

NNECAPA Executive Committee

2025 - 2026

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Executive Committee Updates

Just a short summer President's Corner from Jeff Levine, FAICP!



What a Spring! We've been busy on the NNECAPA Executive Committee planning out the next couple of years and we're excited to launch some new initiatives.

In April we held our bi-annual retreat. In addition to catching up in person, which is too rare in this Zoom era, we drafted updates to the organization's strategic plan and finalized the 2026-2027 work plan for NNECAPA. We also drafted proposed updates to the chapter's bylaws that are currently under review by APA. These changes update our processes to allow for more electronic voting as well as making some updates to the Executive Committee structure. Once their review is complete, we will share them

with members and ask for an affirmative vote to adopt these changes at the fall Business Meeting

in Manchester.

Speaking of Manchester, the Conference Committee is hard at work finalizing an amazing agenda for the Northern New England Planning Conference to be held October 21 through 23 at the DoubleTree Downtown. By the time this gets to your inbox we expect registration to be open. I'm looking forward to the best planning conference around!

In December, I also was able to attend the APA Legislative Summit, where I learned about what is happening in other states related to planning legislation and policy. While we certainly have our challenges in our three states, it's fair to say we're on the more fortunate end of what's happening in state capitals nowadays. Most of the work our sections do with respect to planning, housing and zoning tends to be on how far to reform our laws. In other states, legislatures seem to be actively opposing planning actions such as these.

Thanks to your vote at the Business Meeting last fall, we have revised our dues structure to both lower dues on lower-income planners as well as collect some additional revenue to put into programming. Combined with a Chapter Presidents' Council administrative grant we received recently, that means more events for our members! As you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, we're planning a media training webinar for members, in addition to our work with the Planning Webcast Series that offers free CM credits and informative presentations for NNECAPA members.

I hope you are all able to take some time during our short, sweet summer season to get away to the lakes, oceans and mountains of northern New England! As always, I can be reached at president@nnecapa.org if you have any ideas or questions.

Enjoy your summer!

PDO Corner

Congratulations to the 2026 inductees of the AICP College of Fellows!



Induction into the AICP College of Fellows is the highest honor awarded by the American Institute of Certified Planners, recognizing planners whose exceptional and sustained contributions have advanced the profession and strengthened communities. Fellows are long-standing AICP members recognized for excellence in professional practice, teaching and mentoring, research, and community leadership. Congratulations to Ben Frost, FAICP, and Jeff Levine, FAICP!

The Class of 2026 Fellows was formally inducted during a ceremony at the 2026 National Planning Conference (NPC) in Detroit on Sunday, April 26, at 3 PM. NNECAPA representatives enjoyed celebrating Mr. Frost and Mr. Levine at the induction ceremony and look forward to doing so again at our annual conference to be held in Manchester, New Hampshire, beginning on October 21, 2026.

2026 AICP One Path



Interested in taking the AICP exam or submitting your professional planning experience in 2026? The [certification window](#) will open now. Join APA for one of their [AICP Office Hours](#) to learn about One Path to AICP. You'll also find helpful checklists at the bottom of the page to guide you through each step.

The [AICP Certification Scholarship](#) application window is open now, with recipients selected in June. Scholarships may be applied toward either the exam or the experience assessment.

NNECAPA also offers scholarships to help cover the cost of AICP study materials and exam fees. [Apply here.](#)

CM Grace Period Ending Soon

The 2024–2025 AICP Certification Maintenance (CM) reporting period closed on December 31. The extended CM grace period closes on May 31, 2026.



Host a NNECAPA Webinar

Have a project, idea, or topic you'd love to share? Lead a conversation with planners across the region! NNECAPA webinars are held on Thursdays from 12:00 to 1:00 PM. Please contact pdo@nnecapa.org if you're interested in presenting.

As part of our effort to provide more opportunities for professional development of members, we are planning a 90-minute media training webinar this fall. It's tentatively scheduled for **Friday, September 18th** at **noon**.

Save the Date!

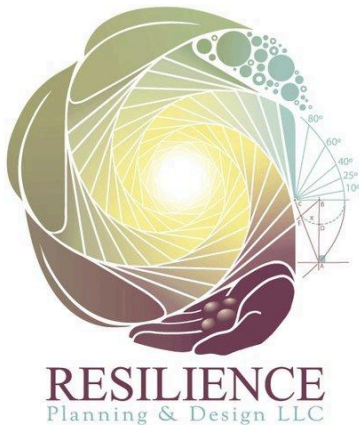
The session will be with experts from a public relations firm and will include how to work with reporters; how to promote good projects; how to respond to criticism; and other things that we planners deal with all the time.

