

# Master Builder

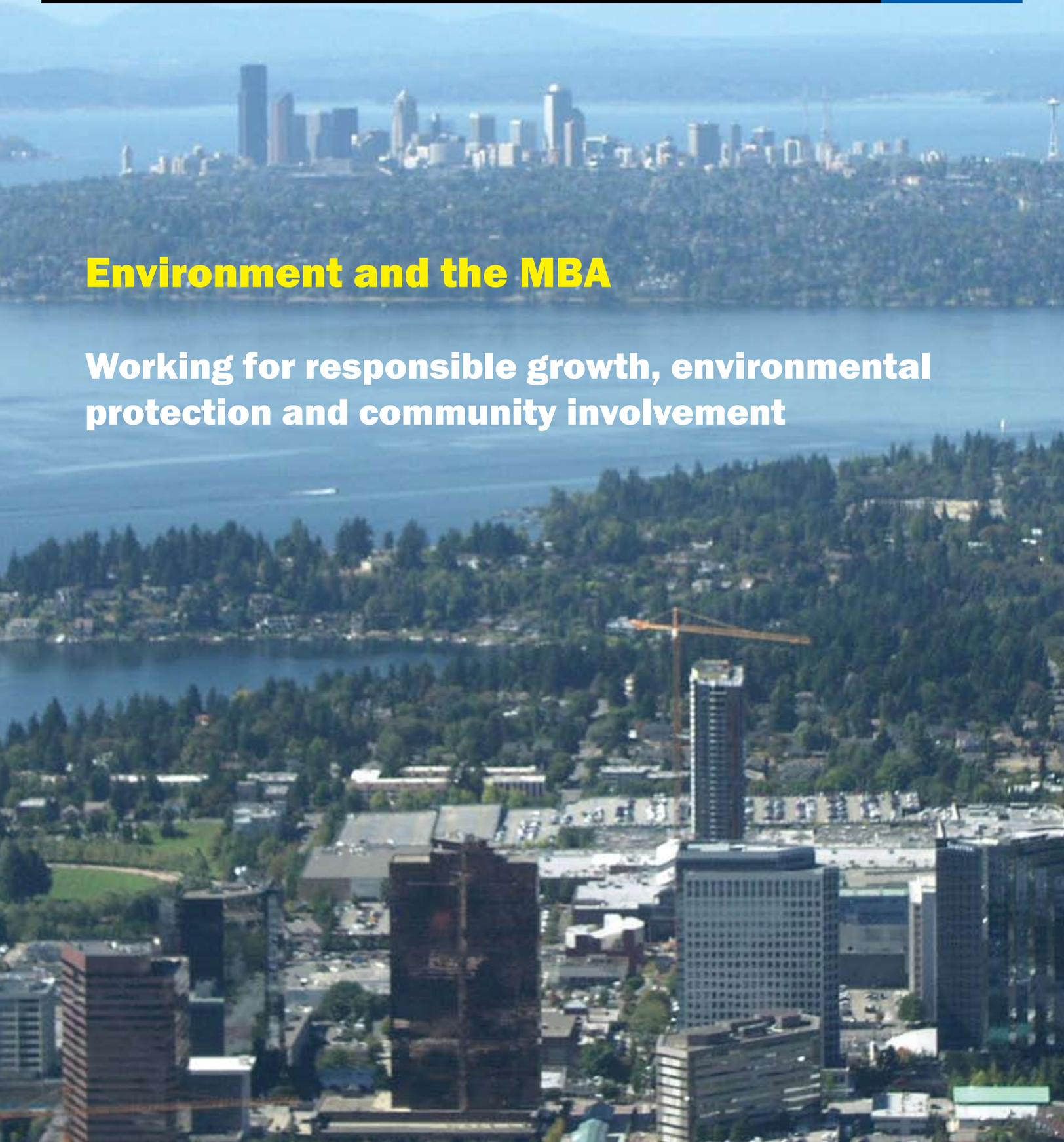


OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MASTER BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF KING AND SNOHOMISH COUNTIES

October 2005

## Environment and the MBA

Working for responsible growth, environmental protection and community involvement



# The environment and the MBA:



Photo courtesy of Ronald Parker, Associated Earth Sciences Inc.

