



*The American Planning Association seeks to Make Great Communities Happen for All, and the Washington State chapter (APA-WA) is dedicated to that goal in our state. The 2021 legislative session presents urgent challenges, and will be vitally important to set our state on a path to a sustainable and equitable recovery from the pandemic and its side effects.*

## 2021 Session Legislative Priorities

### Housing & Homelessness

In order for communities to function, there must be an adequate supply of housing in proximity to employment, public transportation, and community facilities, such as schools. The housing stock must include affordable and accessible for sale and rental units, not only to meet social equity goals, but in order to ensure community viability. The development of a diverse and affordable housing stock must be carried out without sacrificing sound regulations that are in place to protect the environment and public health.

- ***APA Washington supports strengthening requirements for comprehensive plan housing elements to provide more specific direction to cities, counties, and regions, as well expanding technical assistance and financial support from the state, which will together make comprehensive planning a more effective tool for providing housing for all economic segments of the population.***
- ***APA Washington supports the Housing Affordability Response Team [2017 Recommendations](#) and the Affordable Housing Advisory Board [2020 Legislative Agenda \(Dec. 4 draft\)](#).***
  - *Provide planning grants and require local governments to plan for housing at every income level, especially for lower-income households, and require accountability.*
  - *Encourage communities to facilitate the development of more affordable housing.*
  - *Seek responsible changes to development-related statutes to facilitate housing development.*
  - *Provide stable and dependable funding for affordable housing.*
- ***APA Washington supports expanding the availability of accessory dwelling units in urban areas around the state.***

### Climate change

Washington needs to act. Reducing our carbon footprint is a moral obligation to future generations, as well as a wise investment in resiliency and the state's economy. Preparing for a warming world is also an unfortunate necessity.

- ***APA Washington supports updating, clarifying, and strengthening the state's statutory greenhouse gas emission reduction benchmarks, as well as action to establish mechanisms, such as pricing carbon pollution, that will achieve those benchmarks.***
- ***APA Washington supports legislative efforts to pursue climate action plans, regulatory measures, incentives, technical standards and specifications, and mitigation and adaption measures in comprehensive plans.***
- ***APA Washington supports incorporating climate impacts, indicators, and benchmarks in comprehensive plans, environmental impact analysis, and development reviews.***

## Support for planning

Planning creates value. Planners need funding, planning requirements, and technical and policy support from the state; in return, effective planning can provide better communities, better health, a better economy, and more participation, fairness, efficiency, and innovation.

We observe that state and local revenue sources for planning work are similar (sales, property, B&O, and utility taxes, and other), but also recognize that many cities and counties are challenged in their ability to raise revenue. To the extent that local governments are prevented by state law from raising the necessary revenue to fund existing and new planning requirements, local taxing authority or state funding should be provided.

Good planning pays ongoing dividends through efficient and effective provision of public services, a healthy tax base, and engaged communities.

- ***APA Washington supports state funding, consistent with the statewide interest in consistent and effective planning work, for upcoming local comprehensive plan periodic updates.***

## Inclusive planning

The American Planning Association seeks social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration.

- ***APA Washington supports an approach of equity in all policies to address community engagement and empowerment, access to opportunity, safe, fair, and affordable housing, and health equity.***

## Transportation

Transportation is closely linked with land use, and transportation facilities and services are best provided using a structured, objective, and transparent project selection and development process. Planning for transportation must incorporate multimodal solutions, connectivity, safety, context-sensitivity, and maintenance needs.

