



February 7, 2023

The Honorable Davina Duerr, Chair
Local Government Committee
Washington State House of Representatives
Olympia, WA

Dear Chair Duerr,

I am writing on behalf of the American Planning Association, Washington Chapter ([APA-WA](#)) to express our **support for HB 1519**. The 1,500 members of our chapter are planning professionals who advise elected and appointed officials on land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental policy, enforce development regulations, administer the permit process, and inform and engage with the communities we work with.

We agree that delays in permit review contribute in part to increasing the cost of housing, as noted in Sec. 1 of this bill. We also share the goal of having an efficient permit review process, which will enable the construction of much-needed housing and other development that advances GMA goals. To support this goal, we offer the following technical comments:

- **Sec. 3 (2), page 3, lines 27-30:** We are concerned about striking the requirement that an application be “sufficient for continued processing” to be deemed complete. In Sec. 3 (1)(b), page 3, line 19, consider replacing “procedural submission requirements” with “clearly articulated submittal requirements”. Substantively incorrect or incomplete application materials should not be considered complete because a procedural requirement (i.e. simply having a site plan) has been met. A determination of completeness starts processing timelines *and* confers vesting rights. The bill as written could create an incentive to submit incorrect or incomplete materials just to vest a project.
- **Sec. (3)(1)(c), page 3, line 22:** We note that the method for counting days elapsed differs from the method in RCW 1.12.040, which could cause confusion.
- **Sec. 4(1)(a), page 4, line 37 through page 5, line 2:** We recommend providing a path for timelines to be extended by mutual agreement of applicant and local government. Consider adding a new Sec. 4(1)(d)(iv) “The time frames specified in (i)-(iii) may be exceed by mutual agreement of applicant and local government to extend the review time period”.
- **Sec. 4(2), beginning page 6, line 21:** Pursuant to RCW 82.02.020, permit fees may only be used to cover the cost of processing applications, inspecting, and reviewing plans. Consequently, permit fee refunds as an accountability measure will have the effect of hampering local governments’ permit processing function, which won’t help process permits faster. Local governments may already be held accountable through the use of RCW 64.40.

- **Sec. 6(1), beginning page 9, line 3:** We recommend amending subsection (1) to remove the list of options in subsections (a) through (j) and to provide a few examples, e.g., "... by using innovative techniques such as interlocal agreement with another jurisdiction to share permitting resource, using on-call permitting assistance or creating educational materials on local zoning codes and procedures for applicants." As written, the language could be construed to be mandatory and exhaustive. Further, some options are likely to increase overall permit review times or have little to no effect. For example, the use of consultants to engage in review requires that the consultant become familiar with local regulations and still requires oversight by a local government; often resulting in an increase in permit review timelines. Instead, we recommend asking the Department of Commerce to study and evaluate methods that have been demonstrated to expedite permits and use those findings to inform guidance of local governments.

In our members' professional experience, the most effective way to speed up the permitting process is clear dialog between applicants and permit review staff about project specifics and applicable standards. We hope that the above comments help foster this dynamic, and we look forward to continued collaboration with other parties interested in the bill to achieve our shared goal of having an efficient local permit review process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Yorik Stevens-Wajda, AICP
President, Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association