**By Allison Butcher, Public Affairs Manager  
and Robin Rogers, Otak Inc. (former Built Green™ Director)**

As members of the communities in which we work, play and serve, our businesses are founded on helping our neighbors create and fulfill their dreams. These dreams may include purchasing a new suburban home or an urban condominium, remodeling an older home, obtaining shelter for a homeless family or gaining accessibility to a home for the aged or disabled. For many residents, part of this American dream also ensures preserving the beauty and integrity of the region so that it remains a desirable place to live. Our sincere efforts as an association to be part of the solution for our area, rather than part of the problem, have led us to be proactive on various environmental fronts while providing well-designed and built, attractive, affordable communities. Following are some highlights in the Master Builders Association's arsenal of environmentally sensitive actions as we work towards responsible growth, environmental protection and community involvement.

## Lobbying

The Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBA) works for a better environment through our lobbying efforts in King and Snohomish counties. This is especially true with respect to Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA emphasizes protecting our valuable resources and maintaining a healthy environment by reducing sprawl. In order for the act to work, a balance must be struck between providing adequate housing on the one hand and protecting the environment and preserving open space on the other. Our association recognizes the importance of striking this balance to create a thriving, livable region. Therefore, the Master Builders Association has worked hard to support policies directing growth to our urban areas and preserving the environment in our rural areas.

For example, the MBA has long advocated for changes to Washington's Condominium Act that would make it easier for our members to

# Growing, greening and giving

build this environmentally friendly type of housing. Condos require much less land than other housing types and are critical to creating the densities in urban areas envisioned under GMA. However, a proliferation of lawsuits by condo owners against builders has caused liability insurance companies to stop offering much-needed contractors liability insurance. As a result, condominium construction has been on the decline in the Puget Sound region, despite high demand. Earlier this year, the association



Condominiums, like this mixed-use development located in Seattle, require much less land than other housing types and are critical to making the Growth Management Act work. Luminaire Condominiums is a Built Green™-certified project built by MBA member Kauri Investments.

successfully lobbied the Washington State Legislature to pass HB 1848, a bill requiring, among other things, third-party inspections during condominium construction to encourage insurers to come back into the market. It is the third law passed in the last several years attempting to curb the proliferation of lawsuits and ultimately to help increase condo production.

## Urban centers

The Master Builders Association also made the creation of a model urban centers code a priority during 2005. Under the countywide planning policies for both King and Snohomish counties, several areas have been designated for high density/mixed use to accept a higher share of housing, jobs and population. The problem is they are subject to the rules and regulations of any particular jurisdiction they happen to fall within. The MBA worked to develop a model code to try and bring a common standard to these sites, whether they are in Seattle, Burien or Totem Lake. Our association will continue promoting the model urban centers code as an important tool for helping make GMA work.

## Critical Areas

Furthermore, our association has been actively involved in our region's critical areas ordinance (CAO) debates during the past year. The GMA requires local jurisdictions to review their critical areas regulations and, if necessary, update them. In so doing, several jurisdictions have been pressured by some groups to dramatically increase no-build buffers around wetlands. The Master Builders Association has actively opposed dramatic buffer increases within urban areas primarily because of the impact it would have on our supply of buildable land. As we constrain the buildable land supply in urban areas, this only creates more pressure to expand growth boundaries into sensitive areas, running counter to the goal of preventing sprawl and protecting our pristine rural areas and forestlands. Our association also believes that current buffers are adequate.

## Salmon recovery

In addition to our work on behalf of GMA, our association has been involved in the creation of a regional salmon recovery plan. After Chinook salmon were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1999, our region was charged with the task of creating a recovery plan that could help lead to delisting. As a stakeholder in the process, the Master Builders Association has participated in local watershed groups, as well as the Shared Salmon Strategy for Puget Sound and the Puget Sound ESA Business Coalition providing input on salmon recovery. Last July, the Shared Strategy reached an important milestone when it officially handed over a draft salmon recovery plan to the federal government.

