



**American Planning Association**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

## **APA Board of Directors – Development Plan Initiatives**

### **BOARD MEETING**

**DATE:** April 26, 2014

**TO:** APA Board of Directors

**FROM:** APA Consumers of Planning/Engaged Citizens Task Force  
Rodger Lentz, AICP, Chair

**SUBJECT:** **APA Consumers of Planning/Engaged Citizens Task  
Force Task Force Update**

### **ADOPTED POLICY:**

No

### **TYPE OF REPORT:**

☐ Action

☒ Information

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

☐ Yes

☒ No

### **FISCAL NOTE:**

All activities will be funded from the FY 2015 and future budgets.

Related to Development Plan Goal/Strategy:

1.1 Promote planning to emphasize its value and role in good governance and economic development.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Board accept this informational report.

### **ACTION REQUESTED OF THE BOARD:**

That the Board accept this informational report.

### **Task Force Purpose/Charge**

This task force is charged to develop a strategy for APA to meaningfully engage citizens who are not professional planners, including elected and appointed officials, public agency managers, business leaders, and citizen activists – strategy may include role of social media, promotion of APA website, training academies (with universities).

## Background

APA's communications strategy has long focused on moving community leaders into positions of stronger support for planning. We use Great Places in America to highlight the outcomes of good planning, and National Community Planning Month to highlight the value and accomplishments of planners through a program of local events, outreach and public service announcements. We need to continue to find more ways to engage with community leaders and engage them in the organization leading the planning movement. We need to continue to find out what consumers of planning need from the profession.

The task force's preliminary thoughts are focused in these areas. In order to more fully develop these concepts, we recommend that more work be done to explore these issues, by APA and its Chapters and Divisions:

## Outreach to Elected and Appointed Officials

Begin development of formal outreach and partnership building with allied professional organizations such as ICMA, US Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities and National Association of Counties to have APA recognized as a training partner for City and County Managers as well as elected and appointed officials for best practices for planning. Proposed responsible parties include, APA Board, APA Staff, City Planning and Management Division, and County Planning Division. State Chapters could be called on to build relationships with state level chapters of ICMA and State Municipal Leagues and County Associations.

To be effective, a work group should be created to develop what the partnership could entail and provide assistance to chapters for their local outreach efforts. This would include marketing APA to these allied associations, recommending specific programming and products for these audiences, and developing a strategy to attract members of these associations as allied members of APA.

## Diversity of Appointed Officials

APA should formally develop programs to attract more participation of women and people of color in the planning process. This process should be done in partnership with the Latinos in Planning Division, Planners in the Black Community Division, and Planning and Women Division. The goal is to attract a more diverse population to appointed positions on planning and planning related boards at the local level. Chapters could be encouraged to participate by offering training workshops or partnering with state organizations that already offer similar training/leadership development initiatives.

To implement this, a working group should be established to develop marketing materials, sample programs and outreach initiatives and develop a potential pilot program for training and leadership development for women and people of color.

These populations could be encouraged to participate with APA either through a planning board membership once they were appointed to a board/commission or could be a potential demographic for a “Friends of APA” membership category.

### **Youth Education**

Educational Outreach was discussed as a potential avenue to increase interest in planning and improve awareness among new generations. While APA should continue to find ways to have planning curriculum added to the classroom another approach could be more effective. APA should begin to develop new partnerships with organizations that are closely aligned with schools including 4-H, Boys and Girls Scouting, Youth Councils, and YMCA as just a few examples. These examples all offer civics and local government related educational programs which could offer an avenue for planners to volunteer their time to help reach these age groups to teach basic planning principles and the importance of creating communities of lasting value.

One outreach model we could look toward is the ICivics.org. Online games and lessons were developed to teach school aged youth about civics. While the site is more slanted towards national and state level civics lessons, there are a few local government examples on the site such as “Counties Work”. ICivics claims to have reached 40,000 educators and 3 million students across the country and that ICivics games have been played more than 10 million times. APA Staff, the Technology Division and partners in Academia could be charged with developing an idea that blends civics education with issues of community improvement, planning, community involvement and participation.

### **Engagement**

Engagement of citizens generally was examined by the task force as an area for improvement for APA. AARP was seen as a model with their products geared towards educating their members about the importance of place, being involved and the relationship of good planning to healthy outcomes with their “Livable Communities – Great Places for All Ages” initiative. Their content is specifically geared towards encouraging their members to get involved in local planning decision making. The task force suggests that APA Staff explore a formal partnership with AARP as well as other organizations that can be identified with similar levels of interest in training their constituencies about the value of creating livable communities. <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/>. This partnership could also be a spring board for a new membership category that is geared toward citizens passionate about planning outcomes such as a “Friends of APA” category.

### **How We Say It**

Communications Skills for professional planners is still an issue identified by the task force. Some of the non-professional planning members highlighted the need for the



profession to do more to engage interested individuals and groups and be sure to use language that did not intimidate persons that might be new to a planning process. This was especially important for immigrant populations that may not have originated from a country that valued citizen participation in governmental decisions. This idea was reinforced through our review of the 2012 national planning survey results. Similar surveys should become a regular part of the work of APA as a way to periodically examine the preferences of citizens around the country. That the findings of these surveys be incorporated in communications training not just for APA leadership, but the entire membership through a combination of webinars as well as national and state conference sessions.



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**APA CONSUMERS OF PLANNING/ENGAGED CITIZENS TASK FORCE ROSTER**

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RODGER LENTZ, AICP, CHAIR  
RON LITTLEFIELD, AICP, VICE CHAIR  
ANN BAGLEY, FAICP  
SHEDRICK COLEMAN  
CONNIE GALAMBOS MALLOY  
LUCAS LINDSEY  
GABRIEL METCALF  
DANIELLE DE-RUITER WILLIAMS  
ALEX CHEN  
MARY NEWSOM