

PROJECT PROSPECTUS: A Collaborative Road Map to Washington's Future

A proposal for a comprehensive, evidence and policy-based evaluation of the State of Washington's framework for managing future growth

BACKGROUND – PROBLEM STATEMENT

Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) 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 GMA has met its goals. Piecemeal amendments to the GMA have been adopted for two decades, but lacking a broad and more informed context, achieved only limited results. Older land use statutes, such as the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), have never been reconciled with the GMA framework. While the State has adopted Greenhouse Gas Emission reduction targets there is no mechanism in state law or regional policy about how to achieve those targets. Our state's governance and finance statutes were written for the Washington of the 19th century, not the circumstances, aspirations and needs of the 21st century.

The Office of Financial Management projects that by the year 2040, Washington's population of 7 million could swell to almost 10 million. The Puget Sound Regional Council projects that half of those 3 million new residents will locate in the four counties and eighty-two cities in the Seattle metropolitan region, together with 1.4 million additional jobs.

Declining housing affordability, deteriorating health of state waters, loss of productive farmland, crumbling infrastructure, worsening traffic congestion and freight mobility are all crucial State issues. Rural parts of the state struggle to grow economic opportunity and mitigate natural hazards. To nurture economic and environmental health and protect the quality of life in our communities, Washington needs a "road map to the future" – a coherent and effective framework of law, institutions and public policy.

PROJECT PROPOSAL: A ROAD MAP FOR WASHINGTON'S FUTURE

These challenges have led some Washington leaders to believe now is the time to conduct a constructive 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. This prospectus suggests a two-part approach:

Part I - Preliminary Assessment - six months

A. Objectives of Preliminary Assessment

1. Gauge stakeholder support for a full-scale, two-year Comprehensive Assessment of Washington's existing statutory, institutional, and policy framework for managing growth and a Road Map to Washington's Future.
2. Secure sufficient seed funds from sponsor organizations to fund Preliminary Assessment.

B. Deliverables of the Preliminary Assessment

1. Process design and background assessment to:
 - a. Develop a neutral frame for a comprehensive statewide assessment.
 - b. Identify participants, support, and develop a research interview protocol.
 - c. Research GMA, SMA, SEPA history and similar efforts in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland and Florida.
2. Conduct up to 25 confidential interviews with leaders representing a broad range of statewide interests.
3. Analyze interviews, collate responses, and develop an aggregated report with:
 - a. Findings from pre-assessment interviews,

b. Recommendations for statewide policy process design, and

c. Recommended work scope

C. Timeframe - August 2016 through January 2017.

D. Project Cost of the Preliminary Assessment – Phase I cost is estimated at \$50,000.

Cost variables: travel for interviews and presentations, and the number of printed reports.

E. Project Sponsorship

A diverse group of core interests initiated discussions with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center to determine if the Center could serve as a neutral third party to convene and conduct a near-term preliminary assessment. Participants in this preliminary assessment would be Washington cities, counties, state agencies, tribes, citizens, businesses, advocacy organizations and other interested parties.

For additional details on sponsoring the Preliminary Assessment project, potential sponsors are encouraged to contact: The William D. Ruckelshaus Center: Darren Nichols, Associate Director
Tel: 206.428.3021 Seattle -or- 509.335.2937 Pullman

Part II - Comprehensive Assessment and Road Map to Washington's Future – two years+¹

A. Deliverables of the Comprehensive Assessment and Road Map to Washington's Future

1. Draft and Final reports outlining a comprehensive policy, evidence-based and science-informed evaluation of the effectiveness of Washington's framework for managing growth.
2. Identification of issues warranting resolution and alternative methods for doing so.
3. Identification of how Washington's statutory, institutional and policy frameworks can be adapted to address these issues in view of the robust growth in the metropolitan areas, shifting economic trends in both metro and rural areas, trends and opportunities in national and international commerce.
4. Coordinated state, regional and local actions to address climate change and improve resilience of Washington's communities, economy and infrastructure.

B. Timeframe - July 2017 through July 2019

C. Project Cost of Comprehensive Assessment and Road Map: \$500,000+ (informed by Phase I)

D. Potential Comprehensive Assessment and Road Map Sponsorship/Funding

1. State Funding – a funding proposal to the State Legislature
2. Federal Funding – portability of Washington's Road Map to the Northwest/other states

E. Potential institutions to collaborate on the Comprehensive Assessment and Road Map

1. Central Washington University
2. Eastern Washington University
3. The Evergreen State College
4. University of Washington College of Built Environments and College of the Environment
5. University of Washington Evans School for Public Policy and Governance
6. Washington State University Extension – Community and Economic Development
7. Western Washington University
8. Municipal Research and Services Center
9. Washington State Institute for Public Policy
10. Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
11. Other organizations with relevant expertise

¹ Scope will be informed by the findings and recommendations of the Phase I Preliminary Assessment.