



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

March 7, 2014

To: Representative Ross Hunter, Chair Appropriations

Senator Andy Hill, Chair Ways and Means

Re: Request for Increased Funding in House Bill 2185 and Senate Bill 6002 to Support Local Planning Under the Growth Management Act

Dear Sirs,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) to highlight the importance of sufficient funding for the Department of Commerce to continue to assist local jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act. Specifically, we support the inclusion of funding for planning grants to local governments in the House and Senate budgets.

Adequate funding for planning is a key issue for local governments and for APA Washington. We are an organization of more than 1,200 members with an interest in land use, housing, transportation, environmental, economic and social planning. Among others, our membership includes citizen planners, planning commissioners and other planning officials, and professional planners throughout the State of Washington and elsewhere.

As you are aware, the Governor proposed nearly one million dollars in his budget for the Department of Commerce to help local governments with the next round of Growth Management Act-required comprehensive plan updates. However, this funding is not the House or Senate budgets (House Bill 2185 and Senate Bill 6002, respectively).

The Governor-request level of funding allows the Department of Commerce to support the statutorily required updates in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties and cities. Planning in these jurisdictions are critical to the economic success of the state. These grants are a wise use of public funds and will provide long-term benefits.

The comprehensive plan update cycle has been repeatedly delayed over the course of the recession, by a total of four years, because of the inability to fund Commerce's support for local updates. It has been ten years since the last update in Central Puget Sound and much has changed in that time.

Note that there are wide variety of jurisdictions in these counties – some large and some small, some economically successful and some still struggling under the burdens of the recession. These grants will allow our jurisdictions to undertake the work needed to ensure their plans continue to sustainably guide our economic and residential growth.

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In addition to expressing our support for adequate funding for planning, we also want to acknowledge the important supportive role of the Department of Commerce. The Department's work on growth management includes technical support to local planning departments, topical guidance on how to update plans and regulations, best practices reports, and helping jurisdictions avoid legal issues in their planning. These programs create significant value for local jurisdictions. Commerce programs such as the Regional Planners Forums (a joint program between Commerce, APA Washington and the Planning Association of Washington), are a model for how the state can work collaboratively with the planning community to make great communities happen.

Thank you for considering our request and we look forward to a continued partnership with the state to develop strong plans for an economically sustainable future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivan Miller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ivan Miller, AICP
President

cc: Ted Sturdevant, Legislative Director, the Office of Governor Jay Inslee