January 7, 2019

Dear Senator/Representative:

As the President of the American Planning Association (APA), I would like to extend our welcome to the 116th Congress and offer the broad expertise of our members to you and your staff. Our organization is devoted to improving the nation’s communities and serving the public interest through good planning.

APA members are planners, elected and appointed local planning officials, educators, students, and engaged citizens who are working to expand opportunity through creating just, healthy and prosperous communities. Though we are a diverse organization with members serving communities of all sizes and focused on a wide range of issues from housing to transportation to water infrastructure to parks, we aspire to a common goal of creating open and vibrant communities of lasting value.

The convening of the new Congress means the nation has the chance to begin again working on the policies that promise to bring prosperity and opportunity to all. Congress can lead the way in working to support communities across the country as they grapple with important challenges of infrastructure investment, housing, inclusive growth and resiliency.

APA has adopted a new slate of legislative priorities for 2019, the Planning for Opportunity Agenda. APA urges the new Congress to act on four key areas that will strengthen the nation’s communities and expand opportunities for all:

- **Address the nation’s housing crisis with policies that advance affordability, availability, quality and access to economic and social opportunities**

  Housing is a major challenge in communities across the nation. While the challenges vary from region to region and market to market, the common goal in addressing them is to advance policies that promote fairness, affordability and choice rooted in strong, opportunity-rich neighborhoods. Meeting our housing and community development needs is essential for expanding economic and social mobility for all. Federal policies and investments can be essential in supporting communities work to address housing needs and challenges.

- **Advance policies that support and encourage inclusive growth and development strategies**

  Growing our economy means expanding opportunity, economic mobility, and prosperity for all. Inclusive growth provides a new way of tackling persistent poverty and inequality while boosting
economic growth. From the implementation of Opportunity Zones to tax and workforce policies, Congress can be instrumental in promoting an economy that lifts all communities.

- **Investing wisely in the nation’s critical infrastructure**

  Strong economies and vibrant communities require good infrastructure. Well-planned infrastructure investments are a catalyst for economic growth, long-term prosperity, and access to opportunity for all. Today’s bipartisan support for infrastructure holds the promise of not only new jobs and revenue but also stronger communities providing access to prosperity and opportunity. At the same time, we need not just more investment, but better investment. Any federal infrastructure program should be driven by key principles of good planning, such as considering the importance of the right location, helping communities fully leverage investments, funding sustainability, and providing co-benefits for housing and economic development.

- **Promote healthy and safe communities through good planning and strategic investments**

  Federal policy should encourage and support efforts to improve the health and resiliency of the nation’s communities. Congress can help planners address the clear and compelling challenges of natural disasters and climate change and improve park and recreation opportunities. Needed reauthorizations of the National Flood Insurance Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund and implementation of hazard mitigation reforms and new food systems programs present a chance to use good planning to create healthier, safer and more resilient communities.

On behalf of all APA members, I look forward to working with you to advance these critical policy areas. More information on our detailed policy agenda based on these priorities can be found online at [www.planning.org/policy](http://www.planning.org/policy). If you would like more information on APA or our policy priorities, please contact APA Policy Director Jason Jordan ([jordan@planning.org](mailto:jordan@planning.org)).

We appreciate your leadership and public service and look forward to working together to build just, healthy, and more prosperous communities.

Thank you,

Kurt Christiansen, FAICP
President, American Planning Association