

The key to growing strong cities and towns in Washington starts with addressing housing shortages and affordability, helping individuals with mental health and drug addiction issues, and providing tools to enhance local economic vitality.

The 2017 legislative session was the longest in history and yielded numerous helpful policy and budget actions for Washington's 281 cities and towns. However, critical issues remain unresolved and need to be addressed in the 2018 legislative session. The Legislature needs to swiftly adopt a capital budget so that critical community projects can move forward, and take action on the following city priorities to help our communities and state thrive.



Strengthen city tools to address housing conditions in our communities

Cities large and small are experiencing challenges with housing in their community—from shortages of affordable housing, to a lack of workforce housing, to neighborhood impacts of abandoned foreclosed properties. Cities need a variety of local option tools to address the problems of their specific local circumstances. AWC urges the Legislature to adopt:

- 1) A new construction sales tax reimbursement pilot program to attract new multi-family housing in cities outside of our urban core;
- 2) A means for cities to mitigate the impacts of abandoned and bank-owned foreclosed homes; and
- 3) Additional flexibility with existing tools such as making the optional sales tax authority for affordable housing a council decision.



Direct funds to mental health, chemical dependency, and social safety net programs

Although cities are not frontline service providers, many of the problems associated with mental health and chemical dependency show up in our communities and on our streets. Increasingly, local public safety personnel play an expanding role in addressing these impacts. AWC actively supports and will engage with those seeking to direct resources to address these challenges and will collaborate with the state, counties, and providers to find ways to deliver support services in the most effective manner.



Enhance economic development tools and programs that foster business development in cities

Economic development opportunities vary greatly across the state. Some communities have commercial or industrial areas that have deteriorated or lack the needed infrastructure for critical development, and others lack access to adequate broadband services. AWC supports expansion of current programs and funding, and will engage key legislators and stakeholders to identify tools that can help foster vital economies in all corners of our state.



Preserve state-shared revenues with cities and increase law enforcement training funds

The 2017-19 state operating budget continued to fund traditional shared revenues such as liquor revenues and municipal criminal justice assistance at the levels provided in recent years. As the Legislature considers a supplemental budget, AWC will encourage the provision of additional funding for four additional Basic Law Enforcement Academy classes during the biennium to ensure that new recruits receive training as quickly as possible.

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