

Growth Management Act Compliance Scope and Schedule

When Washington's Growth Management Act was first adopted in the early 1990s it included initial Comprehensive Plan and development regulation deadlines for Olympia and other growing cities and counties. The Act also included a directive that plans and regulations "shall be subject to continuing evaluation and review," and a requirement that every ten years a county and its cities must review the urban growth boundaries and permitted densities for the ability to accommodate the State-projected 20-year urban growth for the area. In 1997 this requirement was supplemented with a requirement for a "Buildable Lands Report" for monitoring growth capacity.

In 1997 the Act was also amended to require that beginning in 2002 cities such as Olympia must periodically review and, if needed, revise Comprehensive Plans and related development regulations. Unlike 'annual' amendments of the Plan, which are optional, these 'periodic updates' are mandatory. Olympia's initial periodic update compliance report was approved by the City Council and submitted to the State in 2004. That report generally concluded that annual amendments and other activities had resulted in Olympia not needing to make any significant changes to its Comprehensive Plan nor its development regulations. Olympia's next periodic update was due in 2009, but in 2005, the legislature provided a one-year extension.

In 2008 Olympia began preparing for the next periodic update. Although specific chapters of the Plan had been added and updated over the years, no extensive review had been conducted in nearly twenty years. Given the lower levels of development pressure resulting from the economic recession, this seemed like an opportunity to reevaluate the community's path as set forth in the Plan. The City Council directed an extensive public outreach to ask the community what aspects of the Plan should be updated. That 'scoping' process became the foundation for what we now know as "Imagine Olympia," the ongoing update of the Plan.

By 2010 when this scoping process was concluded, the periodic update deadline had again been postponed and was now set at 2012. On the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the City Council adopted a 10-point "Scope of Comprehensive Plan Update" and a new work schedule targeting 2012 for completing the Plan update and 2013 for amending related development regulations. That schedule envisioned the Planning Commission making a recommendation regarding the Plan amendments in February of 2012. The Council later approved a target of March of 2013 for the Commission to conclude its review of the Plan update.

The State legislature has continued to respond to economic and funding concerns by amending the periodic-update schedule and provided another extension resulting in Olympia's current deadline being June 30, 2016, with an 8-year cycle to follow. This legislation also provided that the next Buildable Lands Reports shall be completed one year before the new periodic update deadline. (The State also adjusted the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update cycle to 8 years – thus the next SMP update will be due in 2019.)

These repeated amendments have led some jurisdictions to cut costs by drastically reducing long-range planning activities, while others have responded by continuing to move forward with their periodic update program albeit a little more slowly than anticipated. The City of Olympia, primarily because it was invested in the Imagine Olympia process, decided to continue its efforts. Outlined below is how the July draft of the Comprehensive Plan now being evaluated by the Commission is intended to fit into this larger effort to ensure full Growth Management Act compliance by June 30 of 2016.

The schedule below is grounded in the Scope of the Comprehensive Plan Update adopted by the City Council in June of 2010 and the associated schedule as later amended by the Council. It includes the basic assumption that a version of the new draft of the updated Plan will be adopted by the Council late in 2013.

Given limited revenues, the ability of the City to engage in more extensive long-range planning activities in the near future is unpredictable. Further, the State legislature has been inclined to modify the various statutory deadlines. Therefore, the program below is intentionally designed to address each issue individually while also being flexible and reaching the goal of a complete periodic update by mid-2016.

Phased Compliance Schedule

In the last twenty years the Growth Management Act has been amended dozens of times. The periodic update process now in process in Olympia is intended to ensure that Olympia's Comprehensive Plan and other related regulations are in compliance with all applicable provisions of the Act. To help cities and counties ensure such timely compliance, the State's Department of Commerce provides a "GMA checklist." The table below outlines the proposed program for achieving compliance with these various requirements. Those judged to be necessary to complete the periodic update are identified as GMA-mandated in the schedule 'notes.'

The program elements in the table below are primarily those related to the Growth Management Act. The Olympia Comprehensive Plan is also linked in various ways to many other planning programs of the City and other agencies. Program elements listed below are not in priority order, but are roughly chronological. The specific timing of each program will depend on priorities and budgets.

