



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

The Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA WA), affiliated with the national American Planning Association, seeks to Make Great Communities Happen for All in Washington. In addition to local and regional planning concerns are issues of statewide importance that impact communities all across the state. The Legislative Committee seeks to be a voice for the Chapter by advocating on behalf of our Chapter members in Olympia.

The Committee regularly surveys Chapter members for their views on dozens of planning issues of statewide importance. The following legislative priorities reflect the issues of highest concern and interest from the most recent member survey in August 2023. These priorities have informed the Chapter's review of legislation since the 2024 session.

2026 Session Legislative Priorities

Act Immediately on Climate Resilience and Sustainability

With accelerating global climate change impacts, planning and preparing for a rapidly warming climate is a necessity and a top priority for the state and local jurisdictions. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to anticipated climate impacts is a moral obligation to current and future generations, a wise use of tax dollars, and beneficial to the state's economy. The Legislature passed Chapter-supported bills in the 2023 session that enacted several climate and sustainability goals within the Growth Management Act. The following priorities reflect continuing Chapter support for further state action on climate change, community resilience, and sustainability:

- ***Support the Dept. of Commerce in continuing to develop robust comprehensive plan climate element guidance for cities and counties.***
- ***Maintain and enhance state funding for cities and counties to develop climate elements in their comprehensive plans and other plan documents***
- ***Update, clarify, and strengthen the state's statutory greenhouse gas emission reduction benchmarks.***
- ***Support legislative efforts to pursue climate action plans, regulatory measures, incentives, technical standards and specifications (e.g., LEED), and mitigation and adaptation measures.***
- ***Incorporate analysis of climate impacts, indicators, and benchmarks in environmental impact analyses and development reviews.***
- ***Adopt policies emphasizing coordinating adaptation, resilience, and hazard mitigation among all levels of government and between agencies rather than only at the local level.***
- ***Encourage or require electric vehicle charging infrastructure, beyond existing building code requirements, in conjunction with new housing.***

Eliminate Homelessness and Increase Affordable Housing Choices

An adequate supply of housing in proximity to employment, food, public transportation, and community facilities must be available within urban growth areas. The Legislature passed bills in the 2023 session that support developing more "Missing Middle" housing and expanding housing stock with the intent to increase affordability. Additional housing stock needs to include affordable and accessible owned and rented units that help meet social equity goals without sacrificing reasonable regulations that are in place to protect the environment and public health.



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- *Strengthen requirements for comprehensive plan housing elements and implementation through zoning reforms, as well as expanding technical assistance and financial support from the state, which will together make providing housing for all economic segments of the population more achievable.*
- *Continue to 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.*
- *Provide subsidies for the construction of housing affordable to people making 50% of the Area Median Income or less.*
- *Provide support for land banking for subsequent affordable housing construction.*
- *Expand the availability of accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, and other denser housing types in single family areas throughout the state.*
- *Amend building and fire codes to support the construction of middle housing types.*
- *Encourage transit-oriented development.*

Apply an Equity Lens to All GMA Goals

The American Planning Association of Washington 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 equity.

- *Apply an equity lens to all policies to address community engagement and empowerment; access to basic needs and opportunity; safe, fair, and affordable housing; and public health.*

Provide Financial Support for Essential Planning

Planning creates value. Planners need sustainable 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, utility fees, and other revenue), 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.

- *Identify sustainable state funding, consistent with the statewide interest in consistent and effective planning work, for upcoming local comprehensive plan periodic updates and development regulation updates.*
- *Continue work to develop broad agreement on improvements to the state's planning framework.*

Transform the Transportation System

To address today's mobility/transportation challenges, the Chapter's priorities are to transform the historic focus on single-occupancy vehicular travel to multimodal solutions, better connectivity and safety, context-sensitivity, and



maintenance needs in order to meet local, regional and intrastate travel needs while addressing climate and equity goals and targets. 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. In recent legislative sessions, the Legislature passed robust bills reflecting the Chapter's goals and priorities. The continues to encourage action on the following Chapter priorities:

