

Planning Commission Roles & Responsibilities

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Overview

- *History Lesson, Pt. 1: Roles & Responsibilities*
- *History Lesson, Pt. 2: the GMA, Code Cities, CPAs and LUCAs*
- *The Planning Commission: Where the Future is Made, Every Other Hump Day Evening*

PC Quiz #1: History & Context

What year was the City of Bellevue Incorporated?

What was the first legislative action taken by the Bellevue City Council?

The PC Body: What Are You in 2025?



- Fact-finding and act as citizen advisors to City Council.
- Provide planning and legislative land use recommendations to the City Council.
- Not a substitute for the City Council: administrative body (the PC) and legislative body (the Council) are distinct and separate.
- Where City Code specifies the process to be followed or criteria to be applied, the Code provisions must be followed.

PC ROLE: What Does the PC do in 2025?

Provide input to the City
Council on planning and land
use legislation



Specifically

Comp Plan amendments
Land Use Code amendments

Planning Commission: A Creature of Statute

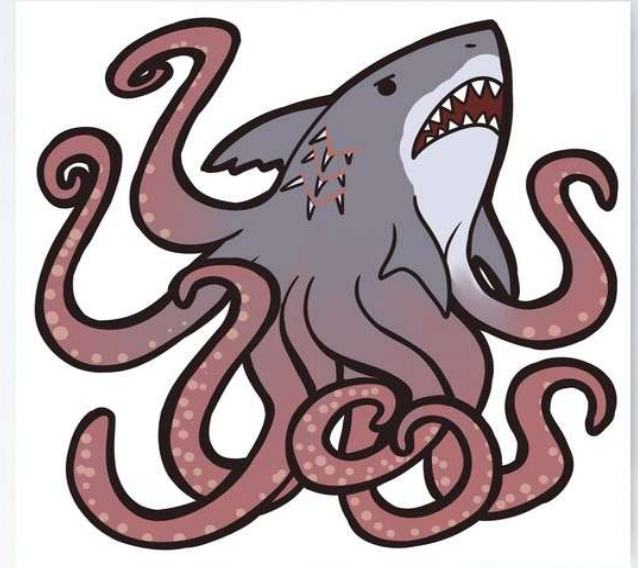
Part 1

- Planning Commission bound by statutory framework (RCW 35A.63.020) and City Code (chapter 3.64 BCC)).
- Planning Commission is not an elected, legislative body;
- Planning Commission is a citizen advisory body that fulfills an administrative function.
- The PC does not represent the public; only elected officials represent the public.



PLANNING COMMISSION: A Creature of Statute Part 2

- Lead role in the annual Comprehensive Plan amendments.
- Recommendations on Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs) and Land Use Code Amendments (LUCAs).
- Directors for Community Development and Development Services (and the CAO), not the Planning Commission, supervise City Staff and direct administrative operations.
- No role in project-level or quasi-judicial land use decisions under City Code.



PLANNING COMMISSION: A Creature of Statute

Part 3

Planning Commission DOES NOT:

- A. Advocate for City without express City Council permission;
- B. Supervise staff, administrative operations, or maintenance; or
- C. Consider regional issues not specifically assigned.



PC Quiz #2: History Lesson

Quiz:

What is the Oldest Building in Bellevue?

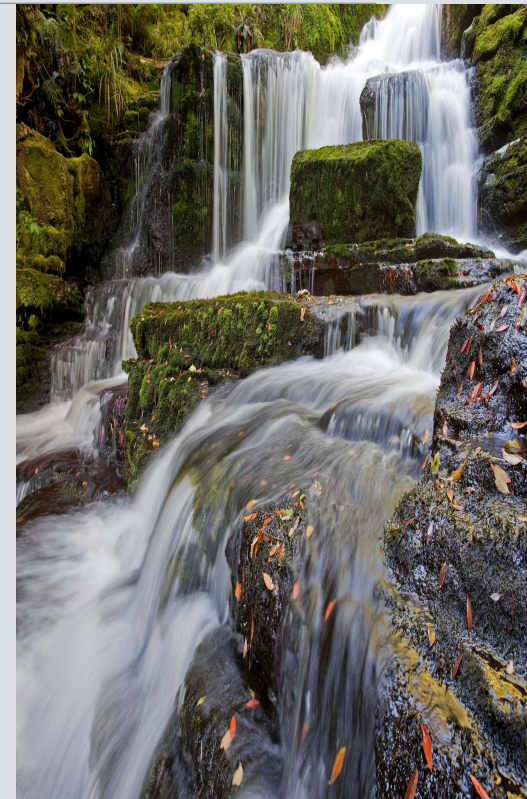


The GMA Waterfall: WA State Guidance to Local Implementation

The State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires local governments to develop and adopt long-range comprehensive plans.