Other related documents available on request include:

- Washington Department of Commerce Periodic Update Checklist for Cities
- Comprehensive Plan Relationship to other Planning Documents memo
- Olympia's Comprehensive Plan - Relationships (Influences and Effects)

Program Element	Description	Tentative Schedule	Schedule Notes
Shoreline Master Program Update	Revision of Olympia’s Shoreline Master Program (SMP) as mandated by state law. Goals and policies of the SMP are already considered part of Comprehensive Plan. Upon Ecology approval, the new SMP goals and policies will be incorporated as a subchapter of the Environment chapter. Any inconsistencies with other parts of the Plan will be resolved at that time; none have been identified to date. See RCW 36.70A.480.	City Council action in August, 2013; final Ecology approval late in 2013.	SMP update is overdue; it was to be submitted to Ecology in 2011.
Action Plan (aka Implementation Strategy or Action Strategy)	This is Item 10 of the Scope of the Update - a new implementation prioritization process with performance measures for guiding Comprehensive Plan implementation.	To be completed by June of 2014	GMA option
City Growth Forecast review	In late 2012 and early 2013, the Thurston Regional Planning Council adopted new county-wide employment and population forecasts and allocations to cities and other smaller areas. This information will be incorporated into the Plan	2013 prior to Council adoption	GMA-mandate due 2016
Critical Areas Code update	Add ‘special considerations’ necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries. See RCW 36.70A.172(1).	2013 or 2014	GMA-mandate due 2016
Capital Facilities Element	Olympia’s Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) is a separate volume of the Comprehensive Plan and includes two documents: a chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and a 6-year CFP. The CFP is to be converted to a new format acknowledging the style of the Plan update, and the goals and policies enhanced. RCW 36.70A.070.	Format change in 2013; enhancement by 2016	Enhancement options to be explored
Subarea Planning	Strategic planning for twelve subareas including a special downtown approach (see below) is envisioned in the proposed updated Plan.	Two subarea plans each year (format in 2013)	A GMA option
Downtown Master Plan	The July draft envisions a new “Downtown Master Plan.” Initially, the existing downtown section of the Comprehensive Plan would be adopted as a separate master plan; to be updated later.	Initial adoption 2013; update in 2014?	Initial adoption to comply with GMA
Urban Corridor Focus Areas	Studies of three locations within urban corridors are envisioned in the draft Plan. A ‘HUD Challenge Grant’ has been received and will fund at least a part of the Martin Way analysis. (See Urban Corridors section of Land Use Chapter of draft Plan.)	Martin Way in 2013; others when funds available	Not a GMA mandate
Development regulations to implement Plan	This program would update and revise regulations to ensure consistency with the updated Plan.	2013 thru June 2016	Timing may vary by regulation

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County-wide Planning Policy review	Comprehensive Plans must be consistent with the County-wide Planning Policies adopted by Thurston County and the cities. The draft Plan conforms with current policies, but an update is expected at the conclusion of the on-going Sustainable Thurston process. (See TRPC website for more information.)	Probably 2014 or later	Depends on Sustainable Thurston schedule
County review & adoption of update	Olympia's Comprehensive Plan is a joint plan adopted by Thurston County; the County has not yet scheduled its periodic update	Probably 2015	See County work programs
Coordination with Lacey and Tumwater, etc.	Comprehensive Plan updates must be coordinated with neighboring cities and other agencies. RCW 36.70A.100. Lacey and Tumwater have not scheduled their periodic updates.	Probably 2015	GMA mandate
Buildable Lands Report review	The Buildable Land Report evaluating growth capacity, which is to be updated by TRPC staff for Thurston County and its cities, is not expected to lead to Plan revisions.	2014 or later	Report due June, 2015
Urban Growth Area review	Thurston County will be reviewing all Urban Growth boundaries; any changes will require amendment of the city's Comprehensive Plan. RCW 36.70A.130.	Probably 2016	See County schedule
Urban Corridor Task Force report	TRPC's 'UCTF' report as accepted by Olympia includes recommendations that could lead to Comprehensive Plan changes, such as reviving the short/long-term growth area concept.	Various; depends on cities/county coordination	Not a GMA mandate