

GPA Legislative Policy Priorities

2023-2024 Georgia General Assembly

The Georgia Planning Association (GPA) is an official Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA). With over 1,000 members, GPA is an organization of professional planners and planning officials who serve Georgia's communities in many ways, at all levels of government, the private sector, and not-for-profit organizations. The Mission of the Georgia Chapter of the American Planning Association is to provide leadership to plan and build vibrant communities throughout Georgia; advocate support for sound planning; and provide its members with tools, services, and support that advance the art and science of planning.

GPA members have a responsibility to comprehensively implement practical solutions to pressing issues that balance the needs of the state's diverse population, environments and economies. Our pivotal role in the decision-making process at each level of government provides unique insight to help shape the debate on planning-related issues. This effort requires us to monitor shifts in statewide policy and identify planning solutions in the context of local, state and national trends.

This document is a statement of our Chapter priorities and an outline of our professional position on policy and legislative issues. It is intended to be a guiding document for advocacy positions taken by the Chapter on legislative matters, and as a framework for local advocacy efforts by our membership. As a chapter in a battleground state in the 2020 election, we recognize that our membership is also politically diverse, and it is our intention to approach legislative issues objectively and respectful of the views of both major political parties. This document is designed to be flexible enough to address the unanticipated issues that inevitably arise during the legislative session.

To address the priority issues facing our state and set the standard for our profession, the GPA Policy and Advocacy Committee supports the American Planning Association (APA) Policy Priorities, which are described at APA website at <https://www.planning.org/policy/priorities/>. In short, APA has identified three top priorities for 2022 at the national level:

1. Infrastructure and recovery legislation implementation
2. Zoning reform and housing opportunity, and
3. Climate change.

Based on our experience in monitoring the Georgia General Assembly in prior years, GPA has identified the following Policy Priorities for the 2023-2024 Georgia General Assembly. During the current session we plan to pay close attention to the following policy areas and work with other organizations on policy areas of mutual interest and concern:

Local governance in support of home rule – over the past several years there has been a nation-wide effort to pre-empt local control of design standards, zoning, and other land use controls. We as a Chapter reject this effort and support home rule that supports the rights of local citizens to enact and administer those land use controls in support of implementing their adopted long-term vision and the desired character of their built environment. We will monitor legislative efforts that would pre-empt local land use control, and be an advocate for fair and equitable zoning reform that promotes the vision and interests of our local communities.

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Available, Affordable and Attainable Quality Housing – GPA is committed to working with partners to increase the affordability and attainability of housing opportunities. We recognize that these opportunities manifest themselves differently throughout the state. As some parts of the state are experiencing construction booms and others experience population stagnation, not to mention the universal impacts of rampant inflation and rising home prices, a variety of tools are needed in order to address the challenges communities are facing with housing for both homeowners and renters.

Safe and Resilient Transportation and Infrastructure – As planners we support the modernization and maintenance of quality infrastructure, including broadband, through ongoing planning and investment. We recognize the critical role and multiple benefits that infrastructure plays in supporting our economy, public safety, and mobility. We support the further development of multi-modal circulation systems that are efficient and safe.

Healthy Communities – The global pandemic has exposed the important role that our built environment and our public policies play in promoting healthy lifestyle. We support local plans, policies and regulations that encourage active and healthy lifestyles, provide access to healthy food, and support the responsiveness of local health authorities to react to local health crises.

Fair and Equitable Governance – APA and we as a Chapter are committed to building and supporting more equitable, diverse and inclusive communities for all. At the heart of this effort is how local and state governments use the resources available to meet the needs of their respective communities. In support of this, we will monitor important decisions and policies regarding local and state budgets, inclusive and non-discriminatory policies and programs that provide for the fair treatment of all people, and that require meaningful public outreach and input.

Environmental Stewardship – We are committed to promoting environmental protection and conservation in planning decisions. We recognize that climate change is largely driven by human behavior and as planners can lead efforts to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. We will monitor decisions at the federal level that affect state and local decision making, while also supporting state and local efforts that address climate change in an effort to protect the most vulnerable communities. As practitioners we are committed to the integration of climate change performance measures in local and regional planning, advancing data availability and tools, and incorporation of resiliency planning and mitigation programs at the state, regional and local level.

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