW 36.70A.215:

- (i) Clark;
- (ii) King;
- (iii) Kitsap;
- (iv) Pierce;
- (v) Snohomish;
- (vi) Thurston; and
- (vii) Whatcom.

(b) If another county or city establishes a program containing features of the buildable lands program, they are not obligated to meet the requirements of RCW 36.70A.215.

(3) Countywide planning policies and supportive documents.

(a) Buildable lands programs must be established in countywide planning policies.

(b) The buildable lands program must contain policies that establish a framework for implementation and continued administration.

(c) The buildable lands program's framework for implementation and administration may be adopted administratively. The program's framework must contain policies or procedures to:

- (i) Provide guidance for the collection and analysis of data;
- (ii) Provide for the evaluation of the data no later than the date specified in RCW 36.70A.215, prior to the deadline for review of comprehensive plans and development regulations required by RCW 36.70A.130, commonly referred to as the buildable lands report;
- (iii) Provide for the establishment of methods to resolve disputes among jurisdictions regarding inconsistencies in collection and analysis of data; and

(iv) Provide for the amendment of the countywide policies and county and city comprehensive plans as needed to remedy inconsistencies identified through the evaluation required by this section, or to bring these policies and plans into compliance with the requirements of the act.

(d) The program's framework for implementation and administration should, in addition to the above, address the following:

(i) Establishment of the lead agency responsible for the overall coordination of the program;

(ii) Establishment of criteria and timelines for each county or city to:

(A) Make a determination as to consistency or inconsistency between what was envisioned in adopted countywide planning policies, comprehensive plans and development regulations and actual development that has occurred;

(B) Determine whether there is sufficient suitable land to accommodate the countywide population projection, and the subsequent population allocations within the county and between the county and its cities;

(C) Adopt and implement reasonable measures, if necessary;

(D) Report on the monitoring of the effectiveness of reasonable measures that have been adopted and implemented. Such reporting could be included in the subsequent buildable lands report;

(E) Transmit copies of any actions taken under (d)(ii)(A), (C) and (D) of this subsection to the department.

(iii) Providing opportunities for the public to review and comment on the following:

(A) Refinement of data collection and analysis methods for the review and evaluation elements of the program;

(B) Determinations as to consistency or inconsistency between what was envisioned in adopted countywide planning policies, comprehensive plans and development regulations and actual development that has occurred; and

(C) Adoption of reasonable measures, and reports on the monitoring of their effectiveness.

(iv) Public involvement may be accommodated during review and evaluation of a county or city comprehensive plan in consideration of the buildable land report information. This would generally include public review and comment opportunities before the planning commission or legislative body during the normal local government planning process.

(4) Buildable lands program reporting.

(a) No later than the date specified in RCW 36.70A.215, prior to the deadline for review of comprehensive plans and development regulations required by RCW 36.70A.130, the buildable lands program must compile and publish an evaluation, known as the buildable lands report. Each buildable lands report must be submitted to the department upon publication.

(b) The buildable lands reports must compare growth and development assumptions, targets, and objectives contained in the countywide planning policies and the county and city comprehensive plans with actual growth and development that has occurred since the adoption of the comprehensive plan or the last required buildable lands report. The results of this analysis are intended to aid counties and cities in reviewing and adjusting planning strategies.

(c) The publication, "*Buildable Lands Program Guidelines*," available from the department, may be used as a source for suggested approaches for meeting the requirements of the program.

(5) Criteria for determining consistency or inconsistency. The determination of consistency or inconsistency for each county or city maintaining a buildable lands program must be made under RCW 36.70A.215(3). At a minimum, the evaluation component of the program shall determine whether there is sufficient land suitable for development or redevelopment within the 20-year planning period:

(a) Evaluation under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(a) should determine whether the comprehensive plan and development regulations sufficiently accommodate the population projection established for the county and allocated within the county and between the county and its cities, consistent with the requirements in RCW 36.70A.110; the zoned capacity of land alone is not a sufficient standard to deem land suitable for development or redevelopment within the 20-year planning period.

