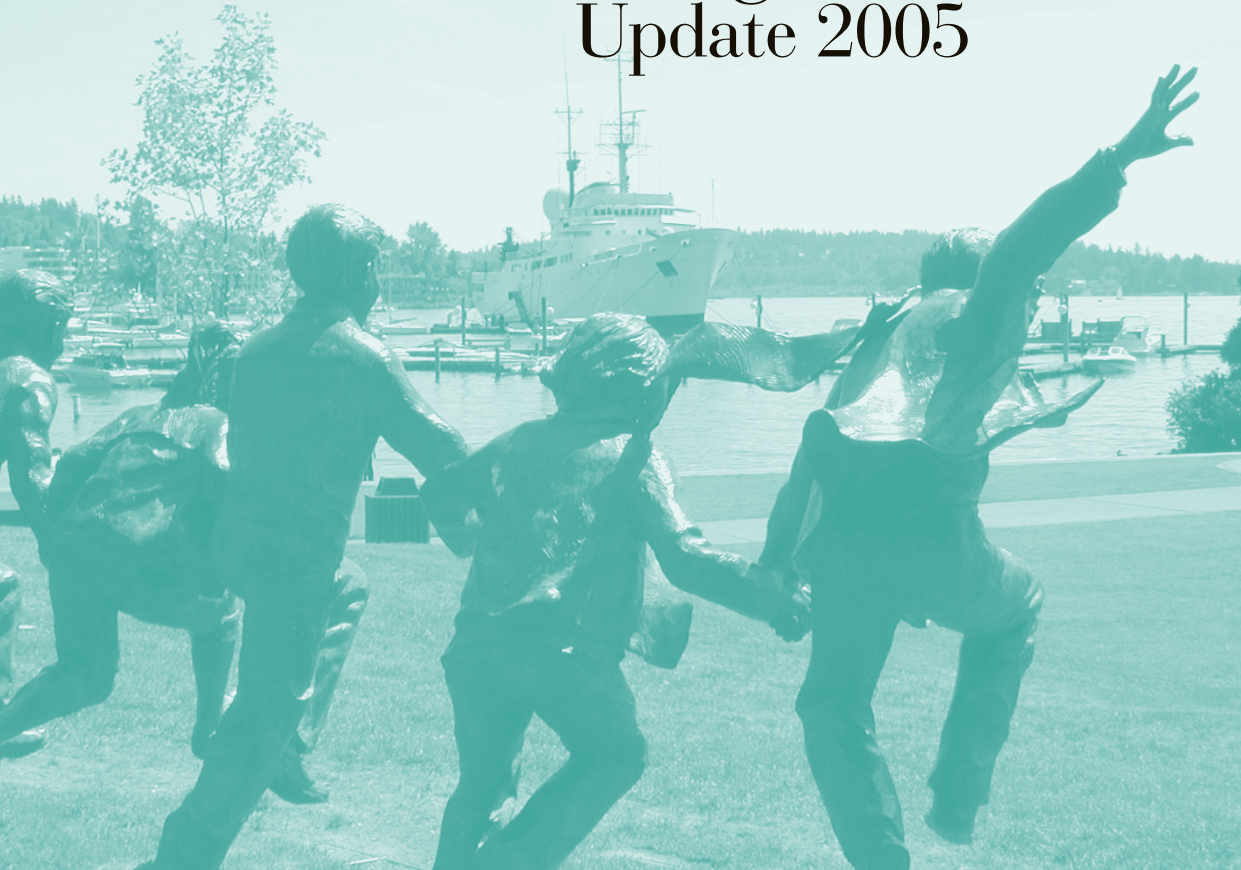


# Livable Washington Update 2005



Washington Chapter

of the

**American  
Planning  
Association**

2005



# Livable Washington Update 2005

In 2002, we published *Livable Washington: APA's Action Agenda for Growth Management*, an assessment of how well our state is achieving its goals of growth management. Our conclusions were that we have made great strides and GMA is achieving many of its goals. However, as planners we know our work is never complete because communities and the issues they face are dynamic. Successful planning requires regular assessments and the ability to adapt to changing priorities, to apply new knowledge, and to explore a broad range of possible solutions. In that spirit, we offer this update - a reassessment of growth management issues and strategies to address them.

As with our first report, this update is being provided to our 1,300+ members, elected and appointed officials around the state, and others interested in growth management. Please read it and use it to inform and to generate discussion. The Washington Chapter of APA will continue to be an advocate for good planning and growth management. We also recognize the importance of working with other organizations. Together, we will make great communities happen throughout Washington!