- ***Implement a performance-based, outcome-driven transportation planning and funding process that aligns with the Growth Management Act.***
- ***Develop and expand sustainable transportation funding sources to replace the gas tax and expand local funding authority for transit, complete streets, and non-motorized transportation.***
- ***Fund 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.***
- ***Maintain and enhance state transit operations funding in all communities, with a focus on improving service in underserved populations and smaller jurisdictions that have historic underinvestments in transit.***
- ***Require evaluation and reporting of levels-of-service for transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.***
- ***Adopt 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.***

Ensure Infrastructure Investments Support Climate Resilience and Equity

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, consistent with the Growth Management Act.

- ***Expand loan programs, local funding authority, and state appropriations to address infrastructure needs that align with state, regional, and local plans and policies.***
- ***Promote future infrastructure funding, design, and maintenance that addresses climate change causes and impacts as well as resiliency/disaster recovery planning strategies to ensure the investments are protected and resilient to climate change.***
- ***Apply an equity lens for infrastructure planning, funding, design, and maintenance.***

Ensure Coordinated Planning Between Special Purpose Districts and Local Governments

Special purpose districts providing services such as water, sewer, fire, and schools are vital for supporting development, but planning resource and capacity needs can be challenging, given that special districts and local governments each have their own decision-making authority and governance systems. Further, the geographic boundaries of these various entities rarely align with each other, further complicating joint planning. Information-sharing and collaboration amongst special purpose districts and local governments is crucial, because local governments need to understand service capacity in order to plan for future growth, and special purpose districts need to understand the future population they will be asked to serve in order to provide adequate facilities.

- ***Require special purpose districts to plan for the county adopted 20-year population forecast and local jurisdictions' growth targets.***



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- *Include special purpose districts in the local planning process(es).*
- *Support siting schools and other public facilities within the UGA when the school district includes both urban and rural land.*
- *Support funding for collaborative efforts between special purpose districts, local governments, and others to address siting challenges and support smart site and capacity planning in a positive and thoughtful way.*

Long-term legislative priorities:

Reform Annexation Policies and Procedures

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.

- *Amend laws to ensure that a proposed annexation does not become final until the resolution of any and all GMA appeals.*
- *Create a state program of incentives and regulatory simplification to facilitate and encourage annexations in urban growth areas. Increase efficiency in the permitting process.*
- *Clarify and streamline laws and regulations without sacrificing fundamental environmental, safety, and health protections.*
- *Increase local resources to adequately manage the permitting process.*

Define Necessary Capital Facilities and Clarify Comprehensive Plan Requirements

The American Planning Association of Washington supports the coordinated planning called for by the Growth Management Act and seeks to facilitate compliance through clarified definitions and standards.

- *Clarify that the term "capital facilities", as used in RCW 36.70A, refers to physical facilities in a fixed location that a city or county deems necessary to support development, together with park and recreation facilities.*
- *Clarify that when updating its comprehensive plan a city or county shall identify all public entities that own capital facilities within the Urban Growth Area and endeavor in good faith to work with other public entities, but that if the city or county is unable to obtain the necessary information after a good faith effort, failure to include such information in the capital facilities plan shall not be grounds for a finding of noncompliance or invalidity of its comprehensive plan.*

Maintain 10-year Update Cycle for Comprehensive Plans

The comprehensive plan update cycle was changed from 8 to 10 years in the 2022 legislative session, aligning the update cycle with the decennial census.



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- *Maintain the 10-year comprehensive plan update cycle; if legislation adding or modifying comprehensive plan requirements is enacted this session, these requirements should be addressed separately or during the next review.*
- *Maintain value-added planning work through midpoint reviews every five years after a periodic update. The ten-year cycle should address accommodating new growth; a review every five years should be used to remove obsolete provisions, update existing conditions and inventories, and address new and revised state laws that affect planning.*