The GMA requires local land use regulations (referred to as development regulations) to be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Comp Plan = foundational City planning document; Land Use Code = regulates projects through zoning and land use controls.



GMA, Regional Planning, & City of Bellevue Local Planning:

Growth Management Act



Regional Planning in King County



Local Planning: Comprehensive Plan



Local Planning: Development
Regulations

Growth, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, Critical Areas, Public Facilities, Growth Management Hearings Board....

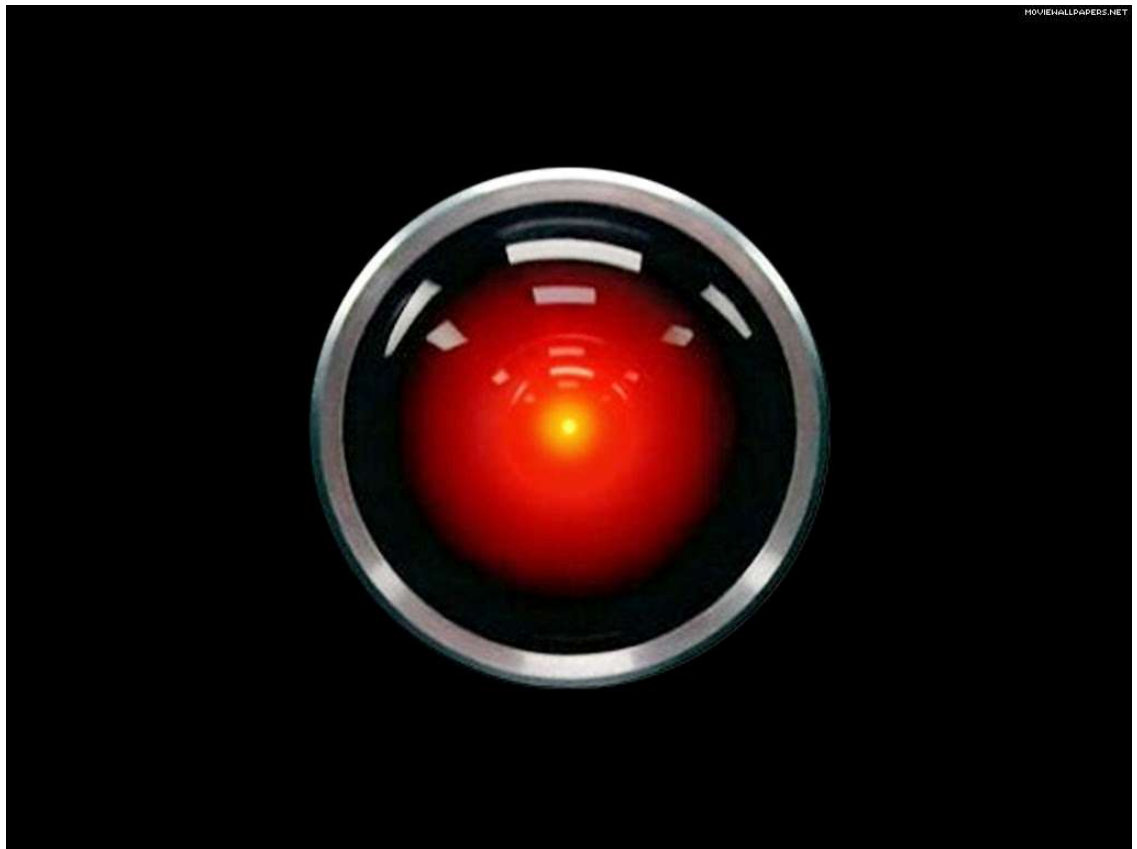
King County Planning Policies (CPPs), Housing and Job Targets, PSRC, GMPC, Urban Growth Capacity Report (Buildable Lands Report)....

