



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

2016 Legislative Agenda

Washington State has one of the strongest community planning statutes in the nation, and for the past 25 years this has enabled our citizens, our elected leaders, and our profession to “make great communities happen” across the state. Since 1990, Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA) has been successful at slowing or reversing unsustainable development patterns and loss of farm and forestlands. This year’s 25-year milestone provides an opportunity for the State Legislature to build upon the wins made possible through the GMA framework and enact targeted amendments that spur innovation and help support stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.

Planners work with elected and appointed officials, such as mayors, councils, and planning commissioners, to plan for the short- and long-term future of our communities, ensuring we have adequate public facilities like schools, emergency services, transportation infrastructure, water and sewer, parks, etc., that are needed to support growing and changing populations. Planners help civic leaders, businesses, and citizens envision new and more cost-effective solutions to community problems. Planners work in rural areas, small towns, and large cities. They function in the public sector within federal, state, and local governments. They also work in nonprofits and within the private sector in real estate development companies and planning or multi-disciplinary consulting firms. Over the past 25 years, the GMA—the legal framework that planners and planning operate under in our state—has created a strong, dependable, predictable system that has streamlined and improved development in Washington. Without the GMA, the taxpayer dollar would not have created the lasting value in infrastructure, public space, and adaptable building stock while maintaining the quality of life and natural and cultural resources we all enjoy.

To inform our new set of legislative priorities for 2016, we asked planners around the state to share success stories, drew on our *Ten Big Ideas* Initiative, and surveyed our membership about priorities for legislative action.

APA Washington’s 2016 Legislative Priorities

APA Washington’s 2016 Legislative Priorities are an important, achievable, and timely set of recommendations for action from the state Legislature, drawn from APA Washington’s *Ten Big Ideas* initiative. APA Washington’s Legislative Committee will work with our state legislators, partner organizations, and other stakeholders to make progress on each one in the 2016 session.

Priority #1: Pass HB 1802 and support proactive and cost-effective planning, give local governments tools, including, but not limited to, restoring the Public Works Trust Fund, to address local infrastructure deficits, and work to ensure that funding decisions reflect state, regional, and local plans and policies.

Priority #2: Address climate change directly in local, regional, and state planning, including GMA, and direct state agencies to help plan for the worst by preparing vulnerability maps for climate change hazards in digital formats suitable for local government planning.

Priority #3: Develop a state framework for social equity and inclusive participation in comprehensive plans and environmental reviews. Where one lives impacts access to opportunity, quality of life, and ultimately, health and wellbeing. Develop a framework for addressing these issues through plans and policies.

For more information about our legislative priorities and other programs and initiatives, visit our website at www.washington-apa.org, email us at office@washington-apa.org, or call our office at 206-682-7436.

The Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association counts more than 1,400 members: professional planners, planning commissioners, researchers, and others with a passion for “making great communities happen.” Our diverse membership works every day with communities around the state to help plan a prosperous, healthy, and sustainable future. We appreciate the opportunity to work with the Legislature to build the tools we need for a brighter tomorrow.

Success Stories

There are numerous models the Legislature can look to in plans and projects across the state to understand what has worked and how to create the necessary tools for communities to thrive and grow. On October 26, 2015, Governor Jay Inslee announced the “Lifetime of GMA” Achievement Awards, recognizing efforts by communities to envision and plan for their future. Beyond the award-winning 16 cities, four counties, and one regional planning agency, there are numerous other examples of communities successfully managing their growth, including:

- **Revitalizing downtown areas** – *Wenatchee Waterfront Sub-Area Plan*
- **Addressing poverty and changing demographics** – *Tukwila’s Community Connectors Program*
- **Improving walkability** – Safe Routes to Schools projects in many communities throughout the state
- **Innovative transportation planning** - City of Bellingham Multimodal Transportation Concurrency and Urban Village Transportation Impact Fee Reduction programs

These are just a few examples of how communities have shown leadership and innovation in managing growth, while tackling complex new issues of climate change, social equity, and infrastructure deficits. The models are impactful and valuable; yet we need leadership from the Legislature to enable success across Washington State.

APA Washington’s *Ten Big Ideas* Initiative

In 2014, APA Washington kicked off an effort to tackle ongoing, difficult problems, and developed big ideas to make a substantial positive impact. Working groups of planners from across the state have developed tools, resources, and key opportunities for legislative action. APA Washington’s legislative priorities involve these Ten Big Ideas:

1. **Address climate change** – This is one of the major issues of our time, and it’s ripe for action. World leaders are gathering in Paris this year to sign a landmark agreement and jointly commit to bend the trend; Governor Inslee recently signed an executive order directing state agencies to advance efforts to address carbon pollution; and dueling initiatives on the November ballot mean big visibility this year. The legislature needs to support communities that want to tackle this issue with innovative solutions.
2. **Enhance regional decision-making** by strengthening statewide coordination and local collaboration
3. **Restore and protect ecosystems** – Incorporate the value of ecosystem services in decision-making and address them according to natural boundaries, rather than jurisdictional ones.
4. **Link health and planning** – Help communities combat the growing chronic disease health epidemic by requiring public health components in comprehensive plans and environmental review.
5. **Increase local government capacity** – Good planning generates value and pays ongoing dividends through efficient and effective services, healthy tax base, and engaged communities. Local governments need resources and guidance from the state to do this valuable and proactive work.
6. **Support economic development** – Empower sustainable economic development and incentivize local business growth with a coherent state plan and a dedicated funding source for planning.
7. **Foster social equity** – Different areas of the state face different challenges. For some areas, affordable housing and displacement are the biggest issues; for others, more broad-based and meaningful public engagement is the key to more equitable communities. A coherent state framework for addressing social equity in comprehensive plans can help address all of these challenges and achieve consensus.
8. **Support sustainable agriculture and healthy food systems** – Enable and encourage inclusion of healthy food access and urban farmland conservation components in both city and county comprehensive plans. Fund Washington State University Extension research, outreach, and training to farmers and gardeners.
9. **Build social capital** – Build social capital by increasing civic engagement, supporting a culture of education, and fostering leadership and entrepreneurship.
10. **Rebuild infrastructure** – The legislature made a significant stride in 2015 with the transportation package but more steps are needed. Resources for planning, which are cost-effective investments that pay dividends over time, have still not recovered from the recession. Local governments need tools like the Public Works Trust Fund to support local infrastructure deficits. The state should also establish mechanisms to ensure funding decisions reflect state, regional, and local plans and policies.