Michael D. Kattermann, AICP AHBL, Inc.  
President, Washington Chapter APA



Walla Walla's award-winning historic preservation is enlivening the downtown and the region.

- Courtesy of CTED/Rita R. Robison

## Blue Ribbon Panel

**Brad Collins, FAICP**

City of Port Angeles

**Dick Anderwald, AICP**

Yakima County

**Fred Hurand, FAICP**

Eastern WA University

**Harold Robertson, FAICP**

Consultant

**Judith Stoloff, AICP**

Snohomish County

**Laura Hudson**

City of Vancouver

**Leonard Bauer, AICP**

CTED

**Mark Personius, AICP**

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**Mary Lynne Evans, AICP**

Snohomish County

**Mary McCumber**

Consultant

**Mike McCormick, FAICP**

Consultant

**Paul Krauss, AICP**

City of Auburn

**Shane Hope, AICP**

City of Mountlake Terrace

**Steve Butler, AICP**

City of SeaTac

## Livable Washington Co-Chairs

**Jill Sterrett, FAICP**

EDAW, Inc.

**Lisa Verner, AICP**

Commercial Development Solutions

## Acknowledgements

Washington Chapter APA celebrates the success of GMA. Throughout this document are photographs and stories illustrating specific success stories for community planning under GMA. Our thanks to the PSRC, CTED (Rita R. Robison), APA Board Members, Cities of Sumner, Spokane, Kirkland, Camas, and Bonney Lake, Town of Stanwood, William Grimes, Rita R. Robison, and planners across the state for sharing photos and documentation of these achievements.



Through Livable Washington and the tireless efforts of many planners, APA's voice is being heard on planning issues and we are making a difference!

## two years ago...

the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) embarked upon an ambitious program to advance the Growth Management Act (GMA) and to ensure that planners have a voice in that process. The result was the document, *Livable Washington: APA's Action Agenda for Growth Management*, distributed to all 1,300 APA members, as well as state legislators, planning directors, and the press. We celebrate the success of GMA and of the first *Livable Washington* effort, while recognizing there is more to be done. This *Livable Washington Update 2005* reframes the issues to focus on our highest priorities today.

Among other actions in the past two years, APA Chapter leaders worked with representatives of the Washington Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) to form the GMA Working Group – a coalition of eleven wide-ranging constituent groups who met to develop legislative amendments to refine GMA. This group reviewed a large number of issues, and was ultimately successful in getting four amendments passed by the 2004 legislature and signed into law:

- SSB 6534, refining the rules on Industrial Land Banks;
- ESHB 2905, clarifying the regulations on LAMIRDS;
- SB 6237, Flexibility for Washington Farms, allowing for limited retail sales on designated agricultural resource lands; and
- SHB 2781, expedited state agency review of development regulation amendments.

*Through growth management, subarea planning, and redevelopment, Esther Short Park (left) blossoms again as Vancouver's vibrant, central gathering place.*  
- Courtesy of CTED/Rita R. Robison

*Historic preservation, one of the goals of growth management, is a tool communities are using to revitalize downtowns. Example (right), City of Spokane's Historic Davenport Hotel.*  
- Courtesy of CTED/Rita R. Robison

Also, the Group's review of Growth Management Hearings Board procedures prompted the three Hearings Boards to initiate their own process to review, refine, and coordinate their procedures. The GMA Working Group is continuing into 2005 and APA has a voice in this process.

**For 2004, APA revisited the issues** raised in *Livable Washington* to update and refine our focus. All 1,300 members had the opportunity to respond to a survey in June to prioritize the 19 issues identified by *Livable Washington*. A new Blue Ribbon Panel of Chapter members met in July to review the survey results, discuss the issues, and develop the foundation for this *Update*. Reviewed and adopted by the Chapter Board, this document establishes policy direction for APA's Legislative Committee and our representatives to the GMA Working Group, among others. Through its Strategic Plan, APA has committed to specific actions to further this agenda.

Though this process APA has identified five major issues needing attention in the next two years. For each issue, recommended actions are identified. APA wants to work with individuals and to form coalitions to move forward on solutions to build better communities.



## Regulatory Integration

The planning community is concerned about regulations that overlap, duplicate, and contradict. When regulations are confusing they hinder development. While the 1995 Regulatory Reform Act and additional legislation in 2003 (ESHB 1933) attempted to integrate the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the Growth Management Act (GMA), in practical terms this has not happened. Communities are required to update Comprehensive Plans, Shoreline Master Programs, and other documents, but are not required to integrate and produce one guiding document. The lack of integration creates additional layers of time, expense, and confusion to an already lengthy and expensive process for jurisdictions, applicants, and the public to undertake for GMA actions.

