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**TO:** Local Government Subcommittee of the Education and Local Government  
Interim Committee of the 59<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature

**FROM:** John Horwich, Professor and Director of the Land Use Clinic, University of  
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**SUBJECT:** Planning Assistance for Montana Local Governments

**DATE:** February 28, 2006

As this Committee has heard in previous meetings, there is widespread interest among local governments in Montana and the planning community in Montana to reinstate some form of statewide planning assistance to serve as a resource for local communities. Most cities, towns and counties in Montana do not have permanent, professional planning staff, and most local government attorneys are not specialists in land use law. Even in the more populous jurisdictions, while they do have professional staff, those staff are stretched thin in responding to current development proposals. Statewide planning education, training, publications and guidance can efficiently and effectively enhance the capacity of local governments in Montana to address the land use and development issues they face.

Beginning in September, 2005, the Land Use Clinic at the University of Montana School of Law undertook a study of programs in states somewhat similar to Montana to understand the different models for providing statewide planning assistance to local communities. Enclosed with these materials is a summary of that study and outline summaries of the primary state programs on which we focused.

Also enclosed is a proposal for a Montana Community Planning Center to be located at The University of Montana. Our research and analysis, and discussions with interested parties in Montana, suggested that there were significant values to be realized by locating statewide planning assistance in the University System. The educational opportunities for students, the ability to utilize students in the work of local assistance, the interactions with other university programs, and the opportunity to leverage the state investment with private and government grant opportunities all are available in a program that has a significant University component.