

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



November 28, 2001

The Honorable Mel Martinez
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Martinez:

The undersigned members of the Republican Caucus of the Washington State House of Representatives write you to express serious concerns regarding the American Planning Association (APA) Legislative Guidebook (Guidebook), and to urge you to exercise your authority under the HUD/APA contract to disapprove the Guidebook.

The State of Washington has had ten years of experience under a state-mandated "growth management" regime. The results of this experiment have been dramatic:

- 1) increased congestion in our urban areas,
- 2) increased housing costs in our urban areas,
- 3) decreased economic development in our rural areas,
- 4) an ever-increasing amount of regulation by both the state and local governments.

These regulations -- on both the state and local levels -- breed further regulations. A perfect example of this is "concurrency" requirements, currently contained in Washington State law with regards to transportation facilities and recommended in the Guidebook for most infrastructure. These prescriptions require local governments to deny development where local facilities do not meet some predetermined "level of service." However, it is precisely the "density" requirements embodied by these so-called "smartgrowth" policies that create the congestion in the first place. The answer by state and local governments? Further regulation, in an ever increasing cycle of control over individual's use of their property, without a hint of compensation provided to affected landowners.

The Puget Sound region in Washington has developed some of the worst congestion in the country over the past ten years, the time period coinciding with Washington's growth management scheme. At the same time, housing prices in the Puget Sound region have skyrocketed, in large part due to the limitations on supply that have accompanied growth management. Finally, economic development in Washington's rural areas has come to a virtual standstill, and as the agriculture-based economies of such rural areas have suffered over the past few years, local communities have not been able to turn to other industries for jobs because of the development restrictions contained in the state's "smartgrowth" statutes.

The Republican members of the Washington State House of Representatives do not believe that a

Republican administration could be party to encouraging these destructive policies to be adopted by other states and local governments. Yet this is precisely what H.U.D.'s acceptance of this Guidebook would accomplish.

It is not hard to fathom the APA's interest in pursuing this guidebook. The APA will expand its membership as the number of planners expands exponentially with the implementation of this "smartgrowth" scheme. Further, under these very restrictive proposed local and state laws, the power of those who make a living by "planning" the lives of citizens will also radically increase.

For the most part, these planners are unelected, as are the state bureaucrats who oversee these "smartgrowth" programs. Such programs, when instituted, therefore constitute a massive shift of responsibility and accountability from the people and their elected local officials to labyrinth planning departments and state agencies.

We in Washington have lived with this nightmare for ten years, and despite our best legislative efforts, democratic majorities in Washington's legislature or a democratic Governor have prevented reasonable reforms to Washington's Growth Management Act. However, we would urge you, Secretary Martinez, to avoid assisting big-government liberals and their planning association and radical environmentalist allies, from spreading this "smartgrowth" disease across the country. We urge you to reject the APA's Legislative Guidebook, and if the department is interested in addressing state and local planning methods, to begin an inclusive process in which all interested parties might participate to develop the administration's position on this issue.

Sincerely,

Republican Members of WA State House of Representatives

		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		