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## Local Government Committee

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### HB 1164

**Brief Description:** Expanding urban growth area boundaries for residential development.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Connors, Leavitt, Low, Jacobsen, Couture, Barkis and Barnard.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act to expand their urban growth area boundaries to include specified types of parcels, subject to exclusions.

**Hearing Date:** 1/28/25

**Staff:** Michelle Rusk (786-7153).

**Background:**

Growth Management Act.  
*Comprehensive Plan.*

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that certain counties, and the cities within those counties, engage in planning for future population growth. The central part of the planning process is the comprehensive plan. The Legislature has established 15 goals that act as the basis of all comprehensive plans, including reducing sprawl, providing for affordable housing, and protecting property rights. The comprehensive plan must address these goals and set out the policies and standards that are meant to guide the city or county's actions and decisions in the future. These plans are required to be updated every 10 years and must contain certain elements, such as land use, housing, and a capital facilities plan. Each individual element must be satisfied while fitting within the overall comprehensive plan.

*Urban Growth Areas.*

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Each county that participates in planning under the GMA is required to designate an urban growth area (UGA). A UGA is an area designated by a planning county, inside of which urban growth is encouraged, and outside of which urban growth is prohibited. Urban growth is growth that makes such intensive use of land for buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces that it is unsuitable to be used primarily for agriculture, natural resource use and management, or for rural uses. Each city must be included in an urban growth area, and a UGA can include more than one city within its boundaries. Areas outside of a city can also be included within a UGA, if the areas are already characterized by urban growth.

The Office of Financial Management prepares population projections for each county, and the county and each city must include sufficient area and density for the anticipated growth in the next 20 years. Cities and counties may consider local circumstances, and have discretion to make choices about how to accommodate growth. The areas included in the UGA must be sufficient for medical, governmental, institutional, commercial, service, retail, and other nonresidential uses. The areas must also include greenbelt and open space areas and permit a range of densities and uses.

A UGA may also be revised when the revision is not needed to accommodate future growth. If patterns of development have created pressures in areas that exceed the developable land within the UGA, then the UGA can be revised to accommodate those patterns of development, and the likely pressure over the next 20-year period, if, for example:

- the areas added to the UGA are not agricultural, mineral resource, or natural resource lands;
- not more than 15 percent of the added area is designated as critical areas;
- areas removed from the UGA do not include areas of urban growth or density;
- the new UGA is contiguous, without gaps, and will not increase pressure to urbanize rural or natural resource lands; and
- the public facilities, services, and funding for the facilities and services have been identified in the transportation element and capital facilities element of the county's comprehensive plan.

Urban growth location is prioritized. First, urban growth must be located in areas that have adequate existing public facility and service capacities. Second, urban growth must be located in areas that will be served by a combination of existing facilities, and public or privately sourced facilities that will provide additional adequate services. Third, urban growth will be in the remaining portions of the UGAs.

#### *Urban Governmental Services.*

In general, cities are the most appropriate for providing urban governmental services. Urban governmental services include those public services and public facilities that are typically provided in cities, including storm and sewer systems, domestic water systems, public transit, public safety, and other services associated with urban areas and not associated with rural areas. It is generally not appropriate that urban governmental services are extended to or expanded in rural areas except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to protect basic public

health and safety and the environment, and when services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not permit urban development.

**Summary of Bill:**

Urban Growth Areas.

A city or county planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) must expand its urban growth area (UGA) boundaries in its next comprehensive plan update. The UGA boundary must include all parcels that:

- share a common boundary with another parcel that:
  - shares a common boundary with a UGA boundary;
  - is developed for residential purposes or has been approved for residential development; and
  - has access to urban services or is in an area planned for urban services; or
- are adjacent to a UGA boundary road where parcels on the opposite side of the road:
  - are within the UGA;
  - are developed for residential purposes or have been approved for residential development; and
  - have access to urban services or are in an area planned for urban services.

If a parcel meets either of the above criteria, the city or county must: (1) include the parcel in the UGA; (2) authorize residential density at the same density as allowed on the parcels with a shared common boundary or on the opposite side of the road; and (3) allow any buildings that are part of a residential development to use and connect to any available urban services.

Urban governmental services may be extended or expanded into rural areas when it is necessary for the residential development of a parcel that meets the above criteria, and county comprehensive plans designating urban growth areas and permissible densities in these areas must be revised to accommodate including parcels meeting the above criteria within the UGAs.

Cities and counties are not authorized to expand the UGA boundary to include any of the following:

- critical areas or their buffers, subject to exception;
- designated sole source aquifers on Puget Sound islands;
- watersheds serving a reservoir for potable water if listed as impaired or threatened under federal law;
- lots designated as urban separators by countywide planning policies;
- lots created through splitting a single residential lot; or
- areas designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on 1/21/2025.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.