
Local Government Committee

HB 1700

Brief Description: Concerning the timing of updates for comprehensive plans and development regulations.

Sponsors: Representatives Volz, Graham, Schmidt, Low, Schmick, Klicker, Dye, Abell, Chase, Connors, Engell, Ormsby and Hill.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the 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.
- Provides that cities subject to certain minimum density requirements are not required to update their capital facilities element to accommodate the additional housing until their first comprehensive plan review and revision occurring on or after June 30, 2036.

Hearing Date: 2/11/25

Staff: Kellen Wright (786-7134).

Background:

Growth Management Act Planning Requirements.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that certain counties, and the cities within those counties, engage in planning for future population growth. Counties that have a population of 50,000 or more and, prior to May 16, 1995, had its population grow by 10 percent or more in the prior 10 years, or, after May 16, 1995, by 17 percent or more in the prior 10 years, are covered

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by the GMA. So, too, is any county that experiences population growth of 20 percent over a 10-year period. Counties with populations under 50,000, that would otherwise be required to plan, can remove themselves from the GMA's comprehensive planning requirements. Conversely, counties that do not meet the standards for automatic inclusion in the GMA may choose to be included. Currently, 18 counties are required to plan, 10 have chosen to plan, and 11 are not subject to the full GMA planning requirements.

Whether a county is automatically required to plan under the GMA or voluntarily chooses to, the planning requirements are largely the same, and the comprehensive plan is the centerpiece of the process. The Legislature has established 14 goals to act as the basis of all comprehensive plans. Examples of goals include 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. Comprehensive plans must contain certain elements. Each element must satisfy the requirements for the individual element while also fitting within the overall comprehensive plan.

One such element is a capital facilities plan element. This element consists of an inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities showing the location and capacity of the facilities, a forecast of the future need for such facilities and the proposed locations of new or expanded facilities, and a six-year funding plan for the facilities. If funding appears as if it will fall short of this projection, the local government must reassess its capital facilities plan element.

Another part of the planning process is the establishment or revision of urban growth areas. An urban growth area is an area in which there is such intensive use of the land for buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces that the land cannot be used primarily for agriculture, natural resources, or for rural uses. Within a designated urban growth area, urban growth must be encouraged, while outside of a designated urban growth area, such growth must be prohibited. Counties planning under the GMA are required to designate urban growth areas, and each city within such a county must be included in an urban growth area.

Comprehensive Plan Review and Revision Deadlines.

Every 10 years, a county or city that is planning under the GMA must review and revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations to ensure that the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of the GMA. The 10-year review and revision deadlines are staggered for different counties. King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, and the cities within those counties, had a deadline of December 31, 2024. Clallam, Clark, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Thurston, and Whatcom, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of December 31, 2025. The deadlines for these two groups of counties and cities had originally been set for June 30, rather than December 31, of the year that their plans were due. Both groups of counties and cities, however, received six-month extensions of the due date, with the Legislature extending the deadline for the first group of counties and cities in 2022, and for the second group in 2024.

Of the remaining counties and cities, Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Kittitas, Skamania, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of June 30, 2026. The last group of counties and cities, Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Wahkiakum, and Whitman, and the cities within those counties, have a deadline of June 30, 2027.

The third and fourth groups of counties and cities must review and revise their comprehensive plans 10 years after their current update. The due date for the first and second group is instead nine and a half years, as the due date for those counties and cities reverts back to June 30 of the year that their next comprehensive plan is due. That means that the next deadline for the first group of counties and cities is June 30, 2034, and, for the second group, June 30, 2035. Subsequent reviews and revisions are due every 10 years thereafter.

Minimum Density Requirements.

Cities planning under the GMA that have a population of more than 25,000, or that share an urban growth area with a city that is both the largest in the county and has a population of more than 275,000, are required to comply with certain residential density requirements. For example, a city of between 25,000 and 75,000 people must allow for at least two units per lot on all lots zoned primarily for residential use. A city of more than 75,000 must allow at least four units per lot on those same lots.

Cities subject to these density requirements are not required to update their capital facilities element to accommodate the additional required housing until their first comprehensive plan review and revision on or after June 30, 2034.

Summary of Bill:

The next comprehensive plan review and revision deadline for Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Kittitas, Skamania, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima, and the cities within those counties, is December 31, 2026. Thereafter, the next comprehensive plan review and revision deadline for these counties and cities is June 30, 2036, with subsequent reviews and revisions required every 10 years after that date.

Cities subject to the density requirements are not required to update their capital facilities element to accommodate the additional required housing until their first comprehensive plan review and revision on or after June 30, 2036.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 31, 2025.

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

passed.