PHOENIX 2016: What’s Next on Planning’s New Landscape?

By Jessica Garrow, Vice-Chair for Programs

There are a plethora of great small-town focused sessions and events at this year’s National Planning Conference. We hope you can join us for a few – especially our STaR Dinner on Monday to discuss ethical issues for the small town and rural planner and our Tuesday mobile tour of Agritainment Zoning Districts complete with tastings of farm-fresh peaches, olive oils, and more.

Sessions
This year’s STaR by-right session highlights how to showcase your small town’s local unique character is an effective economic development and features the 2015 STaR Award winning Essence of Athens (Ohio) plan.

Title: Small Town Craft Planning and Design
When: Sunday, April 3rd 10:45am - noon
Session Code: 9000471
CM: 1.25
Session Description: Strategies to enhance small town economies often depend on charm and character to draw businesses and residents, but assembly line charm and character may not be enough. Many small towns have begun to look, feel, and function like each other. Craft planning and design is an opportunity for small towns to more effectively express their local character and aspirations. Discover why craft planning and design is a powerful economic development tool. Learn from small towns that adopted craft-based plans including:
- Athens, Ohio: Public infrastructure and private development
- Duluth, Georgia: Public art master plan
- Blacksburg, Virginia: Rule tightening when establishing a retail mix that respects the crafted community

There are a number of other sessions that should be of interest to small town and rural planners, including sessions on managing growth in rural communities, small town plans with bold visions and implementation, tribal planning, and planning for environmental hazards.

A few highlights are listed inside.
From the Chair

I am writing this on my 51st birthday and it has been one of those weeks that really make you look back at your life and think about what you have done and the people with whom you have had contact. I have been involved with APA either at the Chapter, National or Division level in some way since 1998. It has provided me with opportunities to meet people from all over the United States and the world. Earlier this week we lost one of those people that involvement in APA gave me the opportunity to meet. Joe Horwedel, the former Planning Director for San Jose, CA passed away after a very short bout with cancer. I did not even know he was sick; I think that was true for a lot of people.

Joe was the Chair of the City Planning and Management Division. He was a BIG City Planning Director and he was passionate about planning and the planning profession. After he retired from San Jose he took a job as the interim public works director for San Benito County. He told me that he thought maybe he should join STaR since he was working in a rural county. If you visited the Division’s booth at the National Planning Conference in the last several years it is likely that you had the opportunity to meet him. He would ask you what interested you about planning and then say “We have a Division for that!” and push you into signing up then and there. I will miss Joe and the Divisions will miss Joe in Phoenix and then in New York, New Orleans, San Francisco and....

Right now I need to begin looking for a new Joe. Could you be that new Joe? Are you as interested in planners and planning as you are in your job or career? STaR will be holding elections for officers along with the consolidated APA elections during the summer of 2016. We will need a new Chair for the Division. I have served my allotted two terms. It is time for me to move on to immediate past chair. All of our offices will be open Chair, Vice-Chair of Programs, Vice Chair of Communication and Secretary/Treasurer. My life has been enhanced by participation in APA leadership. I have made many friends and professional contacts. I got to meet Joe and a lot of other great people that have improved my life and my career.

If you are interested in one of the STaR positions and are going to the National Planning Conference stop by the STaR Business meeting and volunteer or send me an email chadn@grand-island.com.

Follow APA STaR online so you don’t miss any important news! At APA: http://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/ On LinkedIn: Search “APA Small Town & Rural Planning Division” On Facebook: www.facebook.com/APA-Small-Town-and-Rural-Planning-Division On Twitter: Follow @APA_SmallTown
APA Divisions Council Recognizes STaR Communications Efforts

The APA Divisions Council Awards Committee selected the Small Town and Rural Planning (STaR) Division for a Divisions Council Achievement Award in the “Communications Efforts” category for a Large Division. The award recognizes our members’ contributions to this newsletter (10 years after our move to electronic newsletters), our social media outreach (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and periodic emails.

Please join your division representatives at the APA/AICP Annual Meeting & Leadership Honors at the National Planning Conference, Tuesday April 5, 9:30am.

