



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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(Pittsburgh, PA) -- In today's economic climate, local government must be ready to provide the services and infrastructure necessary to support the development of new businesses, provide a variety of housing options, and protect our quality of life. Unfortunately, state budget cuts have drastically limited the chances that our communities will prosper. A group of community professionals, planners, and developers have joined forces in a voluntary collaboration called "Planners Unite" to fight for local government and protect our investments.

Planners Unite has formed to re-establish state recognition of the importance of land use planning in Pennsylvania. The organization hopes to build legislative support to restore funding for the Department of Community and Economic Development's Land-Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP). This vital state program was cut by 90% from \$4 million to less than \$400,000. LUPTAP, administered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services (Center), is the single program in state government with a direct mandate to provide financial and technical assistance in the area of community and land use planning. It helps to fulfill Act 58 of 1996, which requires the Department to provide technical assistance to municipalities on zoning and planning-related issues. Community planning is an essential function of local government and necessary to prepare strategies for community and economic development, land use, transportation, conservation, and infrastructure; and to undertake improvements in a coordinated manner and deal with issues cooperatively across municipal boundaries.

Alexander J. Graziani, AICP, President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, notes, "With our tough economic climate, now is the time to invest in planning to us get back on the path to prosperity. Communities all over the commonwealth use this program to leverage other dollars to make good long term decisions which attract millions of private investment dollars."

Planners Unite urges our state representatives and senate members to support the legislative strategy that is mounting around the Commonwealth. The restoration of funding for planning is critical, as LUPTAP funding has touched nearly every legislative district in the state. While this effort began through the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (PA APA), other local government organizations recognize the importance of planning and have joined the effort including the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, 10,000 Friends, and Pennsylvania Works! Support for this initiative continues to grow, with new members continuing to commit to and support the cause. More information on Planners Unite and the importance of community planning can be found at the Planners Unite webpage located at [http://www.planningpa.org/planners\\_unite.shtml](http://www.planningpa.org/planners_unite.shtml).

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