

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1742

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Environment & Energy

**Title:** An act relating to environmentally sustainable urban design.

**Brief Description:** Concerning environmentally sustainable urban design.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dye, Doglio, Fitzgibbon, Zahn, Parshley, Duerr and Pollet.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Environment & Energy: 2/3/25, 2/18/25 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Creates the Center for Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design in the Department of Ecology for the purpose of awarding grants for building design projects within an urban area that promote health and sustainability benefits through the use of architectural and landscape design.
- Requires the first design competition to be for a priority project that is located on a specific site near the Capitol Campus.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Doglio, Chair; Hunt, Vice Chair; Dye, Ranking Minority Member; Klicker, Assistant Ranking Member; Abbarno, Abell, Barnard, Berry, Duerr, Fey, Fitzgibbon, Kloba, Ley, Mena, Mendoza, Ramel, Stearns, Street, Stuebe, Wylie and Ybarra.

**Staff:** Matt Sterling (786-7289).

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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.*

## **Background:**

### First-Class Cities.

First-class cities are cities that have a population of 10,000 or more at the time of organization or reorganization and have adopted a charter under the state constitution. There are 10 first-class cities in Washington: Aberdeen, Bellingham, Bremerton, Everett, Richland, Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver, Spokane, and Yakima. No cities have organized or reorganized as first-class since 1973.

### State Building Code.

The State Building Code (Code) establishes minimum performance standards and requirements for construction and construction materials in the state, consistent with accepted standards of engineering, fire, and life safety. The Code comprises a number of model codes and standards, developed and published by international and national organizations, which are adopted by reference in the State Building Code Act (Act). Model codes and standards adopted in the Act include the International Building Code and the Energy Code.

### Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design Standards.

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) provides the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating System, which provides national design guidelines and a third-party certification tool. There are four ranks of LEED certification: (1) Certified; (2) Silver; (3) Gold; and (4) Platinum. In order to achieve any level of LEED certification, a project must earn a certain number of points that are allotted for a variety of elements.

The International Green Construction Code (IGCC) is a model code that provides minimum requirements to safeguard the environment, public health, safety and general welfare. The IGCC aims to do this through the establishment of requirements that are intended to reduce the negative impacts and increase the positive impacts of the built environment on the natural environment and building occupants.

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## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

### Center for Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design.

The Center for Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design (Center) is created in the Department of Ecology (Ecology) for the purpose of encouraging the use of architectural and landscape design to promote health and sustainability in built environments within first-class cities and other urban areas and may be demonstrated through application of the USGBC rating system or the IGCC.

The duties of the Center include:

- identifying priority projects;
- coordinating a biennial design competition for a designated priority project;
- awarding grants on a competitive basis for priority projects that implement environmentally sustainable urban design;
- providing recommendations on potential priority projects to state agencies and local government entities;
- advocating for environmentally sustainable urban design;
- coordinating with elected leaders and the private sector to achieve renewed urban spaces that improve public health and environmental outcomes;
- encouraging workforce development for related fields; and
- studying, exploring, developing, and promoting ideas that could inform improvements in design by incorporating the values of reintegrating urban living within the greater ecosystem.

*Advisory Council on Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design.*

The Advisory Council on Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design (Advisory Council) is created and consists of 10 members appointed by the Director of Ecology. The members of the Advisory Council must have experience in urban planning, green building design, sustainable architecture, or similar subject areas and be from each Washington congressional district. The Advisory Council must review and recommend applicants for grants or competitions coordinated or awarded by the Center and provide advice and guidance on the annual work plan of the Center. The Advisory Council must meet at least quarterly and members of the Advisory Council serve without compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses.

Priority Projects.

Priority projects are designated as parcels within an urban area with significant potential for improvement in ecological benefits or public health measures due to:

- dilapidation by being in a state of disrepair, disuse, or neglect; or
- falling within an area of the environmental health disparities map that is experiencing higher than the median environmental health disparities.

The Center must establish criteria for the selection of successful applicants for design competitions and grants. The Center considers any recommendations by the Advisory Council established in the final selection of awardees or grantees. To receive a design award or grant, an applicant must be a designer or a design team and the criteria for a successful applicant should at a minimum include:

- providing compelling vision to the public and elected leaders of how investment in the parcel could provide health, ecological, and aesthetic benefits consistent with the purposes of the center's mission;
- demonstrating the specific health and sustainability benefits achievable in that location through environmentally sustainable urban design; and
- documenting the basis of claims regarding specific outcomes for health and the environment.

The first design competition must be for a priority project that:

- is located on a multiacre parcel within three miles of the state Capitol Campus;
- was previously used for commercial purposes in the beverage processing or manufacturing industry;
- has not been inhabited or used for commercial purposes for at least 20 years; and
- has experienced damage from a fire.

The Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design Account is created in the State Treasury. All funds for competitions and grants are deposited into the account and moneys in the account may be used only for design competition and grant awards.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill requires all recipients of design awards or grants to be designers or a design team.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 30, 2025.

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

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) It is important for the built environment to connect our communities to nature. Communities appreciate the impact of environmentally sustainable design to create healthier indoor spaces, a more efficient built environment, and more beautiful communities. This bill is a creative approach to address complex and difficult properties like the one located near the Capitol Campus. Design competitions provide a market-driven opportunity for new ideas to be explored and they offer young design firms and recent graduates an opportunity to gain exposure and provide a positive economic impact.

Integrating living plants into urban areas is essential to reducing some of the negative heat island impacts on water cycles, on energy use, and on human health. Building environmentally sustainable design projects is important, but the Legislature should expand the mission of the Center for Environmentally Sustainable Urban Design (Center) to also become a prime source for landscape options and plans that support environmental health and sustainability across the state. Such a resource in the Department of Ecology (Ecology) would significantly complement the current Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Division. This would lead to wider use of complementary design plans for developing needed housing across the state and to sustain and grow our urban forest for climate resiliency. The list of cities involved in the bill should be expanded to

include all cities with a population of 75,000 or more.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There is a certain kind of development that is needed in the Puget Sound area that channels population growth into attractive, transit-oriented urban growth areas and this bill describes it perfectly. An ideal development project in this area is a brownfield or undeveloped space in the city that is redeveloped to build a multi-use space to provide residential or commercial uses while incorporating stormwater infrastructure and other green elements. The goals of these kinds of developments, in addition to meeting the needs of the community for housing and commercial spaces, are to filter stormwater, reduce flooding, and create inviting landscapes that provide places for people to enjoy that are shown to improve mental health, traffic, and provide other community benefits. There are frequently regulatory or funding barriers for projects like these and these opportunities need to be more ingrained in the culture of design instead of just being occasional grant projects. The bill creates the Center in Ecology and an advisory council. The primary work of this new office would relate to promoting and developing environmentally sustainable design, a biennial competition for urban design improvements that provide health and sustainability benefits, and awarding design grants. This would be a significant new line of work for Ecology requiring the agency to develop expertise in a new topic area. Ecology does not currently have any civil engineers or expertise in urban design or planning and would need to create new positions to meet the requirements of the bill. The bill refers to median environmental health disparities which are undefined, so a clarifying amendment would be helpful.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Mary Dye, prime sponsor; Kelsey Hulse, Washington State Association of Counties; Sue Lani Madsen; and Steve Zemke, Friends of Seattle's Urban Forest, TreePAC.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Samantha Weinstein, Department of Ecology; and Don Gourlie, Puget Sound Partnership.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.