APA Divisions Initiatives bring focus to planning challenges in local communities across the nation. We would love to hear from you on how you are working through these issues in your own Small Town & Rural plans.

Aging and Livable Communities
- Developing communities that are more age friendly with the swelling ranks of Baby Boomers.

Planning for a More Dynamic Population
- Minorities are the new majority, as our suburbs reinvent themselves in the face of re-urbanization.

Smart Cities and Sustainability
- Planners are using new spectrums of data to measure outcomes, and better apply critical thinking.

Small Town & Rural Planning news is produced quarterly. Contact the Vice-Chair Communications John Shepard, or any board member on the prior page, with your ideas.

STaR Awards
This year the STaR Awards Committee had 17 plans and planning initiatives to review. The quality of every entry was top notch and it was an incredibly difficult decision for the Awards Committee. This year 6 plans and initiatives will be honored with a STaR Award.

Join us in Phoenix at the Awards Ceremony and Business meeting to learn about the winning plans – Sunday April 3rd from 7:30pm – 9pm at the Sheraton. Newsletter articles about the winning plans will be featured in upcoming newsletters.

STaR Member Survey
The Small Town & Rural Planning Division is YOUR division—the Conference program is put on by our members for our members; the Newsletter and Communications effort is put together by our members for our members.

STaR is only as good as our members.

The Division Executive Committee is asking for your opinions, and appreciates your anonymous input as guidance for developing and improving the division work plan, future conference sessions, the division website, and our newsletter.

Watch for an email in your in-box soon with a survey link.
Sorry I Didn’t Read Your “Rural is Dying” Article
…but I was busy serving the people who are innovating in rural places today

By Becky McCray, Small Biz Survival

That’s not actually true. I did read your article. And I shook my head through the whole thing. And I set aside being busy long enough to write down a few thoughts in response.

You went with the “this town is dying, all of rural is dying” theme. (The only other ones that I see used very much are “small towns are the idyllic past” and “rural people are a bunch of nuts.”) I’d rather talk about the #SmallTownNow than your same old stories.

I disagree with your fundamental premise. Rural has a future. Small towns have long-standing relevance in growing food, raising livestock, processing foods, producing natural resources and protecting the environment. That relevance is never going to go away as long as we need food, utilize natural resources and care about our environment. Professor Ivan Emke goes so far as to point out that rural will save civilization. Small towns have new relevance in a work-from-anywhere, anywhen world. I think you wrote about rural sourcing once, years ago. Thanks!

More innovations are happening right now in small towns that you could write about. There’s a solar panel company in rural Minnesota that’s worth a look. In fact, tech-related companies dominated the Farm Bureau Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative contest this year. And the 15 important innovations from Missouri S&T (that’s Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla) include cool stuff like inkless printing, hydrogen-producing bacteria and hollow concrete columns that are stronger than solid ones. That’s only one rural university’s results for one single year. Lots more rural innovation out there right now.

There’s a fish farm called Iowa’s First near Webster City, IA, in a former hog barn. It’s going to change the way you eat fish in a few years. Watch for it. You’ll see more sustainable, healthy, fresh fish coming into your cities, and never realize it was grown in this innovative way pioneered in this small town by this local businessman. Happening now.

Parts of your car were made by Lisle in a small town in Iowa. Your Grasshopper Mower came out of Kansas. The Ditch Witch that pulled the utility cables to your house. Your LL Bean boots. Your Crayolas. Your Pella windows. Your SEL electrical boxes. Hundreds more products and services you know by name. Tabasco. Dow Corning. Viking Ranges. Jiffy Mixes in the blue boxes. All are #SmallTownNow

I saw your profile article on the dejected rural guy who lost his good factory job and feels trapped. That’s very sad for him. But it’s not exactly representative of all of rural people today. When you follow the headlines for bad news from small towns, you miss out on the meaningful stories.

I’d rather talk about Webster City, Iowa. They lost a factory. They took a moment for self-pity (and got looked at with pity by others). But they’re over that. When Deb Brown took over as chamber of commerce director, she counted 12 empty buildings downtown. Every conversation with board members and local leaders included some reference to losing the factory. So they did a tour of empty buildings. They started thinking about what could be instead of what was. They started looking for the businesses that could be filling those buildings, and with a lot of work, they filled 10.
They saved their theater. They built a co-working place. Lots of things are changing. They don’t talk about that lost factory any more. They’re busy.