We need to ensure that development occurs in a holistic manner. Environmental impacts must be addressed at the same time as other factors that are needed to build great communities. As planners and elected officials, we should help the community make the necessary tradeoffs during the planning process.

Creating places where people want to live begins with vision. We need to promote coordinated, integrated regulations that support and implement the vision of the comprehensive plan. Livable communities result from building the comprehensive plan.

### Recommended Actions:

1. **Expand regulatory reform.** Move toward requiring one comprehensive planning document that integrates GMA, SMA, State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), Watershed Protection Act (WPA), and other regulatory requirements. Simplify conflicting or overlapping regulations and permitting that all address one resource. Mandate that new planning initiatives occur under the umbrella of GMA.
2. **Conduct a review of state regulations to identify a way to achieve integrated regulations through state legislation.** Integrated regulations should provide for local decision-making on project development of local impact and limit state or regional roles to appeals and review of project developments of regional or state-wide impact.
3. **Conduct a performance audit to identify redundancies and duplicative reviews and recommend legislative changes to address how GMA/SEPA/SMA/WPA and other planning requirements can be better integrated.**

*Utilizing satellite imagery, Spokane County identified wildlife corridors and landscape linkages. The County developed a Rural Conservation category in the County's Comprehensive Plan and zoning. The Rural Conservation zone provides for low impact uses and utilizes rural residential clustering to protect sensitive areas and preserve open space.*  
- Courtesy of the City of Spokane



*This live/work arrangement in Sumner (left) is unique in that it allows renters to have a dwelling above and run a business below. Note the outdoor patio on the second floor.*  
- Courtesy of the City of Sumner



*Under the City's GMA Comprehensive Plan, new development in the City of Mill Creek (right) is creating an attractive, dense urban center.*  
- Courtesy of CTED/Rita R. Robison





*The City of Kirkland's vision to encourage affordability and various housing choices for residents includes developments such as this cottage housing project clustered around common open and garden space. - Courtesy of the City of Kirkland*



*In the City of Sumner, Fred Meyer is an example of a large retail store that has been designed to fit into the character of a small town Main Street. - Courtesy of the City of Sumner*

## Annexation Reform

Both cities and counties are invested in channeling growth to occur within Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). GMA requires cities and counties to work together through the Countywide Planning Policies for land use and transportation issues. However, GMA does not require cities and counties to jointly address annexation timing, phasing, provision of services, and local government revenues. Revenues to meet demands for public services are primarily dependent on continued development within each jurisdiction. For counties, this means that providing regional services is largely dependent on promoting new development in rural areas, rather than in UGAs. These issues contribute to conflict between cities and counties as they influence “who” and “how” public safety and infrastructure services are provided. Providing counties adequate revenue sources to support required services is

essential; otherwise, the goals of growth management will be defeated as counties seek to locate revenue-generating uses in unincorporated areas.

Additionally, special districts (school districts, port districts, sewer and water districts, parks and recreation districts, and others) are not required by the GMA to participate in the Countywide Planning Policies process. While GMA jurisdictions must coordinate their planning with special districts, these districts operate within separate statutes that do not place equal weight on coordination with local jurisdictions. This lack of participation and coordination also affects cities’ and counties’ inter-local agreement negotiations on the provision of services and receipt of revenues. These issues impact the goal of containing growth within the UGAs.

### Recommended Actions:

1. **Modify GMA to require cities, counties, and special districts to discuss and reach agreement on an orderly process and schedule of annexation of all unincorporated lands within the UGA and address revenue distribution in conjunction with the provision of services.**
2. **Modify annexation statutes to clearly establish that the fundamental decision as to whether an area is appropriate to be annexed is established by city and county adopted comprehensive plans.**
3. **Promote legislative action to require special districts to develop plans compatible or consistent with adopted GMA plans for the cities and counties they serve.**
4. **Promote legislative action to unify special districts (in a manner similar to unified school districts) or to require them to merge into cities, especially in urban areas. Multiple layers of government are not good government.**
5. **Establish new and separate revenue sources for: (a) counties for the provision of countywide services, and (b) for cities for financing infrastructure needs of newly annexed areas.**

# State-wide Smart Growth Strategy

GMA established 14 statewide goals and mandated that cities and counties establish comprehensive plans. What GMA failed to do was to establish strategies at a state level to address state-wide issues. While some other states have developed smart growth strategies that align with state policies and spending, here in Washington, many jurisdictions believe that their local efforts are thwarted by uncoordinated state investment actions. Many also feel that solutions to the state's

most serious problems cannot be achieved without state support – and that these issues threaten to undermine the foundation of growth management. Fully half of the 19 issues identified in *Livable Washington* (2002) can be addressed by a statewide strategy. Cities and counties have shown that good planning can make a difference. Coordinated planning and investment by the state can do the same.

