



March 24, 2016

Members of the House of Representatives  
Washington State Legislature

The Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Washington) respectfully submits comments on proposed **Senate Bill 6426 Allowing schools to be sited as essential public facilities outside the urban growth area (SB 6426)** and **House Bill 1420 School Siting (HB 1420)**.

APA Washington is a 1,400 member association of public and private sector professional planners, planning commissioners and elected officials, among others. We believe the strength in Washington's planning and community design approach over the past 25 years has been its flexibility. For this reason, we oppose **SB 6426** and **HB 1420** as written and offer the following comments:

- By making it easier for school districts to locate schools outside the urban growth areas (UGA), these bills undermine cities and counties comprehensive plans and their ability to curb sprawl. Larger sites outside UGAs may be easier to find and appear less expensive, other cost considerations make siting outside of UGAs more expensive including: busing services, extension of water and sewer lines, and added road improvements.
- Expensive water and sewer lines outside of UGAs give sewer and water providers motivation to add nearby land and customers outside of UGAs, thereby increasing sprawl-like development and pressure to expand the UGA.
- Schools generate a lot of traffic and should be located in areas with good transit, pedestrian and bicycle connections to their attendance areas, which helps to make Safe Routes to Schools programs feasible. Locating schools within UGAs reduces the emissions from dedicated school transportation vehicles and parents driving children to school.
- Building schools closer to denser housing areas increases potential of walking or bicycling at a time when our public health policies are being directed at promoting physical activity and fitness.

- Siting schools outside the UGA also works against cities' efforts toward higher densities and containment of sprawl. These efforts are being realized throughout the state and are resulting in increasing transit use, reductions in carbon emissions and decreased energy usage.

APA Washington offers assistance and support to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in working with school districts to redevelop or design schools for smaller sites in the UGA and in revising OSPIs siting design guidance to make sites within the UGA more feasible and encourage partnerships.

Identifying schools as essential public facilities in order to allow some districts to purchase less expensive land is a mis-application of the provisions of the Growth Management Act. Our state has agreed on many occasions that bringing growth together creates communities and benefits all of us. These two bills do neither.

**For these reasons, APA Washington opposes SB 6426 and HB 1420 as written.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paula Reeves".

Paula Reeves, AICP CTP  
President  
Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association