

MA, PDS

Tonight, we are going to discuss the “Review and Evaluation” Program Methodology.

Also known as the Buildable Lands Methodology.

Counties Subject to Review and Evaluation Program

Source: State Department of Commerce (2018)



The Growth Management Act (GMA) has special “buildable land” provisions that originally applied to five counties in the Puget Sound region and Clark County to the south.

The State legislature amended the GMA by adding Whatcom County to the list of buildable land jurisdictions in 2017.

This map, from the State *Buildable Lands Guidelines*, shows the 7 counties now subject to the program.

Main Objective # 1: Urban Densities

Determining whether a county and its cities are achieving urban densities within UGAs by comparing growth assumptions in the comp plans with actual growth.

We see three main objectives in the buildable lands program.

The 1st is determining whether urban densities are being achieved in UGAs

and

whether actual growth is consistent with County and city comprehensive plans.

This is the “look back” part of the project. Reviewing past growth to see how the comp plans have performed over time.

Main Objective # 2: Land for Development

Determining whether there is sufficient land that is suitable for development in the future.

The 2nd main objective is to evaluate whether there is enough land, that is available and suitable for development, to accommodate growth over the remainder of the planning period.

This involves:

- Making deductions from the land supply for land that is not likely to develop in the planning period;
- Estimating how much land is left for actual development; and
- Estimating how much population and employment that land can accommodate.

This is the “look forward” part of the project, to prepare for future growth.

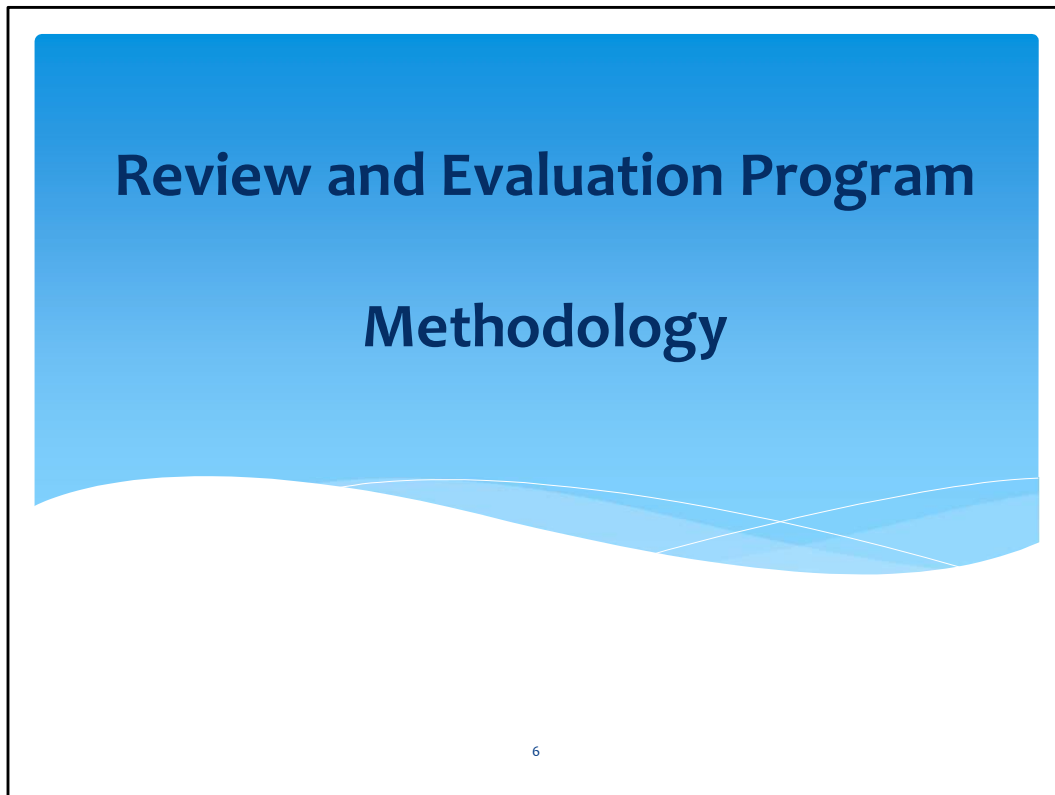
Main Objective # 3: Rectifying Inconsistencies

Identifying reasonable measures, if necessary, to reduce differences between comp plan growth assumptions and actual development patterns.

