

2026 AWC legislative agenda

The following items are the official 2026 City Legislative Priorities as adopted by the AWC Board.

2026 City Legislative Priorities

Enhance indigent defense: Increase state support and funding for indigent defense. Enhance state support for increasing indigent defense workforce.

Increase sustainability for local transportation preservation, maintenance, and operations needs:

Advocate for sustainable revenue that supports local preservation, maintenance, and operations and includes direct distributions to cities and towns. Continue to work to improve traffic safety and explore revenue tools like a highway usage fee, a retail delivery fee, and expanded Transportation Benefit District (TBD) authority, as well as other funding options such as a “sidewalk utility.”

Preserve state shared revenues: Preserve existing state shared revenues for cities and towns.

Improve housing supply: To help cities meet their goals for more housing affordability, cities need the state to provide the time to implement recent state housing legislation and, critically, provide new tools to increase housing investments. Cities need new investments and funding tools to meet the needs for affordable housing in cities large and small across the housing continuum, including construction and preservation of affordable housing, home ownership and senior housing, and support for tools such as updating UGA development, local option real estate excise tax and short-term rental taxes, and expanding use of lodging taxes for housing.

Issues that are significant to cities

- **Increase revenue flexibility:** Find opportunities to enhance existing revenue tools to make them more flexible and easier to implement including moving to more councilmanic options. Ensure a mix of local revenue options that are broad enough to meet unique community needs. Consider modifying the voter approved levy lid lift options to expand the maximum time that apply to the levy lid lifts. Continue to support revising the property tax cap.
- **Public safety funding:** Review new funding tools created in HB 2015 to ensure that they are effective and accessible for communities of all sizes. Continue to explore additional funding tools to support public safety.
- **Support programs to reduce homelessness:** Focus resources on programs that will help individuals access emergency shelter as well as permanent and supportive housing options. Focus on programs to reduce youth homelessness. Continue to support existing state funding for state right of way programs.
- **Enhanced emergency management support:** Support additional resources and technical assistance for emergency preparedness, disaster response, and long-term recovery
- **Behavioral health treatment capacity:** Support increased investments in community behavioral health treatment funding – both capital start-up and operational expenses; support expansion of continuum of treatment capacity, from crisis stabilization to inpatient to outpatient; support continued expansion of forensic behavioral health treatment capacity; Support substance abuse treatment and behavioral health crisis centers; provide more support for diversion programs and alternative response programs.
- **Increase technical assistance and community engagement in land use:** Focus state involvement on providing more technical assistance and preserving the importance of community engagement and

incentives. Avoid agency overreach that prioritizes state enforcement, redundancy, and substituting community engagement for bureaucratic process.

- Reduce costs and improve consistency in land use decisions: Reduce costs and improve consistency in land use by minimizing new mandates and providing more funding for implementing any state-mandated changes to land use and planning and permitting requirements. Allow for more time for implementation of recent changes.
- Updating UGA development: Ensure better coordination of development standards in unincorporated UGAs and cities to facilitate future annexations. Require county to apply city development standards in unincorporated UGA to facilitate future annexations. Explore opportunities to make it easier to make changes to UGA boundaries to support growth and housing targets.
- Nutrient General Permit for wastewater treatment: Ensure that any state efforts around developing the nutrient general permit are balanced between the benefits and the costs to local government and rate payers of wastewater systems. Update Marine Dissolved Oxygen science including update Marine DO Criteria last set in 1967.
- Infrastructure funding: Provide direct and meaningful state investment in local infrastructure for operations and maintenance of aging systems, including keeping up with state regulatory requirements. Preserve reliable revenue streams for the Public Works Assistance Account and fully fund the account.
- PFAS: Seek local liability protection for PFAS contamination and treatment. Seek additional investments and technical support for cities and towns responding to PFAS detection and contamination.
- Fish barrier removal (Culverts): Include local barrier correction in state investments and fully fund the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Board list. Oppose diversion of existing local infrastructure funding to state culvert replacement.
- Support capital facilities planning: Provide more technical assistance and resources for capital facilities planning and assessing funding needs.
- Public records and public safety tools: Support efforts to limit release of data and images collected by automated license plate readers and other public safety camera systems to protect privacy and preserve this cost-effective public safety tool.
- Preserve public employer management rights: Protect against efforts to reduce management rights in collective bargaining, particularly efforts to impede a city's right to make decisions about expenditures, programs and new technology.
- Reduce inefficient and costly requirements: Find opportunities to reduce inefficient, costly, and outdated requirements and reports.

Issues that cities support

- Tax code structural changes: Support efforts to review and revise both state and local tax structures such that they rely less on regressive revenue options and recognize the unique aspects of different communities (i.e. border communities). Changes to the state tax structure should not negatively impact cities' revenue authority and should allow cities revenue flexibility to address their community's needs.
- Alternative Response programs: Support continued and expanded operational grant funding, as well as dedicated ongoing operational funding for co-response, municipal therapeutic courts, community courts, and diversion programs.
- Crime reduction: Support additional prosecutorial and law enforcement resources to address retail theft. Support efforts to prevent and address juvenile crime, including expansion of juvenile behavioral health treatment capacity. Support efforts to reduce gun violence.
- Support encampment mitigation: Advocate for resources similar to those used in state right of way to mitigate unsanctioned encampments located on city-owned and private properties.
- Streamlining state permitting/regulatory requirements: Explore changes to state permitting/regulatory requirements that are impacting housing development.
- Expand tax incentive for redeveloping surface parking lots: Expand existing tax incentive for redeveloping parking lots for affordable housing so that it is available to cities and towns of all sizes.

- Preserve mobile home parks: Advocate for more funding to support preservation and development of mobile home parks.
- Disincentivize investor residential purchases: Explore options to disincentivize investor purchases that result in out-of-state ownership and increased costs.
- Incentivize condominium development: Support efforts to expand development of condominiums as more affordable home-ownership options.
- Publicly owned land available for housing: Look for opportunities to reuse state owned land for housing. Explore expanding use of eminent domain for housing development.
- Alternative affordable housing options: Provide cities with more flexibility to regulate health and safety around temporary housing uses like RVs.
- SEPA and state permitting: Work on policy changes that provide clarity and certainty within SEPA, Shorelines and state permits without lessening any environmental protection measures.
- Balanced state regulatory requirements: Ensure state regulatory requirements are balanced and take into account the cost impacts on local governments and tax and ratepayers.
- State highways in cities & towns: Increase maintenance funding of state highways in cities and towns and avoid shifting these costs to local jurisdictions.
- Reduce city liability exposure: Seek opportunities to reduce liability exposure and reduce costs of litigation and insurance.
- Public Records: Continue to pursue changes to reduce the impacts of vexatious litigation.
- Public notice requirements: Provide more flexibility for public notice requirements given the cost of publication and limited reach. Allow cities to rely on more modern forms of communication.
- Update local government ethics code: Update local government ethics code to make it more consistent with state officials' ethics requirements.
- Audits and accountability: Provide more support for technical assistance and training around misuse of public funds. Explore options to reduce the costs of audits.
- Increase digital equity and accessibility statewide: Advocate for statewide funding that supports affordable connectivity and policies that increase digital literacy and adoption.
- Improving contracting and procurement: Improve efficiency and cost effectiveness in local bidding, contracting, and procurement.