Watch for registration to open this summer with more details. This will be a special opportunity for NNECAPA members only. We are planning to offer CM credits for the webinar as well!



As always, please feel free to contact Dayea Shim at pdo@nnecapa.org with any questions!

Thanks to our Northern New England Conference Sponsors!



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[View the Benefits](#)

Become a Member!

Become a member of the NNECAPA Association and join your 500+ colleagues throughout Northern New England. Membership connects you to planners throughout NNE, providing peer-to-peer networking and support, and receive a reduced rate registration to our annual events.

[Join APA Membership](#) - Variable Fees

[Individual NNECAPA Chapter Membership](#) - \$90.00

[Retired/Student/Lifetime Membership](#) - \$25.00

2026 Northern New England Planning Conference

Wednesday October 21 - Friday October 23, 2026, DoubleTree by Hilton, Manchester, NH

Conference Registration is now open! [Register Today!](#)

[Check out the Agenda](#)

There are six mobile session opportunities this year. Registration for each mobile session is required. Each session is first come, first serve with a maximum number of participants. The primary contact of the mobile session will reach out 2 weeks before the conference with more details. Below is a link to the descriptions of the mobile sessions.

[Mobile Sessions](#)

We are looking for one or two individuals with AV & IT expertise to assist us during the conference. There are specific times we would need assistance but otherwise you can participate in sessions and networking. Complementary conference registration which includes all meals. Stipends may also be included.

[Check out the Job Description](#)

Any questions or general conference inquiries to Nancy Kilbride, NNECAPA Administrator, at eventsyourwaynh22@gmail.com.



Book your room at the Double Tree by Hilton Manchester Downtown, 700 Elm Street, Manchester NH 03101

Room rates: regular room king and double: \$174 + tax = \$188.79 per night

Corner room - King only: \$194.00 + tax = \$210.49 per night

On the reservation website, confirm your check-in and check-out date. You are able to book rooms at the above rates for 3 days prior and 3 days after the conference. Overnight guest parking: \$8.00 per night.

[Double Tree Reservation Link](#)

Sponsorships

Each year the Northern New England Planning Conference provides businesses and organizations with an opportunity to build on existing relationships with the planning community and establish new ones, reaching out across New England to promote their services. We expect to have over 300 planners and related professionals from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as from Southern New England. We have three different [sponsor levels](#) which are very affordable and will provide you exposure. [Become a Sponsor Today!](#)

Contact [Nancy Kilbride](#) for more details.

Save the Dates for Future Northern NE Planning Conferences:



2027 Conference, October 24 - 27, DoubleTree Burlington, Vermont

2028 Conference, November 1 - 3, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Maine

National Planning Conference: Detroit 2026

A small but amazing group of planners from our chapter made it to Detroit this April for the National Planning Conference! While I spent much of my time in meetings, I heard other members of the group were able to do some exploring of the region before the conference started in earnest.

One of the highlights of the conference is what seems to be becoming a traditional gathering of all four New England APA chapters – as well as planners from the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning. This year, thanks to the Connecticut chapter's organizational prowess, we met at the Checker Bar near the conference site. It's always great to see not just our northern New England colleagues that we don't see often enough, but also our friends from "down south." Here at NNECAPA we started this tradition last year in Denver, and I think it's a winner.



One of my personal highlights of the conference was a mobile workshop to Livernois Avenue, also known as the “Avenue of Fashion.” Despite that lofty name, the area we visited is more like one of the many commercial districts in New England cities that have struggled a bit post-COVID. We learned about strategies that the City of Detroit and local business non-profits are taking to revitalize the area, and visited several businesses that are examples of the success of these efforts. Even in a big city like Detroit, there’s lots to learn that we can apply in our communities.

Dover, NH Receives the APA Economic Development Division Award



At APA's National Planning Conference in Detroit, the City of Dover, NH received the APA Economic Development Division Award in the Innovation-Implementation category for the Cochecho Waterfront Project, a long-term re-development initiative transforming a former wastewater treatment plant and municipal dump into a vibrant mixed-use waterfront district.

The project reclaims 29 acres of environmentally constrained brownfield land and reconnects it to Dover’s historic downtown, expanding the downtown footprint by about 12 percent. Early phases have added approximately \$2.5 million in privately held land value to the tax rolls, with future building assessments expected to exceed \$19 million. The City has also generated about \$3.4 million through land sales.