- ***APA Washington supports a performance-based, outcome-driven transportation planning and funding process that supports the state's transportation policy goals.***
- ***APA Washington supports development of sustainable transportation funding sources to replace the gas tax as fuel consumption decouples from vehicle miles travelled.***
- ***APA Washington supports projects and programs that will significantly reduce transportation-related deaths and injuries, especially among vulnerable, lower-income, and historically-marginalized populations that are overrepresented in deaths, injuries, and impacted health.***
- ***APA Washington supports a statewide requirement to evaluate and report levels-of-service for transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.***
- ***APA Washington supports a fix-it-first focus on keeping our transportation facilities in a state of good repair and carefully considering long-term maintenance and operations costs for new and expanded transportation facilities.***

## Road Map and Updating Washington's Growth Planning Framework

The *Road Map to Washington's Future* report contains a wealth of perspectives and ideas for improving the state's planning framework, and the state would be better off if the key reforms and transformational and systemic changes identified in the report were implemented. To that end, APA Washington participated in the *Updating Washington's Growth Planning Framework* process, which aimed to implement a subset of the recommendations from the Road Map. That work was productive, valuable, and timely, but remains unfinished, and the issues it sought to address remain unresolved.

- ***APA Washington supports implementation of the key reforms and transformational & systemic changes identified in the Road Map to Washington's Future report.***
- ***APA Washington supports continued work to develop broad agreement on improvements to the state's planning framework.***

## **Infrastructure**

The legislature has made strides but more steps are needed to address infrastructure deficits. Local governments need tools like the Public Works Trust Fund and revenue options. The state should also establish mechanisms to ensure funding decisions reflect state, regional, and local plans and policies.

- ***APA Washington supports loan programs, local funding authority, and state appropriations to address infrastructure needs that align with state, regional, and local plans and policies.***

## **Annexation reform**

A core principle of the state's planning framework is that urban growth areas should transition to municipal governance, providing local government that is more local, flexible, and fiscally sound. However annexation and incorporation activity in many urban growth areas has stalled.

- ***APA Washington supports a state program of incentives and regulatory simplification to facilitate and encourage annexations in urban growth areas.***

## **Planning for schools**

School facilities have the potential to be positive centers of community life and to provide important neighborhood amenities like recreation and space for physical activity. When improperly located, they can also create permanent demands on school district and family transportation budgets; create and incentivize sprawl and threaten farm, forest, and rural land; and make inefficient use of public infrastructure. Washington APA continues to prefer that schools serving urban populations continue to be located in urban areas, with a focus on healthy site planning and priority for safe walking and bicycle paths between school facilities and adjacent neighborhoods.

- ***APA Washington supports public facilities serving primarily urban populations, including schools, locating within urban growth areas, near the communities that they serve.***
- ***APA Washington supports funding for collaborative efforts between school districts, local governments, and others (such as the Clark County Quality Schools Task Force) to address siting challenges and support smart and healthy site planning in a positive and thoughtful way.***

## **Periodic update cycle**

There have been many discussions recently about adjusting the statewide periodic update cycle. Two goals have been expressed for this adjustment, including better matching the periodic update cycle to the release schedule for planning data that flows from the decennial census, and reducing costs to local governments by reducing planning work.

Moving from an 8-year cycle to a 10-year cycle would better match the census schedule, state population forecasts that flow from that, and other cyclical planning work like buildable lands analyses. However, simply moving to a 10 year cycle would likely mean an overall reduction in planning work, given that many jurisdictions address overall budgetary pressures by limiting planning work unless required by state law. While certainly sensitive to fiscal constraints, APA believes that more planning work and more up-to-date plans better serves the state's residents (present and future) and businesses.

Option: Ten year cycle with five year check in (for more dynamic jurisdictions, or those with a problem like housing affordability to fix, or those identified by Commerce)

Option: Use a ten year update to advance the planning period and accommodate a new increment of growth (the biggest and most expensive piece of work), then use both the five- and ten-year updates to review the plan and remove obsolete provisions (a la 36.70A.130(1)(b)), update existing conditions and inventories, address new and updated best-available-science since the last periodic update, address new and revised state laws that affect planning, and open a new appeal period on the whole plan.

- ***APA Washington supports moving to a ten-year periodic cycle that matches up with the decennial census and other cyclical planning work.***
- ***APA Washington does not support reducing the amount of value-added planning work in the state. One option could be to move to a ten-year cycle for the most involved piece of work, which is advancing the planning period and accommodating a new increment of growth, then review plans every five years to remove obsolete provisions, update existing conditions and inventories, address new and updated best-available-science since the last periodic update, and address new and revised state laws that affect planning.***