



Washington State has one of the strongest community planning statutes in the nation, and for the past 25 years, this has enabled our citizens, businesses, elected leaders, and our profession to help “make great communities happen” across the state. Since 1990, Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA) has been successful at promoting sustainable development patterns, preserving farmland, building a resilient economic base, and saving taxpayer dollars. However, 25 years of Washington as a pioneer in thoughtful and coordinated growth management planning doesn’t mean things can’t be further improved. This year APA is partnering with peer organizations and research institutions to support a statewide Collaborative Road Map project that will look at the Growth Management Act and other parts of the state’s planning framework with an eye towards improvements that will keep the state at the forefront of smart planning for the next 25 years. See below for more on that as well as other priorities of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association for the 2017 legislative session.

2017 Legislative Priorities

Support funding for planning

The need to provide local governments with the tools to adequately fund planning remains a high priority for APA Washington. Good planning generates value and pays ongoing dividends through efficient and effective provision of public services, a healthy tax base, and engaged communities.

- ***APA Washington supports funding for grants through the Department of Commerce for comprehensive plan updates in jurisdictions with a 2017 and 2018 periodic update deadline.***
- ***APA Washington supports local authority for additional revenue sources, such as permit fees, to support long-range planning.***

Collaborative Road Map

Washington's Growth Management Act was adopted in 1990. Its successes and shortcomings are frequently debated, yet there has never been a comprehensive, evidence-based study of how well the act has met its goals. Piecemeal amendments to the GMA have been adopted for two decades, but have lacked a broad and more informed context. Older land use statutes (e.g. SMA, SEPA) have never been fully reconciled with the GMA framework. To nurture economic and environmental health and protect the quality of life in our communities, Washington needs a “road map to the future” – a deliberate, coherent, and effective framework of law, institutions and public policy.

- ***APA Washington supports a broad-based effort to conduct an assessment of our state’s framework for managing growth to determine what has worked well, what could be improved, and what may be needed to meet the challenges of the next 25 years and beyond.***

Climate change

Despite a strong showing at the ballot, I-732 was ultimately unable to overcome a combination of factors, especially concerns about financial impacts. Nevertheless, the I-732 vote showed a surprising amount of willingness to put a price on carbon, and the legislature is urged to carry this issue forward in the legislative arena, where issues can be worked out collaboratively and dialed in appropriately.

- ***APA Washington supports legislative efforts to pursue climate action plans, regulatory measures, incentives, technical standards and specifications, and mitigation and adaptation measures into comprehensive plans.***
- ***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 incorporating climate impacts, indicators, and benchmarks in comprehensive plans, environmental impact analysis, and development reviews.***

School siting

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, incentivize more sprawl and convert working or potential farm and forest 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 and opposes efforts to carve out exceptions in the growth management act for schools serving primarily urban populations to locate in the rural area.

- ***APA Washington supports maintaining the statewide policy that public facilities serving primarily urban populations, including schools, should locate within urban growth areas, near the communities that they serve.***

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 support annexations in urban growth areas.***

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

Housing & Homelessness

Meeting needs for housing and homelessness is a significant and growing issue. Planning for housing to meet all income levels in a manner that is sustainable and takes into account transportation facilities and other services is needed.

- ***APA Washington supports dedicated sources of public revenue to support appropriate production and preservation of affordable housing and to address homelessness.***

Hirst decision

If local governments don't plan for water availability, the consequences will be dry irrigation wells and inadequate water for in-stream flows. We believe ensuring water availability before granting development permits protects all water users. The Washington State Supreme Court's decision in *Whatcom County v. Hirst* is a common sense interpretation of the GMA requirements to protect surface and ground water in RCW 36.70A.070 and the requirements for adequate water supplies for building permits and subdivisions in RCW 19.27.097(1); RCW 58.17.110. (RCW 19.27.097 was adopted in 1990 as part of the GMA.)

- ***APA Washington supports legislation that will give counties, cities, and Ecology improved tools and adequate funding to carry out their responsibilities to plan for adequate water where it is available and needed. The recent Hirst decision created substantial uncertainty for counties and highlighted the importance of planning for sufficient water supplies. The chapter looks forward to participating in efforts to address this important issue.***