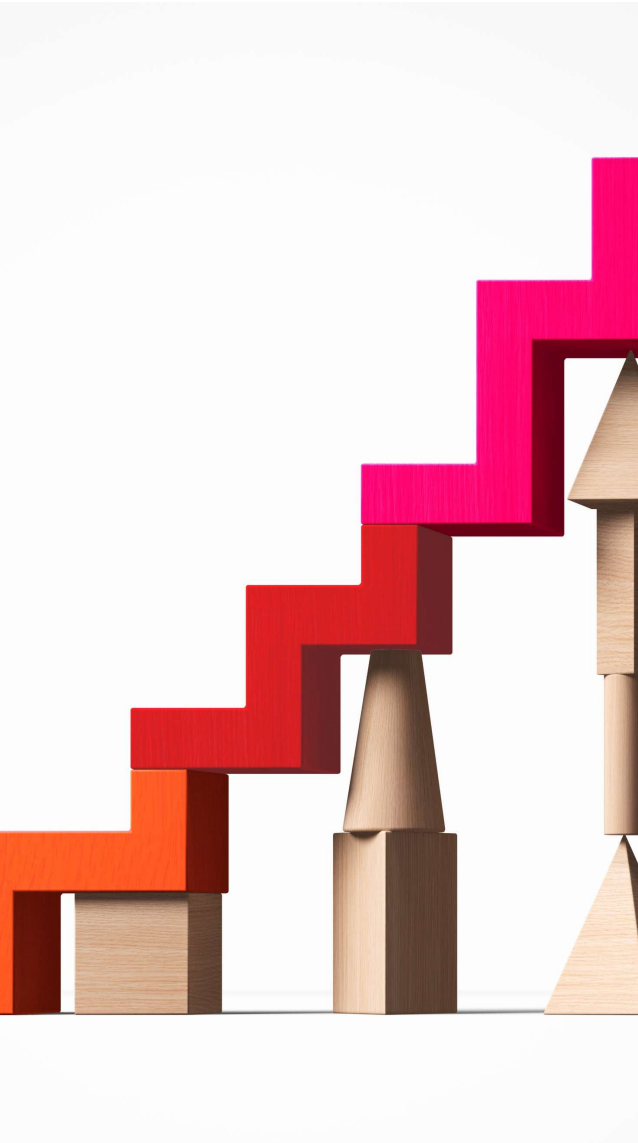
Complies with GMA, consistent with CPPs; internally consistent with Comp Plan itself....

Complies with GMA, consistent with Comprehensive Plan....

PC Operating Manual(s):

- Process IV (LUC 20.35.410): City Council legislative actions
- Part 20.30I LUC: CPAs
- Part 20.30J LUC: LUCAs
- PC Bylaws
- Chapter 3.64 BCC (PC Establishment)
- Chapter 3.92 BCC (Code of Ethics for City Council, Boards and Commissions)





PC Process for City Council Legislative Land Use Decisions

Process IV: LUC 20.35.400 to LUC 20.35.440

1. Initiation
2. Planning Commission study sessions
3. Staff Recommendation and Staff Report;
4. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA);
5. Planning Commission (or City Council) public hearing;
6. Planning Commission Recommendation; and
7. Final action by the City Council

Input for PC Recommendations on *Process IV* City Council Legislative Decisions



Proposed Comprehensive Plan policies, or



Proposed Land Use Code Amendments



Council Direction, CPA or LUCA Scope, Policy Considerations, Legal Requirements



Staff expertise



Environmental Review under SEPA



Public comment/stakeholder input

Comprehensive Plan Overview

CPAs are fundamental part of Planning Commission work program

- Goals, objectives, and policies that guide City growth and development over 20-year period
- Reviewed and updated every 10 years
- Policies direct City actions and decisions, and guide City investments in infrastructure
- Framework for development regulations, land use designations, the zoning map, and future land use decisions
- In general, CPA and changes to Comp Plan future land use map are precondition to City zoning decisions and Land Use Districts.

PC Quiz #3: Plan In Action

How many jobs is Bellevue required to plan for and accommodate between 2019-2044?

How many housing units?

What Planning Documents identify these housing and job targets?



CPA Process Step 1 : Threshold Review

Is a CPA proposal appropriate and timely for including in the annual work program?

1. Study session(s) and public hearing(s)
2. Does the proposed CPA satisfy the threshold review decision criteria in LUC 20.30I.140?
3. City Council action on Planning Commission threshold review recommendations - establishes the annual CPA work program.

CPA Process Step 2: Final Review

Should the proposed CPA be adopted?

1. Study sessions and public hearings
2. Does the proposed CPA satisfy the final review decision criteria in LUC 20.30I.150
3. City Council action on Planning Commission recommendations – adopts or denies amendments.



PC Quiz #4: Fiction Edition

WHAT 2006 LITERARY NOVEL
AND NATIONAL BOOK AWARD
FINALIST IS PARTIALLY SET IN
BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON?



LUCA Gumbo: What is the Land Use Code?