The 3rd main objective is to identify “reasonable measures” if there are discrepancies between planned growth and actual growth.

These measures are intended to close any gap between growth as envisioned in the comp plans and growth as it is occurring the ground.

This part of the project is looking at past inconsistencies and trying to address those issues going forward.



The County and city planners, with the assistance of a consultant, have develop a draft Methodology to implement the GMA's Review and Evaluation Program requirements.

Draft Methodology - Review

- ✓ Stakeholder comments
- ✓ County Planning Commission hearing
- ✓ City/County Planner Group final recommendation
- ✓ County Council briefing
- ✓ City council briefings
- ✓ Approved by the County Planning Director

There are several steps in the review process for the Buildable Lands Program Methodology:

Stakeholders - Earlier this year, we asked for and received stakeholder comments (from BIA, Realtors , Futurewise, RE Sources, and Port of Bellingham).

- The City/County Planner Group issued a paper either incorporating the comments into the Methodology or explaining why we didn't think changes were necessary.

PC - The intent of the Planning Commission hearing this evening is to obtain public comment on the Methodology. The Methodology does not require legislative action, so we are not asking for a recommendation from the Commission.

City/County Planner Group – will make a final recommendation on the document.

County Council - We will do a briefing with the County Council, explaining the Methodology and getting any input (*possibly this fall*).

City Councils - Cities will also brief their respective councils.

Administrative Approval - Finally, the Methodology will be approved by the Planning

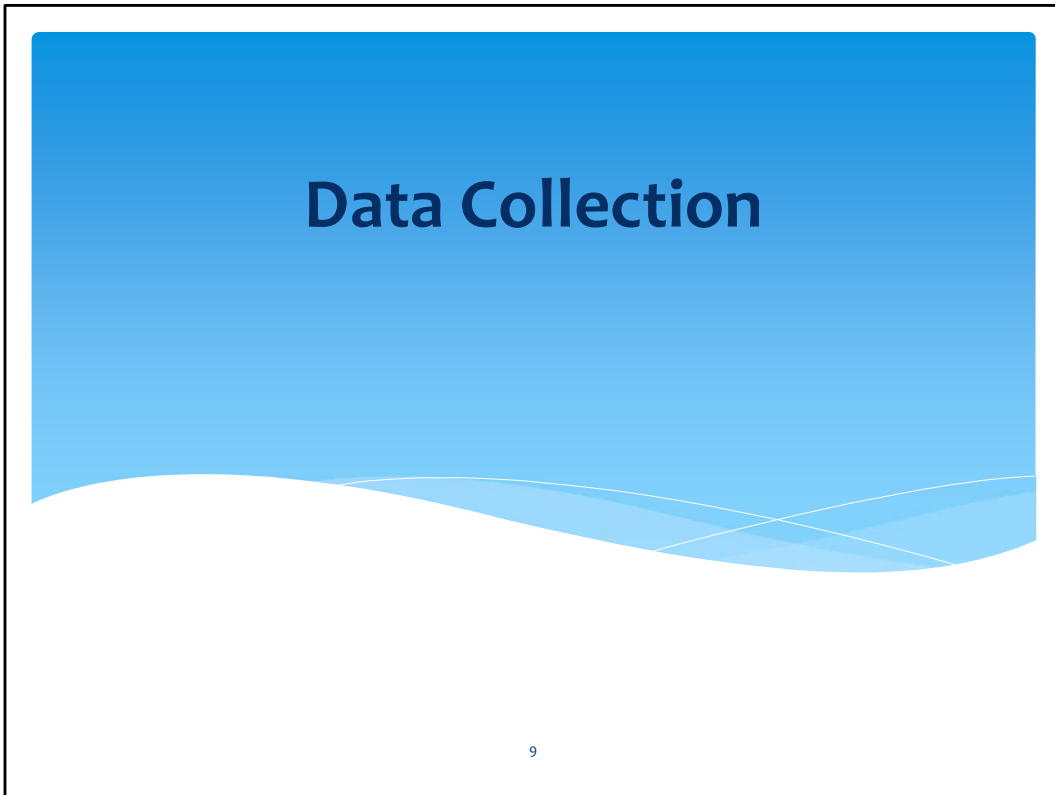
and Development Services Director (*possibly by the end of the year*).

