



2022 Issue Paper: Growth Management Act

Position Statement

The Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW Chapter 36.70A, was adopted in 1990, and the League of Women voters was an advocate for it then and remains so. The purpose of the GMA is stated clearly set forth in the first section of that Act:

“The legislature finds that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and the wise use of our lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning. Further, the legislature finds that it is in the public interest that economic development programs be shared with communities experiencing insufficient economic growth.”

In summary, the GMA requires most jurisdictions to develop comprehensive plans that contain population forecasts and provisions for addressing how the population will be housed and infrastructure needed for a 20-year period. The mandated elements are land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, rural, transportation, economic development and park and recreation. There are also several suggested optional areas of planning, including conservation, solar energy, and recreation.

As time has passed and circumstances have evolved, a number of amendments to the GMA have been necessary. The League monitors and supports or opposes those bills based on positions found in Program in Action on pages 31 and 32.

Summary of Issues for the 2022 Legislative Session

In 2021, the housing element was expanded to assure that the planning includes housing for all of the population, including low-income, severely low-income and those expected to need shelter. In 2022, there will be continued discussion of whether to mandate climate mitigation planning in particular; and whether to modify several other categories as well.

High priorities are addressing the vesting loopholes in the original Act (SB 5042); facilitating transit-oriented development and changes that support transit service and additional housing supply to address low-income housing needs; and requirements for local jurisdictions to plan for climate mitigation (HB 1099) and salmon recovery (HB 1117).

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