



Legislative Agenda 2012

Adopted by the Board of Directors, December 2, 2011

Washington has fared better in this recession than many other states due, in part, to good planning. The State Growth Management Act (GMA) provides an effective framework for managing growth in a recession, as well as times of rapid growth. The Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Washington) supports targeted reforms to state law and investment that help our economy grow, build quality communities and protect our environment. APA Washington supports the following five principles for planning toward economic recovery and recommends five legislative actions in 2012.

Five Principles for Planning toward Economic Recovery

1. To help Washington recover from the recession, provide resources for local planning and financial tools to implement local plans, and maintain flexibility to accommodate a variety of local conditions and priorities.
2. Focus budget-limited state investments and agency actions to complement and implement regional and local plans, and support growth in appropriate locations.
3. Promote the economic recovery through effective and efficient development regulations and permit processing that provide clarity, certainty, timeliness and fairness.
4. Create statutory clarity and reduce impediments to development by reforming planning-related statutes to serve GMA planning goals and eliminate ambiguity, redundancy and conflicts with the GMA.
5. Maintain environmental protection and strengthen the focus on reducing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on our environment, while streamlining regulatory processing that impedes appropriate development.

Five Specific Recommendations for Legislative Action

1. *Enable Tax Increment Financing (TIF)* - Provide new local revenue and financing options for cities and counties to support growth, community revitalization, natural resource conservation and housing affordability—while carefully protecting the needs of other important taxing districts (e.g., schools). Without the TIF tool, Washington's cities and regions compete at a severe disadvantage against peers in California and Oregon.
2. *Pursue targeted Regulatory Reforms to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and other statutes* - Amend SEPA and other state laws to facilitate an expedited process for priority economic development projects. Potential measures include streamlining SEPA "planned

actions” and infill development applications, and reducing unnecessary and duplicative process and cost, while still meeting rigorous environmental and neighborhood protection objectives.

3. *Require Special Purpose Districts to plan under GMA* - To ensure that all layers of government are providing services in an efficient and coordinated manner, amend RCW 36.70A.040 and .280 to require special purpose districts to plan under the GMA. These districts play a significant role in shaping growth patterns throughout the state. The siting, development and budget decisions of special purpose districts can either undermine or support the achievement of GMA planning goals, as well as objectives for other critical issues, such as climate change, Puget Sound restoration and agricultural conservation.
4. *Require State Agencies to plan under GMA* - Amend RCW 36.70A.103 and .280 to make state agencies subject to all parts of the GMA. With our limited state financial resources, it is essential that state plans and capital budget decisions align with GMA planning goals and regional planning policies, and that state facilities meet transportation concurrency.
5. *Clarify and connect state Climate Change goals to regional plans and local actions* - While the economic recovery is central to efforts in 2012, every state and local government planning action must be consistent with policies to address greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Meaningful action at the state level could include the following:
 - A regional approach reduces uncertainty associated with individual projects. Amend RCW 47.80 to require that reductions in vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions be addressed regionally. Regional transportation planning agencies must include policies, strategies, and capital improvements to address compact urban development, transit-supportive residential densities, multimodal transportation and more. Adoption of these policies must be coordinated with multicounty planning policies adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.210 (7).
 - Amend RCW 36.70A.020 (10) to recognize the role that compact urban development and multimodal transportation play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Include GMA goal language related to climate change to recognize that reducing vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions is a compelling state interest that must be addressed in local comprehensive plans, development regulations and capital budgets.
 - Amend RCW 36.70A.070 (6) to include multimodal transportation strategies and highlight transit-oriented development (TOD) as a strategy to create compact, complete and connected communities.
 - To provide greater clarity for the contribution planning can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the state should identify how the broad goals in RCW 70.235 for limiting greenhouse gas emissions apply to each sector of the economy—such as land use, transportation, building and construction.