Draft Methodology

- ✓ Data Collection
- ✓ Evaluation of Lands Suitable for Development
- ✓ Buildable Lands Report
- ✓ Reasonable Measures

The Methodology addresses 4 main issues we are going to discuss this evening . . .

(see above).



The GMA requires “Buildable Land” counties to collect data on development that occurred over the last few years and data on several other matters.

Again, this is the ‘look-back” part of the program.

Data Collection

- * Building permits
- * Land divisions
- * Capital facilities
- * Regulatory changes
- * Annexations
- * UGA changes
- * Zoning map changes

Data Collection – We have developed a “Data Reporting Tool” (spreadsheets) that the County and cities are using to collect data on . . .

(see above).

This data is being collected for a 5-year period between 2016 and 2021.

This data will be summarized in the Buildable Lands Report.

Land Suitable for Development

11

The “look-forward” part of the program involves an evaluation of lands suitable for development over the remaining portion of the existing 20-year planning period.

Evaluation of Land Suitable for Development

- * Review Assumptions and Achieved Densities
- * Assemble Net Developable Land Inventory
- * Estimate Population and Employment Capacity
- * Evaluate Land Capacity

The Evaluation of Lands Suitable for Development estimates how much residential, commercial, and industrial land is available in UGAs to accommodate development in the future.

Step 1. Review Assumptions/Achieved Densities: The Data Reporting Tools will calculate the net residential density of development that occurred from 2016-2021. We will also look at occupancy rates, AHH size, etc. (OFM/Census).

Step 2. Assemble Land Inventory: Estimate the supply of land that may be available for development. This includes deductions for wetlands, future public uses, infrastructure, and market factor.

Step 3. Population/Employ Capacity: Estimate the # of dwelling units the land in each UGA can accommodate and the # of people those dwelling units can house. Also, how many employees can be accommodated.

Step 4. Evaluate Land Capacity: Compare growth projections to UGA capacity and identify potential deficits in capacity.

