

PRIVATE PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES



American Planning Association
Private Practice Division

Making Great Communities Happen

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Summer Is a Time for Planning

Summer: vacations, swimming, beach, barbecue, sunshine, Seattle 2015. Summer is all these things – but Seattle 2015? Didn't we just get back from Atlanta?

It's true, Atlanta is not far behind us – but the session proposal dead-lines are imminent for the National Planning Conference in Seattle next spring.

As you may know, each APA division sponsors a by-right educational session and facilitated discussion at the national conference. It's a great way to get your perspective and ideas to a national audience – and bypass the tight competition in the general session proposals! Past topics have included a focus on small firms, consultants-client relationships, the future of planning consulting, and how to start a new consulting firm.

July 31 is the deadline for division by-right session proposals. Just go to <https://www.planning.org> and click on "National Conference" under the education tab. There, you will see the link to session proposals. Make sure to check of "Private Practice Division" for a by-right session proposal for the division.

And speaking of conferences and this newsletter, we have two new volunteers to welcome to division leadership! Our new conference session coordinator for PPD is Shai Roos, a planning consultant based in Dallas, Texas; our new newsletter editor is Dale Powers, a planning consultant out of Clear Lake, Minnesota. We are delighted to have their talents to add to our core of hard-working volunteers for the division.

Have a great summer!

Best wishes,

Deborah L. Myerson, AICP is sole proprietor at Deborah Myerson Planning & Development Consulting. She can be reached at dmyerson@yahoo.com.



DON'T FORGET!!

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The challenge for the planner is to resist

- **the fascination with high rise;**
- **density requirements too low to support public transportation;**
- **determining density levels based on traffic figures alone**
- **the “style” of the moment**



DENSITY: A CHALLENGE TO PLANNERS

BY CAROL THOMAS, FAICP

THOMAS PLANNING SERVICES

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

What is density? Planners usually consider density to be the number of dwelling units or the number of persons per acre.

What is too dense? What is not dense enough? Why do we care? What do we advise communities? For over six decades I have been wrestling with density issues seeking the answers to these questions. In recent years many planners have joined the search for the answers.

What we know is that the answer relates to many factors, including utilities public transportation, and distances between household types (for the latter, see studies of Dr. Irving A. Spaulding, University of Rhode Island, which were conducted as early as 1973), income, vistas, life style and municipal costs.

We have determined that extremely low density is often desired by persons whom we call “loners” or persons who may have a psychiatric problem and the result is a high rate of suicide. The other extreme, high density, is often associated with high crime rates, although we know this is ameliorated somewhat by high incomes and/or educational levels of the residents. High density in high rises where vistas are blocked by other high rises has a high rate of problems as do high rises occupied by persons with low income who do not get away at will for vacations. High rise and high density with high incomes and education levels have fewer problems. In addition we know that alcoholism and suicide, including teen suicide, relate to the extremes of density.

We also know that the cost of municipal services relates to density and that the cost is highest on the extremes. There are other indicators, but it is often impossible to assemble appropriate data (e.g., police often do not wish to release crime rate information). Over sixty years ago as a graduate student I began working part time for Burnham Kelly, the grandson of Daniel Burnham. My first assignment related to determining a suitable lot size for a Boston suburb. We looked at lot sizes needed to accommodate a well and on site septic or one and not the other. This resulted in various publications on determining lot size, prepared by the United States Soil Conservation Service and myself, which included recommended lot sizes for different soil types based on the ability of the soils to accommodate on site wells and septic and/or a combination of on site and public service.

Gradually we added other factors: alcoholism and suicide being the most important, followed by cost of services, which was the first issue public officials wanted to address, and then by trips per person per day. Meanwhile, planners for the most part established a density figure that sounded good, e.g., one unit per acre, or a figure that continued the current pattern or did not require expensive infrastructure. Now we know that we not only need to consider the factors we did previously, but also many other factors, including services for the elderly, one car per driver instead of one per dwelling unit, places to congregate, urban design, mass transit, walking, companionship, working at home and cost..

So what do we do? Many planners follow the existing pattern to the extent feasible. Some try to direct density levels by selecting catchy phrases for new development. and/or reacting to developers’ proposals. Many place reliance on traffic figures.

Indeed we should build on existing patterns and user preferences. We should consider the character of existing development. In addition we should consider densities which reinforce a sense of place, which are easy to serve, which encourage walking, and which provide opportunities for companionship and for working at home (see article by this author in a Newsletter of the Private Practice Division .)

The challenge for the planner is to resist the fascination with high rise; density requirements too low to support public transportation; determining density levels based on traffic figures alone; the “style” of the moment. Instead the planner should encourage densities, which are economical, community friendly, easy to serve with utilities, and walker friendly.



PLANNING CAREERS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

Allan Hodges, FAICP, who graduated from Michigan State University with an urban planning Master's degree in 1967, gave a lecture to the MSU School of Planning, Design and Construction's Urban & Regional Planning graduate and undergraduate students on February 11, 2014. Allan is the Senior Planning Manager at Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) in Boston, MA, and has had careers in both the public and private planning sectors, and structured his talk on a comparison between the two.

Allan started his career in the public sector, working for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, before moving into the private and public sectors in the Washington, DC area. He joined PB in Boston in 1980.

In his lecture, he compared the pros and cons of the private and public sectors of various fields, including choice of coworkers, financial reward, job satisfaction, choice of project and quality of clients, among many.

In his comparison, both sectors appeared evenly matched. While in the private sector one could have more choices of projects, clients, location and so on, planners in the public sector have the opportunity to reap the personal reward of serving a community for extended periods of time, where they can remain involved in projects over long periods of time, rather than moving on to the next one immediately.

