

Land Use

Background:

Land use, growth and development in Washington State are governed by a wide-range of laws and policies including the Growth Management Act (GMA), the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as well as a long list of other environmental and local regulations. Many local governments are currently in the process of updating their land use plans and regulations, and landowners and local governments alike fear continued litigation over many uncertainties contained in these laws.

Problem:

According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management, approximately 1.4 million people are expected to make the greater Puget Sound area their home in the next 10-15 years with an additional 500,000+ people statewide. In addition, due to Washington's myriad land use regulations, the amount of buildable land is on the decline and the housing and construction markets are struggling as a result of our historic economic recession.

Solution:

To responsibly accommodate future population growth, promote economic development and provide opportunities for the housing and construction markets to recover, we need policies that will streamline the land use development process within Urban Growth Areas. Such policies should meet the existing goals of the Growth Management Act to encourage growth and density within urban areas and reduce sprawl which will, in turn, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles. To accomplish these objectives, AWB:

1. Supports providing increased incentives to local jurisdictions and developers to achieve greater densities by streamlining the SEPA process.
2. Supports amending state law to provide that impact fees be determined no later than at the time of land use approval.
3. To prevent additional economic harm to the struggling housing and construction markets, as well as the downturn in development of residential, commercial and industrial land, AWB opposes changes to Washington's real property vesting laws.