

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5555

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As of February 4, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to zoning regulations in commercial, retail, and mixed-use areas in cities and code cities.

**Brief Description:** Concerning zoning regulations in commercial, retail, and mixed-use areas in cities and code cities.

**Sponsors:** Senators Salomon, Alvarado, Frame and Nobles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Housing: 2/05/25.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires planning cities to allow the addition of housing units in ground floor commercial or retail in a station area that is not designated as a major pedestrian corridor.
- Stipulates that planning cities may not designate more than 10 percent of its area zoned as mixed-use or commercial as a major pedestrian corridor.
- Requires planning cities to allow an expedited ability for a development to deviate from any street level use standards based on a showing that the requirement would result in the creation of fewer housing units in the development.
- Requires cities to adopt zoning regulations that allow for greater building height and increased density in all commercial and mixed-use zones for developments built with all mass timber products.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

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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.*

**Staff:** Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

**Background:** Growth Management Act. The Growth Management Act (GMA) is the comprehensive land use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. The GMA establishes land use designation and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities. The GMA also establishes a significantly wider array of planning duties for 28 counties, and the cities within those counties, that are obligated to satisfy all planning requirements of the GMA.

The GMA directs fully planning jurisdictions to adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans. Comprehensive plans are implemented through locally adopted development regulations, and both the plans and the local regulations are subject to review and revision requirements prescribed in the GMA. When developing their comprehensive plans, counties and cities must consider various goals set forth in statute.

City Zoning and Development Regulations. Cities and counties that do not fully plan under the GMA may adopt comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and other official controls regulating land uses within their boundaries.

Land use regulations may generally include:

- the location and the use of buildings, structures, and land for residence, industry, trade, and other purposes;
- the height, construction, and design of buildings and structures;
- the size of yards, open spaces, lots, and tracts;
- the setback of buildings; and
- the subdivision and development of land.

Nonplanning cities and code cities are subject to various zoning and development restrictions under state law. These include the restriction that cities and code cities may not, through ordinances, development regulations, zoning regulations, or other official controls, prohibit the addition of housing units in any specific part of a building except ground floor commercial or retail that is along a major pedestrian corridor as defined by each city or code city.

A city or code city may prohibit such addition if doing so would violate applicable building codes or health and safety standards.

Mass Timber. As a component of the state building code, the Washington State Building Code Council (SBCC) is required to adopt rules for the use of mass timber products for residential and commercial building construction. Rules adopted for the use of mass timber products by the SBCC must consider applicable national and international standards.

For the purposes of these rules, mass timber products is defined as a type of building component or system that uses large panelized wood construction, including:

- cross-laminated timber;
- nail-laminated timber;
- glue-laminated timber;
- laminated strand timber;
- dowel-laminated timber;
- laminated veneer lumber;
- structural composite lumber; and
- wood-concrete composites.

**Summary of Bill:** Housing Units in Ground Floor Commercial or Retail. A city or code city planning under the GMA must allow for the addition of housing units in ground floor commercial or retail in a station area that is not designated as a major pedestrian corridor by the city or code city. A city or code city may not designate more than 10 percent of its area zoned as mixed-use or commercial as a major pedestrian corridor.

These limitations are added as an exception to the ability of cities and code cities to prohibit the addition of housing units in ground floor commercial or retail that is along a major pedestrian corridor.

A station area is defined as all lots that are fully within an urban growth area and fully or partially within:

- one-half mile walking distance of an entrance to a train station with a stop on a light rail system, a commuter rail stop, or a stop on rail or fixed guideway systems; or
- one-quarter mile walking distance of a stop on a fixed route bus system that is designated as a bus rapid transit stop.

A city or code city planning under the GMA must allow an expedited ability for a development to deviate from any street level use standards based on a showing that the requirement would result in the creation of fewer housing units in the development.

Mass Timber. Cities and code cities must adopt zoning regulations that allow greater building height and increased density in all commercial and mixed-use zones for developments built with all mass timber products.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 29, 2025.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.