Draft Methodology – CAO Buffers

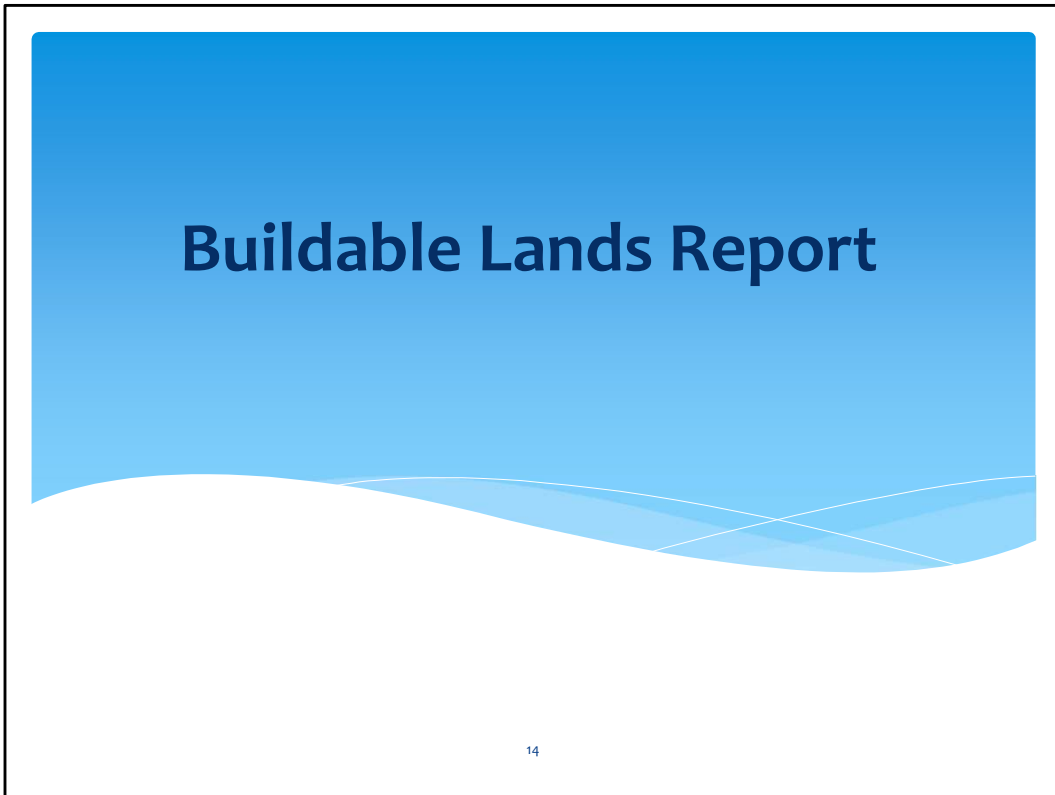
“. . . Critical area buffers will be deducted from the residential land supply unless the jurisdiction, based upon their knowledge of local codes and circumstances, determines that some of the buffers should be included in the residential land supply. . . ”
(p. 22).

The draft Methodology takes a default position that wetland buffers will be deducted from the land supply, with some local discretion built in.

This is different from the 2015 Land Capacity Analysis Methodology, which didn't include buffers in the deductions for residential lands.

Actual wetland buffers are determined by site specific analysis, so each jurisdiction is developing general/assumed buffers that they will apply.

So this is a change from the last go around.



All this information will be analyzed and summarized in a Buildable Lands Report.

Buildable Lands Report

Due: June 30, 2022

- * Policy framework
- * Methods
- * Countywide findings
- * Jurisdiction profiles

The Buildable Lands Report will:

- Summarize the policy framework for the BL program, including CWPPs and UGA growth allocations.
- Summarize the Methods (how we are doing the analysis). This will include highlights from the detailed Methodology.
- Provide Countywide results. A high-level summary of past development. And, in total, is there enough land available throughout the county to accommodate projected population and employment growth? and
- Provide results by jurisdiction. More detailed review of past development. And, does each UGA have adequate land and planned densities to accommodate projected growth?

State law requires that the County and cities issue the Buildable Lands Report by **June 30, 2022** – three years in advance of the comp plan updates.

Buildable Lands Report Review & Approval Process

- * City/County Planner Group issues draft BLR
- * County Planning Commission – public hearing
- * County Council – public hearing
- * Adoption by County Council and each city council

Tonight, we are looking at the Methodology for developing the Buildable Lands Report.

The actual Buildable Lands Report will go through a separate review process:

- City/County Planner Group will issue a Buildable Lands Report - prior to the June 2022 deadline.
- The County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the BLR and issue a recommendation to the County Council.
- The County Council will conduct a public hearing.
- The County Council and each city council and will consider adopting a resolution or ordinance approving the BLR.

Reasonable Measures

Reasonable Measures is a term in the GMA that signifies comp plan or code changes to address gaps between planned growth and actual growth.