Is the progress perfect? No. I’ll bet you can still find a dejected former factory worker in Webster City to interview if you want. But I defy you to name a big city where the progress has been perfect. Yet somehow positive stories on cities, their projects, and their future manage to appear next to the negative ones.

I’d rather have you talk about Norfolk County, Ontario, and their many cool projects. Let’s pick one, #TweetFolkTours. Gregg McLaughlin and pals are turning the “small town businesses are scared of social media” stereotype on its head. They’re taking locals, touring local businesses, and promoting them online. They’re educating locals on what’s in their county, bringing more customers to their local businesses, and drawing in visitors from all over with the buzz they create.

Would you like to interview the leaders in Tionesta, PA, who turned a vacant lot into a business incubator using garden sheds? That’s a town of 500 working on their own economic future. How about Pascagoula, MS, who pulled off a similar trick with surplus Katrina Cottages (tiny houses)?

Want a cool sidebar to that “all rural hospitals are closing” story you were assigned? There’s a cool new maker space that took over one of those closed hospitals in Sonora, CA. You like maker stories. How about crafternoons in Cavalier, ND? It’s a pretty cool way of local crafters and makers getting together and networking. Sure it’s small, but it’s such a cool idea. Small town people come up with all kinds of cool ideas.

Have you seen the Blue Collar Career Fair in San Saba, Texas? It’s the kind of innovative idea that happens when a local person decides they don’t like hearing that 2/3s of their school kids are “at risk.” I personally love the divided retail spaces and mini-villages that are springing up inside of old buildings. I know you wrote about the hip and cool ones in bigger cities like Grand Rapids, MI, and Buffalo, NY, but did you know that the first ones I ever heard of were in Washington, IA, and Ferdinand, IN? Yeah. Really.

I don’t even have space to tell you all the cool things going on in the Township of Stirling-Rawdon in Ontario. My favorite may be the Active Community Expo (A.C.E.) that brings people together with opportunities they didn’t even know they had locally.

Do you need more leads? I can go on. Jacksonville, Texas, turned a burned out building into “Charcoal Alley” and filled it with food trucks, events, and activity. Innovative. Aztec, NM, filled empty buildings with artists and crafters for the holidays. Paris, Texas, turned a building with no roof into a beer garden.

You keep writing about co-working spaces, so you might like to write about the one in Pella, Iowa. Actually, they’re all over rural. The Global Coworking Conference Unconference reported they are everywhere from mountain towns to islands.

Of course some rural towns are dying. Their economic reason for being left them, and they haven’t found a new one. They’ll continue to die. Other rural towns are getting by, and others are prospering. How? How is it possible? Because there are a bunch of towns, thousands and thousands and thousands. No one stereotype can possibly include them all.

Next time you get assigned a “rural is dying” story, I’d love for you to take a look at a new angle. Just holler if you need an idea.

Becky McCray is a small town entrepreneur and public speaker. Reprinted with Permission from Small Biz Survival: The Small Town and Rural Business Resource. Follow her on Twitter @BeckyMcCray.
Title: A Case Study in Rural Planning  
When: Saturday, April 2nd 2:30pm – 3:45pm  
Session Code: 9002126  
CM: 1.25  
Session Description: Updates to a zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan in a county that is the second-largest by land area in the contiguous United States provide a window into the distinct challenges faced by rural jurisdictions as they negotiate tradition and growth. This session will explore three overarching issues that emerged while planning: The importance of partnerships across agencies and institutional and private landowners, new understandings of what growth means in rural communities, and the value of local participation in a large and diverse county.

Title: Unintimidated: Small Towns, Big Results  
When: Saturday, April 2nd 4pm – 5:15pm  
Session Code: 9002163  
CM: 1.25  
Session Description: Case studies in Anniston, Ala. and Valparaiso, Ind. demonstrate small communities tackling great odds to manage outstanding planning processes through strong leadership, a focus on quality of place, and innovative approaches to engagement that generate emotional attachment and impactful results. These communities persevered and built momentum throughout their processes, challenging the perceived limits of what smaller communities can do to take charge of their futures.