## Recommended Actions:

1. Convene a Study Group to review other states' Smart Growth Strategies, develop an Issue Paper, and call for a Governor's or Legislature's Special Task Force to develop state-wide strategies for growth management.
2. Develop a statewide Smart Growth Strategy to include:
  - a. Environment – Identify the resource lands (scenic and cultural as well as natural resources) and critical areas of statewide significance and establish incentives, including funding, and regulations for their protection.
  - b. Regional Governance – Define incentives for the establishment of regional governments in areas where population concentrations extend beyond county lines and establish parameters for the role and authorities of regional agencies.
  - c. Infrastructure Funding – Provide state financial support for infrastructure development consistent with county and city plans for growth in economic development target areas.
  - d. Rural Lands – Establish an overall vision for rural areas and develop model tools for their preservation.
  - e. Agricultural Resource Lands – Establish incentives to maintain agricultural resource lands, as well as long-term solutions for the sustainability of agriculture.
  - f. Economic Development – Develop a statewide strategy for economic development that would define priority areas for economic growth in both urban and rural areas, including financial incentives for priority areas.
  - g. State Investments – Ensure that state investments and facility siting decisions (including schools and transportation facilities) are consistent with comprehensive plans and promote the strategies listed above.



GMA goals include citizen involvement in the planning process. Here, citizens in Bonney Lake discuss a growth management subarea plan. - Courtesy of MAKERS



A visioning processes called Design Stanwood is helping the community prepare for growth. - Courtesy of the Town of Stanwood

## State Tax Structure and Revenue

Washington's state tax structure is not working. The revenue it produces is not stable. Revenue generation is dependent on economic cycles. Due to successful anti-tax initiatives, tax revenues have dwindled; the "size of the pie" has shrunk. Revenues are not distributed equitably and many planning mandates are going unfunded.

Washington State and its local governments rely on sales tax and property tax as their largest sources of tax revenue. These sources foster competition for revenue-generating land uses, which undermines good planning. A few tax options have been approved in the last few years, such as the local option tax and a pilot project Tax Increment Financing program, but

these have been too restricted and too cumbersome to be effective. Better solutions are needed.

There is a direct link between growth management and infrastructure funding. We cannot plan for growth and provide an urban level of service if we do not fund the infrastructure and transportation facilities that will support the growth. The Governor-appointed Washington State Tax Structure Committee (Gates Commission) recently published a report on this issue calling for changes to the state's tax system. True tax reform is sorely needed if growth management is going to succeed.

### Recommended Actions:

1. Follow up on the Washington State Tax Structure Committee findings and call for a Special Task Force to run a public process, develop support for legislation to implement a more balanced tax system, and bring statewide attention to the issue of changes to the tax structure and revenue distribution. The OFM study funded in the 2004 Supplemental Budget is a step in that direction.
2. Develop informational materials with specific examples of how the current tax structure prevents good planning for growth management – including the current volatility of revenues to local communities, the dependence on fluctuating sales tax revenues, the inequities in the structure, and the inability to build community infrastructure.
3. Support reform to our state's initiative process that will prevent initiatives that cut legally committed revenue sources before the bonds or other mechanisms are paid.
4. Develop new and expanded financing tools that cities and counties may use to finance infrastructure and transportation improvements to benefit the community.

## Citizen Education

Citizens play a key role in supporting growth management. Voter initiatives have seriously curtailed public funds needed for infrastructure to support growth. As a result, public officials are faced with tough decisions, and growth management is caught in the crossfire. There is little understanding

by the typical citizen of the true costs of sprawl and the need for increased density to protect the environment and our agricultural economic base. Education is key to informed citizen involvement and a supportive constituency.

### Recommended Actions:

1. Research – Conduct research to investigate and document the true costs of sprawl, the benefits of compact development in terms of economic vitality, and the successes of growth management in Washington.
2. Press Contacts – Develop relationships with the press and provide support for articles demonstrating the issues around growth management.
3. Publications – Prepare public education materials for local communities to distribute to the public.
4. Speakers' Bureau – Establish a Speakers' Bureau to provide speakers knowledgeable about growth management, attractive high density development, and the effects of sprawl.

## How Can I Help?

*APA is a volunteer organization of professional planners, elected officials, planning commissioners, and interested citizens. We encourage all of our members to get involved in implementing the Actions identified here. Visit our website at <http://www.washington-apa.org> or contact the APA Chapter President or the Committee Co-Chairs to join in.*



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