With the economy still struggling, the question of availability of funding arose, to which Allan said that both sectors can suffer equally. While budget cuts and politics affect the public sector, the private sector is more susceptible to communities' willingness and ability to retain private planning consultant firms.

To illustrate exactly how large a range of projects is available for planners in the private sector, Allan talked about a few of the biggest ones he has worked on over the years. They have ranged from locations, such as Hawaii to Boston, and from environmental impact statements for the Big Dig, Boston's underground freeway, to corridor analyses in Indiana and Illinois, to downtown revitalization projects on the East Coast.

While one might think that there would be a greater financial reward in the private sector, Allan stated that this is not necessarily the case. Big cities very much need competent planners, and will pay accordingly.

Being familiar with Michigan, Allan was asked what he sees in Detroit's future. With its vibrant culture and rich history, he envisions opportunities for planners to explore new ways of working with the City, by continuing with trends like urban farming, changing urban environments to rural and increasing housing production especially near the new Woodward Avenue streetcar under design. Of course the big question is how to fashion a new governing structure in Detroit that will effectively plan and provide for the future; a task well beyond urban planning.

When asked which sector a student should enter immediately upon graduation, Allan advised his audience to start with the private sector. There, he said, newcomers to the workforce would learn to be competitive in their field, and how to make themselves billable. Once these skills are acquired, a transition into the public sector could be much easier than the other way around.



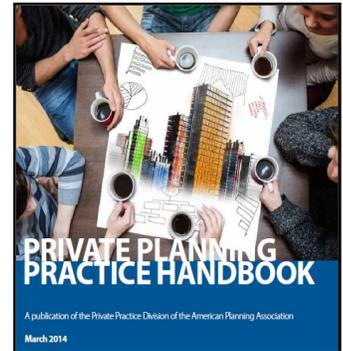
Allan A. Hodges

In (Allan's) comparison, both sectors appeared evenly matched. While in the private sector one could have more choices of projects, clients, location and so on, planners in the public sector have the opportunity to reap the personal reward of serving a community for extended periods of time, where they can remain involved in projects over long periods of time, rather than moving on to the next one immediately.

Private Practice Planning Handbook

The APA Private Practice Division has produced **an exclusive Private Practice Division member-only benefit**: the *Private Planning Practice Handbook*, an outstanding publication with insightful information for prospective, novice, and seasoned planning consultants. We are proud to have this exciting publication to offer division members.

Topics include as “Organizing the Planning Consulting Business,” “Project Management,” “The Personal Side of Consulting,” and many useful templates, including a sample agreement for services. Division members may receive their PDF copy by sending a request to info_private@planning.org



SHAI ROOS, AICP APPOINTED PPD NATIONAL CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

The APA Private Practice Division is pleased to announce the appointment of PPD member Shai Roos, AICP, as PPD’s National Conference Coordinator. Shai recently started her own planning consulting firm, known as SJR Planning Consultants. Her professional experience consists of a mixture of public and private sector planning.

Shai recently completed a 2-year term on the Executive Committee of the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Planning Division. As Vice Chair of Conferences and Programs, Shai was instrumental in making STaR’s national conference experience exciting and relevant. PPD is fortunate to have Shai as its National Conference Coordinator, and Shai is looking forward to working with PPD members to make Seattle a fantastic experience!

Shai can be reached at sroos12@hotmail.com.



SHAI ROOS, AICP

DALE POWERS, AICP APPOINTED PPD NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The APA Private Practice Division is pleased to announce the appointment of PPD member Dale Powers, AICP, as PPD’s Newsletter Editor. Dale has a solo practice concentrating on zoning administration, blight elimination, and code enforcement based in Clear Lake, MN, 50 miles northwest of Minneapolis. His professional experience consists of a variety of public sector positions (city/county planner, zoning administrator, city clerk, city administrator) and elected positions (Clear Lake City Council 1998-2002; 2013-present).

From 2005-2014, Dale held various leadership positions with the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Planning Division, including Division Chair, Past Chair, and Vice Chair of Communications, where he was responsible for editing the Division’s newsletter and maintaining the Division’s social media presence.

Dale can be reached at dale.thepowersgroup@consultant.com.



DALE POWERS, AICP

PPD MEMBER LAURIE B. MARSTON INDUCTED INTO THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PLANNERS

The Private Practice Division offers our congratulations to PPD member Laurie Marston as a new member of College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP). Marston was one of 40 certified planners inducted into the College this year at the 2014 APA National Planning Conference in Atlanta. Marston is planning consultant with Laurie Marston and Associates in Highland Park, IL, and technical advisor for the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at De Paul University in Chicago.

Marston is a prominent Illinois planner who has demonstrated community service and leadership through extensive training, influential publications and an impressive record of civic volunteerism. With the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University, Marston developed and conducted 40 educational programs for planners in the Chicago region. With the Illinois Chapter of APA and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Marston organized and presented 30 Plan Commission training workshops. Marston led the creation of two influential publications, one about adding green elements to urban design and another celebrating the 1909 Burnham Plan of Chicago. (Partially taken from her bio on www.planning.org/faicp).



Laurie B. Marston, FAICP

Congratulations, Laurie!



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR FALL NEWSLETTER

by Dale Powers, AICP, Newsletter Editor

As you can gather, I haven't received many articles for publication. Since the newsletter is distributed electronically, there literally is no limit to the size of the newsletter. PPD members want to read about your experiences, and I know there are a lot of stories to tell. So, get your pens out (OK, sit at your laptop) and start writing! Photos accompanying your articles are especially welcome.

If you have any questions—or to send copy—contact Editor Dale Powers at dale.thepowersgroup@consultant.com or 320-493-8930.

DEADLINE: August 31, 2014

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