Title: Tribal Community Planning & Economic Development  
When: Sunday, April 3rd 2:30pm – 3:45pm  
Session Code: 9002321  
CM: 1.25  
Session Description: Tribal communities are often overlooked in the realm of planning. Yet, roughly two million Native Americans from 566 federally recognized tribes live on or near 56.2 million acres of reservation land. These diverse communities stand to benefit from comprehensive planning processes that address each tribe’s unique needs, especially with respect to economic development and self-sufficiency. Learn how comprehensive planning in Native American communities builds tribal economies. Top planners working with tribes across the U.S. will discuss the integral role planning plays in shaping diverse and sustainable communities that maintain economic self-sufficiency.
Title: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): The Durango Experience
When: Monday, April 4th 10:30am – 11:45am
Session Code: 9001901
CM: 1.25
Session Description: Community officials, planners, and local governments across the country are struggling with how to address accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and illegal dwelling units. Changing housing preferences and lifestyles are increasing demand for these typically smaller and more flexible housing arrangements. This session will describe how a deliberate and inclusive public process led to the creation of an innovative program for handling these unique housing and neighborhood issues in Durango, Colorado.

Title: Safer Communities Through Better Wildfire Planning
When: Monday, April 4th 10:30am – 11:45am
Session Code: 9001831
CM: 1.25
Session Description: As climate change is affecting regional precipitation patterns, many rural and urban communities in the United States are facing the increasing reality of higher wildfire activity. Communities can avoid wildfire disaster, but good community planning is required. This session will draw on a series of best practices and case studies, including Summit County, Colorado, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, where planners have integrated wildfire hazard planning into their community development process.

Title: Zero Growth Planning: Disrupting Rural Decline
When: Tuesday, April 5th 8am – 9:15am
Session Code: 9001831
CM: 1.25
Session Description: Permanent job loss and subsequent decline leave few choices for rural residents, elected officials, and land managers. Case studies from Utah illustrate that principles of planning and implementable solutions are essential in stagnant rural towns and growing cities. Decline is hard to accept for rural leaders who are fighting it; however, a lack of recognition and acceptance leads to a lack of strategy. Zero Growth Planning seeks to change that. The Zero Growth Planning initiative defines relative decline and assists rural towns as they recognize that the next twenty years won’t be like the last twenty years.
Business Meeting & Awards Ceremony
Join us for the annual STaR Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony on Sunday April 3rd from 7:30pm – 9pm at the Sheraton. (Code 9005251).

Facilitated Discussion
This year’s Facilitated Discussion will focus on sustainability in small towns and rural communities. The session will start with a discussion of how communities can incorporate sustainability practices within their comprehensive plans.

Function Code: 9000400
Title: Small Towns and Sustainability Discussion
When: Monday, April 4th 2:45pm – 4pm
Session Description: This session will present techniques available for small communities to become more sustainable in the future. Learn why addressing sustainability in any-sized community's comprehensive plan is important.

Division Dinner and Ethics Session
Back by popular demand is the STaR Dinner session, this year with the ability to receive 1.5 CM Ethics Credits. Learn about and discuss the unique ethics issues for the small town and rural planner. Speakers include Robert Barber, Joanne Garnett, and Graham Billingsley. Cost is $50.

Title: Ethics for Small Town and Rural Planners Dinner
When: Monday, April 4th 6pm – 8:30pm
Where: The Blue Hound (at Hotel Palomar), 2 E Jefferson St, Phoenix, AZ 85004
CM: 1.50 Ethics
Function Code: 9000395
Price: $50
Session Description: Explore the small town or rural area planner’s role and gain tips for addressing ethical issues resulting from the planner’s unique relationship with the applicant and public “where everyone knows everyone else’s business.” Includes dinner.