Reasonable Measure Examples

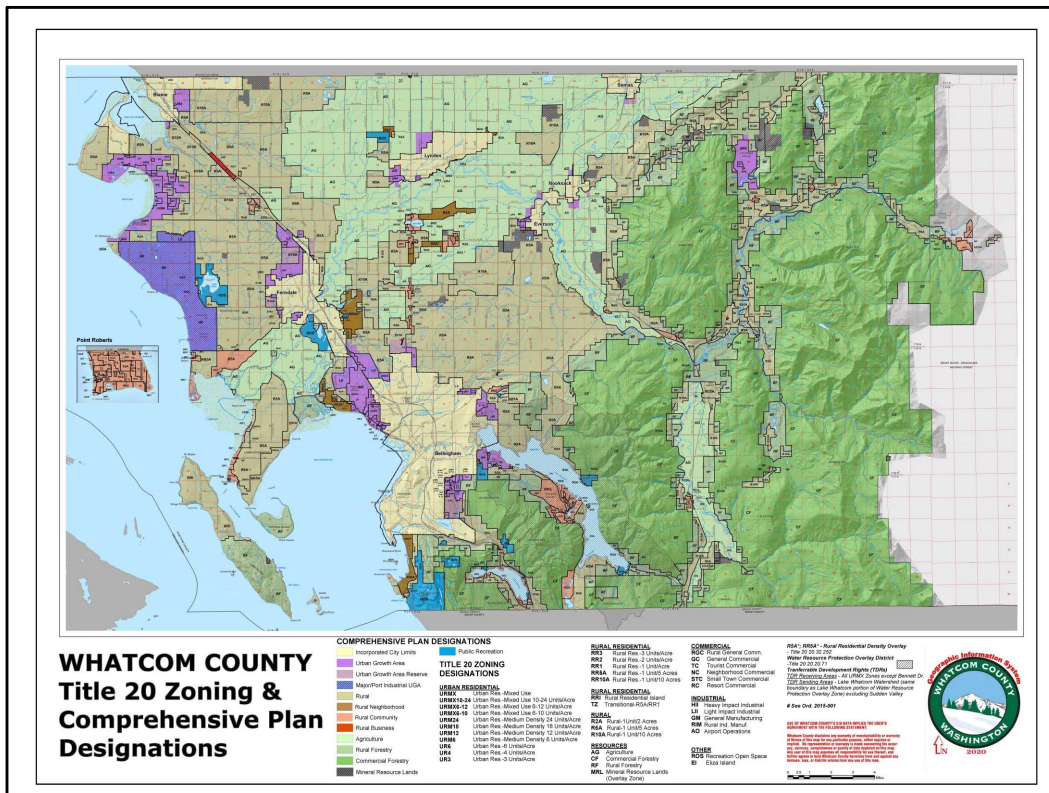
- Capital Facilities Investments
- Modify building height limits
- Density Bonuses
- Higher Allowable Densities
- Minimum Density Requirements

Reasonable Measures – The County and each city will determine whether there is a discrepancy between planned and actual growth in their respective jurisdictions.

If so, the jurisdiction will consider reasonable measures to address the issue.

The 2018 *State Buildable Lands Guidelines* provide examples of reasonable measures, including . . .

(see above)



Under the GMA, the Buildable Lands Program applies to the County and to all the cities.

The County and cities are working together in close coordination to develop a unified approach.

However, each jurisdiction will make decisions about whether or not they need to adopt reasonable measures in their comp plan and development regulation updates.



This is a very simplified graphic showing key steps along the way – that will ultimately lead to adoption of the comprehensive plan updates in 2025.

Website

Search:

Whatcom County review and evaluation program

Whatcom County buildable lands program

Or go to:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3052/Review-Evaluation-Program-Buildable-Land>

The County has a website devoted to the Review and Evaluation program. . .

Summary



22

1. State law was amended in 2017 to add Whatcom County and the cities to the list of jurisdictions that must have a Buildable Land Program.
2. The County and Cities are working together on a number of initiatives to develop the program, including:
 - The Methodology (the subject of tonight's hearing).
3. A Final BLR will be issued by the state deadline of June 30, 2022.
4. Tonight, the main goal is to receive public comment on the Methodology. As mentioned, we don't need a Planning Commission recommendation on the Methodology.

That concludes our presentation. Questions?