- LAND USE DISTRICTS (ZONING);
- DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS (WHICH... REGULATE DEVELOPMENT!);
- PERMITS, PROCESSES & APPEALS; AND ADMINISTRATION





LUCA Gumbo: the Recipe under LUC 20.30J.135

LUCA decision criteria: LUC 20.30J.135:

- A. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan;
and
- B. Enhances the public health, safety or
welfare; and
- C. LUCA is not contrary to the best interest of
the citizens and property owners of the City
of Bellevue.

LUCA Gumbo: the
Essential PC Ingredient
= the Comp Plan

LUC 20.30J.135.A:

*Is the LUCA consistent
with the
Comprehensive Plan?*

Co-exist in a stable
fashion without unduly
negatively impacting
the Plan.



Consistent with Comp Plan = Compatible w/Comp Plan:

- A land use/development regulation must “generally conform” to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Uses permitted by zoning must not be in conflict with the planning policies described in the plan.
- Is the LUCA compatible with and does it further the City vision, goals, objectives, policies, growth planning, and future land use densities and intensities identified the Comprehensive Plan?



PC Quiz #5: LUCA in Action

What is the Tallest Building in Bellevue?

How tall is the Tallest Building in Bellevue?

Why is the Tallest Building in Bellevue the Tallest Building in Bellevue?



What is SEPA?

- Applies to all state and local public agencies.
- Ensures environmental values are given appropriate consideration during City decision making.
- Requires full disclosure and careful consideration of a proposal's environmental impacts “at the earliest possible stage.”
- But does not mandate a particular substantive result.

City must consider the environmental impacts of a proposed CPA or LUCA ***before*** making a decision.



Why is SEPA compliance important?

- Disclosure process for agencies and the public,
- Integrates SEPA review with agency planning and permitting
- Identifies potential alternatives and mitigation, and
- **Failure to comply with SEPA prior to taking final action could result in a finding that the City's action was illegal.**

This does not mean that the City cannot take the same action at a later date; instead, the City must go back and comply with SEPA before taking action at later date.

PC Quiz #6:

What Federal Environmental Law, like SEPA at the state level, requires Federal agencies to identify potential environmental impacts that may result from governmental decisions/actions?



Open Public Meetings Act

Governs public meetings.

Provides transparency in City business (e.g., Planning Commission's decision-making process)

Planning Commission meetings are open to everyone, and the PC Bylaws allow public participation during oral communications.

But when Planning Commission schedules a public hearing, the public hearing is required by **law**; and all members of the public must be allowed to speak.



Public Records Act: Legal Requirements

The PRA is a “**strongly worded mandate for broad disclosure** of public records.” *West v. Thurston County*, 168 Wn. App. 162, 182, 275 P.3d 1200 (2012).

Under the PRA, the Planning Commission has **legal obligations to preserve public records and respond to Public Records Requests**.

Scope of the PRA: A “record” includes writing, photos, texts, any form of communication or documentation that contains information relating to PC conduct, the performance of PC functions. RCW 42.56.010(3) & (4).



PRA Best Practices when conducting Planning Commission Business:

- A. **All Communications you send or receive in connection with your PC work are Public Records.**
- B. *Think about WHERE you generate public records.* Remember, the work product you send (and receive) while acting as a Planning Commissioner, **regardless of whether it resides on a personal device or City device**, is a public record.
- B. Ensure that public records **are retained to an organized, secure, and accessible filing system for retention** (and can be easily accessed and produced in response to a PRA request).

PC Bylaws

- Uniform set of bylaws for all City Boards and Commissions, with a few PC-specific provisions.
- The bylaws ensure compliance with the OPMA (chapter 42.30 RCW), conform to City Code, and include elements of Council Rules of Procedure and *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Planning Commission Code of Ethics,

Chapter 3.92 BCC

- Purpose: promote public confidence in the integrity of local government and its fair operation.
- Designed to ensure (1) legal compliance; (2) fairness; (3) public good, not personal gain; and (4) open, transparent government.
- BCC 3.92.030, Prohibited Conduct, which includes prohibited disclosure of confidential information.



Read the Book!



- ❖ History, Creation, Powers & Duties (PC Manual, p. 2)
- ❖ Roles & Responsibilities & Procedures (pp. 3-6, 13-15, 23-33)
- ❖ Comprehensive Plan Amendments (pp. 8-10, 75-79)
- ❖ Planning in Bellevue (pp. 17-21, 84-93)
- ❖ Code of Ethics (pp. 58-71)

PC Quiz #7: Art History

Who is the Planning Commission's (unofficial) mascot, and where does it live?





FIN!