Joint Reception
Back by popular demand is a joint-division reception with aligned divisions! Join the Small Town and Rural Planning, County Planning, Private Practice, Planning & Women, and Regional and Intergovernmental Divisions for drinks, appetizers, mingling, and lively discussion. This is the networking event at

Sponsorship Opportunity
If you or your company is interested in serving as a sponsor for the Business Meeting or Reception, with recognition at the event, in Division social media, and in the newsletter, please contact STaR Vice-Chair - Programs Jessica Garrow, Jessica.Garrow@cityofaspen.com or 970.429.2780.
the conference that you won’t want to miss. Space is limited so register today!

**When:** Monday April 4th, 8pm  
**Where:** The Blue Hound (at Hotel Palomar), 2 E Jefferson St, Phoenix, AZ 85004  
**Price:** $10  
Due to a website issue this was not listed as a ticketed event until recently, so please make sure you register if you would like to attend. Please note that you can register for both the Ethics Dinner and the joint-reception, but you will get a red schedule conflict notification. Just click through to purchase both tickets and you’ll be registered for both.

**Mobile Tour**
Wrap up the conference with another exciting STaR Mobile Tour! This tour gives a behind-the-scenes tour of two of Queen Creek’s successful agritourism destinations, Schnepf Farms and Queen Creek Olive Mill, and includes lunch.

**Function Code:** 9000500  
**Title:** Developing an Agritainment Zoning District  
**When:** Tuesday, April 5th 1:45pm – 5:45pm  
**Price:** $85  
**Mobile Workshop Description:**
The first stop is Schnepf Farms, a 70-year-old family farm famous for its peaches, u-pick garden, hayrides and festivals. Local farmer and Queen Creek’s first mayor, Mark Schnepf, will speak on the business of creating an agritainment destination and how local government plays a key role in the process. Mark will take us on a guided tour of the farm by train.

Next, you will visit the Queen Creek Olive Mill, the state’s only working olive farm and mill. Situated on 100 acres located three miles south of downtown, the Queen Creek Olive Mill is a top foodie destination and has been featured on Food Network’s *The Best Thing I Ever Ate.* Sample olive oil-infused cupcakes, locally sourced bruschetta bites and other treats while learning about the process of creating olive oil. Perry Rea, owner and certified olive oil sommelier, will share stories about creating a local culinary and retail success story from a small plot of open space. Enjoy some free time exploring the market or enjoy the fresh air of the olive grove before heading back to the hotel.
Planning Webcast Series

APA’s Divisions and Chapters sponsor a series of weekly webcasts to help you gain CM credits you need… and maybe learn something if you’re not careful.

March 11 – New Data Tools for Supporting Analysis of Equitable Development and Environmental Justice — Planning & the Black Community Division

Understanding the challenges and opportunities communities face—economic, social, and environmental—is a prerequisite for making investments that achieve their goals. To respond to this need, environmental justice stakeholders have begun developing analytical tools that can give communities rich and accessible information for supporting local goals for environmental protection and equitable development in cities and regions. This webinar will cover two of these tools – EPA’s EJSCREEN, an environmental justice screening and mapping tool, and the National Equity Atlas a comprehensive data resource to track, measure, and make the case for inclusive growth developed by PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. The presentations will explain what these tools are, how they have been used in real world scenarios to advance equity in local and regional development practices, followed by questions and answers.

March 18 – The New “Cottage” Industry: Housing, Lodging, and the Sharing Economy — Small Town & Rural Planning Division (STaR!)

The new Sharing Economy has enabled the availability of private short-term rental properties like never before. Web-based clearinghouses for short-term rentals, such as VRBO and AirBnB, have changed the economic and regulatory landscape of short-term rental markets. These changes are felt in municipalities of all sizes. While some communities experience strains on the availability of long-term rental housing, others value the short-terms rentals as a supplement to traditional lodging options. This session will explore the relationship of the short-term rental sector of the sharing economy to land use and tax regulation and social and economic factors in resort and destination communities. Sponsored by the Small Town and Rural Planning Division.