## Built Green™

Incidentally, the salmon ESA listing was also a major factor in spurring the creation of our association's Built Green™ program in 1999. Built Green, a partnership among the MBA, King County and Snohomish County, is a voluntary certification program that promotes environmentally friendly homes and yards. Many of the credits on the checklists that builders and developers use to show compliance are designed to protect soils, waterways and, ultimately, salmon. Other credits on the Built Green checklists promote energy efficiency, water conservation and indoor air quality.

The program has gained momentum locally and become a model for green building programs nationally. Since the first few projects were certified as "Built Green" in 2000, more than 5,500 other residential projects have achieved Built Green status. What began with four builders has blossomed into 95 member builders with nearly 200

(continued on page 26)

# Feature: MBA and the environment

(continued from page 15)

associate members. In partnership with the city of Seattle, the program recently held one of the first green design competitions in the country with 34 entries. We also have won national awards, including one for our partnership with the counties, one for our electronic newsletter *Built Green News*, and a Gold Nugget Award from the Pacific Coast Builders Conference for the Puget Sound Energy Built Green Idea Home demonstration project at Issaquah Highlands – one of the first projects of its type in the nation.

## Education

The Built Green program offers many outreach programs to further educate builders, designers, remodelers, developers and

Last July, the Shared Strategy reached an important milestone when it officially handed over a draft salmon recovery plan to the federal government.

## Infrastructure

While the measures adopted by “green” builders and developers go above and beyond code requirements, they do little to relieve the region’s growing pains with respect to necessary sewage infrastructure. Finally, as our region grows, it is critical that vital infrastructure keeps pace with growth, not only to benefit the economy, but also the environment. This is especially true of the proposed Brightwater Wastewater Treatment Plant. As existing sewage treatment plants in



In May, our association’s Built Green™ program hosted a seminar on low impact development attended by one hundred industry professionals.

homeowners on the values of green building, including a website, a monthly electronic newsletter, classes, a conference and an exhibit at the Seattle Home Show. Built Green is also working with the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) to spread the message of its “Beyond Waste Initiative” across the state. With a grant from the department, Built Green facilitated the development of a statewide website for Built Green programs in Washington. Built Green also hosted a seminar created by member company Triad Associates on low-impact development.

King and Snohomish counties reach capacity, a new plant is needed by 2010 to protect public health, the environment and the economy. Delaying or impeding the Brightwater project could create a public health and environmental crisis from sewage spills and overflows, resulting in a building moratorium in much of King County and south Snohomish County. Our association strongly supports construction of the plant and has worked hard to facilitate an agreement between King and Snohomish counties on the permitting and construction of Brightwater. Construction of the plant is good for housing and critical for the environment.



Left: The 2005 Built Green™ Seattle Design Competition honored green building projects, like this remodeled home, in Seattle.

Below: MBA President Donna Shirey presents a conservation award to Starbucks Coffee Company at the 2005 Cascade Land Conservancy Awards Breakfast. Each year, our association supports environmental efforts, like this one, in our communities.

## Giving

In addition to the work of MBA staff members on behalf of the association, our member companies continue to work towards sustainability in our communities in varied ways. For example, Port Blakely Communities initiated an “Adopt a Wetlands” program for its residents to monitor the health of wetlands in its Issaquah Highlands development; several member companies support the Cascade Land Conservancy including Polygon Northwest, Port Blakely Companies, Buck & Gordon LLP, Burnstead Construction Company, CamWest Development, Quadrant Homes and Puget Sound Energy. The MBA also supports environmental efforts in our communities and last year provided over \$20,000 in financial and in-kind support.

For further information on the Built Green program, please visit [www.builtgreen.net](http://www.builtgreen.net) or for statewide programs, visit [www.builtgreenwashington.org](http://www.builtgreenwashington.org).



Photo submitted by Cascade Land Conservancy