A centerpiece of the redevelopment is Nebi Park, a three-acre public waterfront park with gathering spaces, a pavilion, and improved access to the Cochecho River. Environmental improvements include shoreline stabilization, flood-resistant infrastructure, stormwater systems, and native landscaping designed to address sea-level rise and flooding.

The project reflects more than 30 years of planning and collaboration among the City, developers, contractors, and community stakeholders including a volunteer committee known as the Cochecho Waterfront Development Advisory Committee. Residential occupancy began in early 2026, with Nebi Park opening in July 2026. This project serves as a great example of a public private partnership between the City of Dover, CWDAC and Cathartes, the development team.



Start Thinking About NNECAPA Award Nominations!

Chapter awards recognize and celebrate planners, their work, and contributions to the field of planning throughout our region. We're looking for your help identifying communities that have adopted plans or innovative projects that can serve as a model across our states, as well as professional and citizen planners who are doing this great work and advancing the profession in our area. We also recognize members with sustained contributions to the Chapter and the profession through the Planner Emeritus award.

This year NNECAPA is adding a new award category: Great Places in Northern New England. Modeled after APA's sunsetted program, Great Places in America, NNECAPA is excited to recognize the neighborhoods, streets, and public spaces that make communities stronger and bring people together through good planning.

Nominations will be accepted for Plan of the Year, Project of the Year, Professional Planner of the Year, Citizen Planner of the Year, Great Places in Northern New England, and Planner Emeritus beginning in mid June.

Learn more by [visiting the NNECAPA website](#) and contact the Awards Committee at awards@nnecapa.org with any questions.

Grapevine

Maine



Town of Bowdoinham Awarded \$750,000 Federal Grant to Advance Merrymeeting Trail

The Town of Bowdoinham is pleased to announce it has been awarded a \$750,000 federal Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program (RTA) grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to support planning, design, and final engineering for a portion of the Merrymeeting Trail. This highly competitive national program selected just 49 projects out of 799 applications nationwide and the only award in New England.

The grant requires no local match and will fund early-stage engineering, design, and public engagement for an approximately 8.5-mile multi-use trail segment connecting downtown Bowdoinham to downtown Richmond. This work will position the project to pursue future construction funding and advance long-standing regional goals to improve safety, mobility, and economic vitality.

“This award marks a major milestone for the Merrymeeting Trail allowing us to move from vision to implementation by completing the detailed design and engineering needed to make the trail construction-ready after nearly two decades of planning and collaboration.” Says Bowdoinham’s Director of Planning & Development, Yvette Meunier.

The Merrymeeting Trail is a critical economic development and transportation investment for Bowdoinham, Richmond, and the surrounding region. The fully completed Merrymeeting Trail (33 miles) will link four downtowns, regionally connect to the Kennebec River Rail Trail to the north and the Androscoggin River Bicycle and Pedestrian Path to the south and close a 49-mile gap in the East Coast Greenway, a 3,000-mile national active transportation corridor. The Merrymeeting Trail will create a continuous regional route that attracts local users, destination tourists, and long-distance travelers—driving spending at downtown businesses, lodging, and services.

This is the largest single funding award the Merrymeeting Trail has received to date. Previous planning efforts were supported through smaller grants from MaineDOT, the former State Planning Office, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation.

The project timeline will be guided by the Town’s forthcoming contract with the U.S. Department of Transportation. Anticipated next steps include a Request for Proposals to select a consultant team, followed by approximately 12 months of preliminary design and 12 months of final engineering, with construction bidding as early as 2028–2029, subject to future funding and permitting.

More information and project updates are available at:

<https://www.bowdoinham.com/project/merrymeeting-trail>

For more information on the RTA please visit:

<https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/trumps-transportation-department-invests-over-54-million-rural-and-tribal>

The Town of Bowdoinham thanks its many partners and community members for their long-standing support and looks forward to advancing this transformative regional project.

Vermont

City of Montpelier wins Vernon Deines Award for Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Montpelier is excited to announce that they were awarded the Vernon Deines Award for Comprehensive Plan at this year's National Planning Conference in Detroit. The Vernon Deines

award is granted through the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Planning Division of the American Planning Association. The STaR award is given to an outstanding comprehensive plan or special project that addresses the development of a neighborhood, community, county, or region. Dr. Vernon P. Deines was a leader in the discipline of regional and community planning at Kansas State University, in the State of Kansas, and nationally, and is one of the original founding members of the STaR Division.