(b) Evaluation under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(b) should compare the achieved densities, type and density range for commercial, industrial and residential land uses with the assumed densities that were envisioned in the applicable countywide planning policies, and the comprehensive plan, including:

(i) A review and evaluation of the land use designation and zoning/development regulations; environmental regulations (such as tree retention, stormwater, or critical area regulations) impacting development; and other regulations that could prevent assigned densities from being achieved; infrastructure gaps (including, but not limited to, transportation, water, sewer, and stormwater); and

(ii) Use of a reasonable land market supply factor when evaluating land suitable to accommodate new development or redevelopment of land for residential development and employment activities. The reasonable market supply factor identifies reductions in the amount of land suitable for development and redevelopment. The methodology for conducting a reasonable land market factor shall be determined through the guidance developed in RCW 36.70A.217.

(c) Evaluation under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(c) should provide an analysis of county and/or city development assumptions, targets, and objectives contained in the countywide planning policies and the county and city comprehensive plans when growth targets and assumptions are not being achieved. It is not appropriate to make a finding that assumed growth contained in the countywide planning policies and the county or city comprehensive plan will occur at the end of the current comprehensive planning 20-year planning cycle without rationale;

(d) Evaluation under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(d) should determine the actual density of housing that has been constructed and the actual amount of land developed for commercial and industrial uses within the urban growth area since the adoption of a comprehensive plan under this chapter or since the last periodic evaluation as required by RCW 36.70A.215(1); and

(e) Evaluation under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(e) should, based on the actual density, along with current trends and other documented factors relevant to patterns of actual growth and development as determined under RCW 36.70A.215 (3)(b), review commercial, industrial, and housing needs by type and density range to determine the amount of land needed for commercial, industrial, and housing for the remaining portion of the 20-year planning period used in the most recently adopted comprehensive plan.

(6) Measures to address inconsistencies.

(a) The legislative bodies of counties and cities are responsible for the adoption of reasonable measures requiring legislative action to amend their individual comprehensive plans and development regulations. Counties, in consultation with cities, are responsible for amending the countywide planning policies reasonably likely to increase consistency. Annual monitoring and reporting is the responsibility of the adopting jurisdiction, but may be carried out by either the adopting jurisdiction or other designated agency or person.

(b) If a county or city determines an inconsistency exists, the county or city should establish a timeline for adopting and implementing measures that are reasonably likely to increase consistency during the succeeding review and evaluation period. The responsible county or city may utilize its annual review or periodic update under RCW 36.70A.130 to make adjustments to its comprehensive plan and development regulations that are necessary to implement reasonable measures. Information regarding the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of reasonable measures should be made available to the public. Counties and cities may not rely on expansion of the urban growth area as a measure to address the inconsistency.

(i) Each county or city is responsible for implementing reasonable measures within its jurisdiction and must adopt measures that are designed to remedy the inconsistency within the remaining planning horizon of the adopted comprehensive plan;

(ii) Each county or city adopting reasonable measures is responsible for documenting its methodology and expectations for monitoring to provide a basis to evaluate whether the adopted measures have been effective in increasing consistency during the subsequent review and evaluation period;

(iii) If the monitoring of reasonable measures fails to show increased consistency relative to adopted policies, plans and development regulations during the subsequent review and evaluation period, the county or city should evaluate whether the measures in question should be revised, replaced, supplemented or rescinded;

(iv) If monitoring of reasonable measures demonstrates that such measures have remedied the inconsistency, the adopting county or city may discontinue monitoring;

(v) A copy of any action taken to adopt, amend, or rescind reasonable measures should be submitted to the department.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 36.70A.050 and 36.70A.190. WSR 23-08-037, § 365-196-315, filed 3/29/23, effective 4/29/23; WSR 15-04-039, § 365-196-315, filed 1/27/15, effective 2/27/15; WSR 10-03-085, § 365-196-315, filed 1/19/10, effective 2/19/10.]