April 1 – Assessing Affordable Housing Need: A Practical Toolkit — Pennsylvania Chapter

Maintaining a variety of affordable housing types is a critical component of long-range community viability. This session will equip planners and public leaders with strategies for determining the type and volume of housing that is most needed, by whom and where, within the context of shifting demographics. The presenters will review affordable housing needs assessments they conducted in Colorado Springs, CO, the State of Washington and Westmoreland County, PA, and explain the approaches that were most successful in translating measured housing needs into community goals with targeted, practical action steps.

You can see the current listing of all webcasts at www.ohioplanning.org/planningwebcast.

Distance Education – webcast recording approved for CM credit for viewing in 2016:
- Housing for People with Disabilities: A Civil Rights Lens - 1.5 CM LAW Credits (#e.9008313)
- Ethics of Private Practice Consulting - 1.5 CM ETHICS Credits (#e.9016910)
Planner Spotlight:
Rebecca Leonard, FAICP, LEED-AP

Rebecca Leonard is among the newest members of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) College of Fellows, after nomination by the Small Town & Rural Planning Division.

Leonard, a Ball State University graduate and registered landscape architect, is President of Design Workshop, having opened the Texas office in 2007. Previously, she was a Senior Planner with Eagle County, Colorado, and has experience in Australia.

Rebecca is known for helping communities envision and create their futures. The New Braunfels Stormwater Management Strategy, winner of the APA STaR 2014 John Keller Award for a Planning Initiative, is a prime example of this. Rebecca managed to bring forward the wishes of a flood-devastated small Texas community in defining their future. The plan won the STaR award for creating locally accepted and innovative supported strategies designed to achieve the specific goals of the plan. To do this with storm water management is particularly impressive as these types of regulations are often forced on communities from the top down.

STaR Chairman Chad Nabity worked personally with Rebecca on the Grander Vision plan. “We chose Rebecca and her firm Design Workshop because she and her company were able to present not just the capability of developing a vision but a clear understanding of what would need to occur once the plan was approved.”

Leonard grew up in Fortville, Indiana—a small town of 3,600 people, where her mom was on the city council and dad on the county commission. “Small towns have a very special place in my heart,” Leonard says. “Their issues are broad but their common denominator is good people working hard every day for progress. Design Workshop believes that when there is synergy between economic, environmental, community and experiential goals that places endure as a legacy for future generations. We’ve found that it’s not the size, but the heart of a community that can deliver on that promise and small towns have heart in spades.”

No stranger to folks active in APA, Leonard is the current chair of the Urban Design and Preservation Division. Previously, she served on the Board of the Colorado Chapter, and on the Board of Healthy Mountain Communities. And if you’re paying attention, you should have noticed her byline in the February 2016 issue of APA’s Planning Magazine.

Join the AICP College of Fellows as they welcome the 2016 class of distinguished members to their ranks at the National Planning Conference, Sunday, April 3, 4pm. You can also congratulate Leonard at one of her scheduled conference sessions: Plan Houston, 4/2 at 10:30, Ethics of Design Review, 4/3 at 10:45, or Women in Private Practice, 4/4 at 2:45.
Federal Lands in Rural Counties: Liability or Asset?

Rural counties in the western US with the highest share of Federal Lands on average had faster population, employment, personal income, and per capita income growth than their peers with the lowest share of federal lands, from 1970-2014, according to analysis conducted by Megan Lawson, PhD, of the Headwaters Economics nonprofit research group.

“Rural economies in the West, and across the country, have been challenged in the past several decades to sustain prosperity,” Lawson writes. “Some of the reasons for this include a broader transition from a commodity-based to services-based economy and the lack of access to major markets for many rural places.” Many rural areas are struggling to sustain population, but others are more successfully adapting to global economic changes.

The study reviewed 276 non-metro counties in the 11 contiguous western states, and looked at “protected” federal lands—National Parks, Wilderness, National Conservation areas, National Monuments, and National Wildlife Refuges—in addition to USFS and BLM managed property. Results were similar, if more exaggerated, for counties with protected federal lands as well. Population increased by 122% in the top 25% of counties with protected federal lands, compared to 47% in the bottom 25%. Employment grew by 263% vs 98%, personal income increased by 380% compared to 154%, and per capita income increased by 97% vs 78% in the bottom tier of rural counties.