Developed over eight years, Montpelier's City Plan stands out as an accessible web-based plan, making it ideal for planners, decision-makers, and community members. The plan features ArcGIS Storymap chapters that illustrate planning goals and policies through interactive maps and graphics. Montpelier's City Plan is a shining example of a comprehensive plan that covers a range of topics important to the community, including access to housing, flood mitigation, community services, and public safety.

This award follows similar honors from the Vermont Planners Association and NNECAPA for Comprehensive Plan of the year. Planning Director Mike Miller would like to thank the incredible work of Julia Randall, Associate Community & Recreation Planner at SE Group, City of Montpelier Communication Coordinator Evelyn Prim, and Assistant Planning & Zoning Administrator Nick Gauthier. Without their contributions, this plan would not have been the success that it is today.

Learn more about the Montpelier City Plan 2025 at [Montpelier City Plan](https://smalltown.planning.org/community-outreach/awards/) and the Small Town and Rural Planning's STaR award on the website here:

<https://smalltown.planning.org/community-outreach/awards/>

Vermont's Updated Municipal Planning Manual: Best Practices and Pro Tips for Planners

With support from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), a team of consultants and regional planners was recruited in early 2025 to update the state's published guidance to municipalities to reflect recent landmark policy changes enacted by the Vermont legislature. These include:

- Act 47 (the HOME Act) in 2023 represents a sea change in land use planning policy, including eliminating single family zoning, and requiring municipalities to allow multi-family housing in all districts served by municipal water and wastewater. It also provided significant new funding to upgrade Vermont's aging housing rental stock, with grants of up to \$50,000 to homeowners to modernize their properties.
- Act 181 in 2024 revisited Vermont's historic Act 250 state land use law (first enacted in 1970) to devolve significant authority down from the state level to regional planning commissions and municipalities. It created interim exemptions from state jurisdiction for priority housing projects in towns, villages and along transit corridors, and set in motion a process for regional planners to work with communities to set housing targets for towns and cities.

Working with a team from ACCD and regional planners throughout early 2025, including Alison Low from the Northern VT Development Association and Devon Neary from Rutland Regional Planning Commission, three consultants (including Emily Lewis and Dan Mallach of DuBois & King in Randolph, VT and Larry Lewack in Burlington) delivered completely revised and updated versions of the three modules of Vermont's Municipal Planning Manual. These resources, now published & available online [at this link](#), are geared towards the needs of municipal and regional planners, Planning Commissions, Development Review Boards and Zoning Administrators across Vermont.

These new resources will help Vermont's town and city planners and volunteers to understand and apply best practices to improve their community's capacity to meet the current housing crisis, and how to update their municipal plans and zoning bylaws to reflect recent state-level policy changes. A particular focus of these revisions was to create user-friendly, jargon-free materials that could serve as templates for rural communities that don't have the resources to hire full-time professional staff (e.g. most of Vermont's rural towns) to drive and implement effective municipal plans and zoning updates.

While these guidelines are based upon Vermont law, the planning outreach methodology and most of the sample zoning bylaws included are applicable to communities across the region with a shared interest in updating their local plans and permitting rules to improve housing access and affordability—an urgent priority in every New England state.

Here are the three updated modules, [available for download](#):

Module 1: [The Municipal Plan](#) (PDF). A step-by-step blueprint for citizen planners to create local plans that matter.

- Helps communities make plans that are user-friendly and concise;
- Presents a new approach to creating a vision that clearly identifies where and what communities want to maintain, evolve, or transform;
- Focuses on what matters most — identifying the actions that will turn that vision into reality.

Module 2: [State Designation Programs](#) (PDF). Guidance and case studies on state of Vermont designation programs and how they help communities achieve more vibrant communities.

- Outlines the changes in the state designation process for villages and downtowns from Act 181 (2024);
- Provides a summary of the two current designations (Centers and Neighborhoods), along with case studies;
- Explains the benefits of state designation, including increased access to state grants, funding for municipal infrastructure, and tax credit programs.

Module 3: **[Enabling Better Places Through Incremental Local Bylaw Reform](#)** (PDF). Small but powerful steps to reform local zoning and increase housing opportunities in downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods.

- Discusses the benefits of updating local zoning bylaws to improve housing access and affordability in your community;
- Provides examples of topics to update, and sample bylaw language;
- Introduces subdivision standards for new developments.

Planners have a vested interest in making our processes more accessible and transparent to our communities, and in reducing permitting barriers to building more diverse and affordable housing. With the publication of these manuals, and additional resources such as the [Homes for All: 802 Homes Catalog](#), Vermont is leading the way to help planners, citizen boards and municipal officials 'do the right thing.' We hope these materials are useful across the region.

For more information, contact:

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