



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

CAROLINA PLANNING

PLANNERS' FORUM

2011 OUTSTANDING PSO AWARDS

Best Practices

Divided Cities and Regions



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Best Practices

Planners' Forum, the student planning organization of the Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP) at UNC Chapel Hill is submitting Divided Cities and Regions for consideration of the APA Outstanding PSO – Best Practice Award.

Planners' Forum advocates for the interests, needs, and concerns of the students. Through several sub-committees, Planners' Forum envisions, organizes, implements, and evaluates various departmental initiatives including career support, community service and educational speaker events. Planners' Forum also works to strengthen DCRP's relationship with other academic departments and student groups at UNC.

Divided Cities and Regions was planned and executed entirely by students from Planners' Forum. This impressive symposium featured nationally recognized academics, practicing professionals, and student presentations centered on consensus building and conflict resolution. This two-day event put DCRP students on display, highlighting their ability to conceive and organize an event that attracted more than 100 attendees and helped educate practicing planners about best practices in resolving disputes.



Description

Planners' Forum organized and hosted *Divided Cities and Regions*, a two-day symposium on November 3rd and 4th on conflict planning. Seven speakers attended this event, including four professors from around the country, renowned for their work on negotiation and conflict resolution. In addition, three practitioners spoke about their experience with conflict planning at the community-level. Finally, four UNC-CH students presented case studies of disputes and resolutions in the context of real estate development. The first day of the conference featured a Skills Session, where attendees learned about negotiation tactics, and performed them in hypothetical cases. More than 100 people attended the conference, including students from UNC and Duke, professors, and planning practitioners. Attendees travelled from around North Carolina, Ohio, Maryland and Canada.

Divided Cities was a result of a year of organizing and it received support from UNC and the Duke-UNC Rotary Center for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution. The idea for this event can be traced back to a UNC student's bus trip to a Palestinian farm in the West Bank. There, road access, supply of water and electricity, and permissible uses for property--the most basic planning questions--are all determined by religion and nationality. This divisive planning is a common obstacle to planning and development in many countries, regions, and communities. Cities around the world constantly address division in the process of development and the consequences of division on their residents and neighborhoods. The symposium covered the border policy between San Diego and Tijuana, much needed natural hazards planning for coastal minority communities, and the procedural exclusion of immigrants in the United States.



Process and Success

Planners' Forum began planning *Divided Cities* after a group of students enrolled in a course on Development Dispute Resolution in the Department of City and Regional Planning in the Spring of 2011. These students were interested in learning more about conflict planning at the regional and national level, and wanted to learn from both academics and practitioners. In addition, because the skills learned in this course were so applicable to planners' roles, students wanted to share the education with a larger audience. The website for the symposium, conflictplanning.org, was created over the summer of 2011, and the event was marketed to planning programs across the country, on numerous planning list serves, and through NC-APA. Over the summer and fall of 2011, seven speakers committed: three from North Carolina, two from California, one from Massachusetts, and one from Georgia. Discussion provoked by this symposium will be published in the Carolina Planning Journal.

Divided Cities and Regions drew more than 100 attendees ranging from students to faculty to planning practitioners. The symposium's content is applicable to planners in a variety of roles and geographic locations. The understanding of the nature of conflict and the development of the skills to facilitate resolutions are both valuable to planners, and enable them to become more adept at mitigating tenuous situations among key stakeholders. In a time when planning practitioners and academics alike are questioning the relevance of the profession, speakers at this event asserted that the role of the planner is crucial, particularly when he or she has the ability to create a neutral venue for negotiation.



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT
CHAPEL HILL

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December 2, 2011

Members of the 2012 Planning Students Awards Committee
American Planning Association
205 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Members of the Awards Committee: **Re: Divided Cities and Regions Symposium**

I strongly support the nomination of the Divided Cities and Regions Symposium conducted by the Planners Forum at the Department of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for an American Planning Association student organization Best Practices Award. This remarkable two-day event was conceived and executed entirely by student members of the Planners Forum. It is an outstanding example of professional communication and public participation, bringing a national slate of academics and practitioners to the UNC campus for an interactive presentation and discussion of best practices in consensus building and dispute resolution.

During our course in Development Dispute Resolution last spring, the students approached me to ask whether it might be possible to organize a symposium around the topic of Divided Cities and Regions. They wanted to extend their study of this topic and to move beyond textbook information to include the writers of the published materials and those who were applying the methods and techniques of consensus building in actual settings. I replied that it would be possible if they could raise funding for travel and honoraria and handle the logistics of a meeting hall, publicity, and speaker travel and lodging. Since these are not small requirements, I was not sure if the students could manage them.

They responded with complete confidence and amazing entrepreneurial skills. They raised the necessary money, publicized the event, handled the registration and logistics, and took part in the ensuing lively debates and discussions. Not only did they bring in three nationally-known academics—Larry Susskind of MIT, Scott Bollens of UC-Irvine, and Mike Elliott of

Georgia Tech, but they also enlisted three practitioners who are dealing with challenging disputes in their work.

I played a role as advisor to the student symposium organizers, primarily in helping them contact the speakers and frame the questions and issues to be covered. I have been involved in many such efforts during my academic and professional career. This one was easily the most creative and fun of them all. The students provided the ideas, the energy, and commitment to pull it together and to introduce fresh ideas and viewpoints.

This symposium drew much favorable attention to city and regional planning, and the roles of planners in consensus building and dispute resolution. Faculty and students from a number of disciplines participated, along with attendees from other locations. The quality of the talks and discussions was excellent. Everyone, even the seasoned practitioners, learned from the event.

I would not hesitate to say that the Planners Forum's Divided Cities and Regions Symposium is the leading example of student involvement in dispute resolution and consensus building outreach that I have encountered in some forty years of teaching city and regional planning. It clearly merits a Best Practices Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DM Godschalk", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David R. Godschalk FAICP
Professor Emeritus



December 8, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

The North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (NCAPA) is a nonprofit, public interest and research organization representing over 1,400 practicing planners, officials, students and citizens involved with urban, rural, and regional planning issues throughout North Carolina. As an education based organization our mission is to provide leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change.

The Divided Cities and Regions Symposium hosted by the students of UNC-Chapel Hill's Department of City and Regional Planning held on Nov 3rd and 4th helped to advance the mission of NCAPA by providing planning students and professionals with tools to address community challenges involving conflict resolution. The two-day symposium was very successful due to the significant time and effort that Planners' Forum students committed to conceive, fundraise, organize, and market the event. The presentations and training on conflict resolution and successful negotiation were valuable to planners across the state enhancing their skills to become more adept at mitigating tenuous situations among key stakeholders.

Seven speakers presented at this event, all renowned for their work on negotiation and conflict resolution, in addition to three impressive student presentations. Additionally, the event provided hands-on training in conflict resolution, where attendees learned negotiation tactics and had an opportunity to perform them in hypothetical cases. More than 100 people attended the conference, including students from the Triangle, area professors, and planning practitioners from around North Carolina and other states.

Please accept this letter as formal acknowledgement of the extensive efforts by Planners' Forum to organize, promote, provide logistics support for this event and facilitation of the panel discussion.

Sincerely,

Fleming A. El-Amin II, AICP
NCAPA President