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The Future of Intelligent Cities *Jennifer Evans-Cowley, AICP*

A recent *New York Times* article defined Big Data as “shorthand for advancing trends in technology that open the door to a new approach to understanding the world and making decisions.” Big Data has big promise. That promise is that all of this information will allow us as planners and officials to better understand the cities we plan for and ultimately allow us to build more intelligent cities.

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At a Hawthorne, New York, IBM lab, Jay Murdock demonstrates a traffic-management system. Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Singapore all use similar systems.



Joyce Dopken/the New York Times/Redux

For cities to be intelligent, planning agencies have to use data wisely while actively engaging with the public.

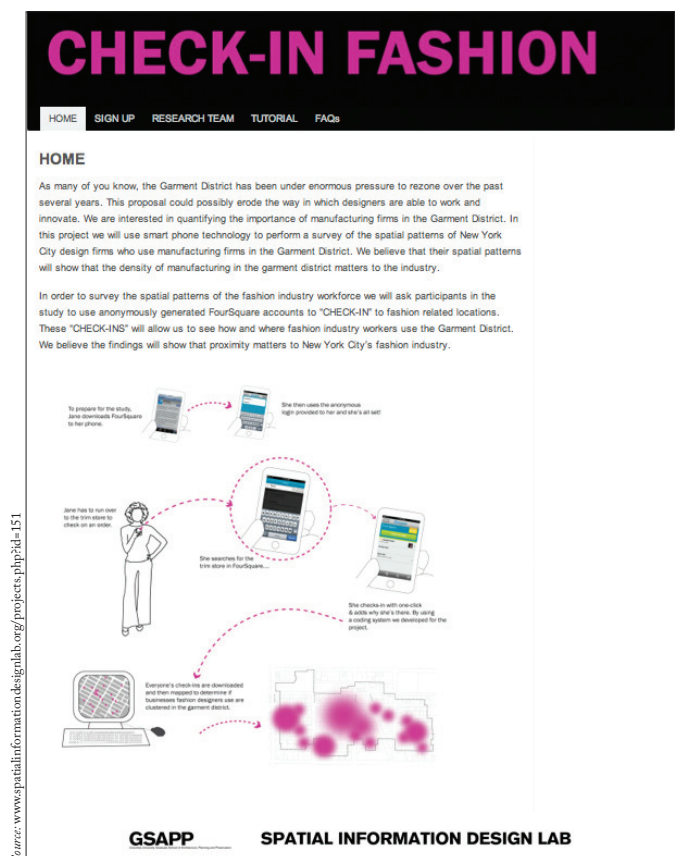
Planners and planning can play an important role in data collection. The public is becoming increasingly accustomed to sharing information. As members of the public, we in some cases view this as an opportunity to participate in public causes via our smartphones. San Francisco County, California, created a mobile app called CycleTracks in 2010. The app uses GPS to record users' bicycle trip routes and times and creates a map of their ride, which is sent to San Francisco County. At the end of the ride the rider can choose to input information about the purpose of the trip. Cyclists had a chance to win one of several \$50 iTunes giftcards for participating. The app was advertised through bicycling coalitions, university groups, and local media outlets. Almost 1,000 cyclists submitted at least one trip and more than 7,000 trips were submitted to the system in a six-month period. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority then used the CycleTracks data to create models that help predict where cyclists will ride and how changes in transportation infrastructure and land use impact the cycling community. After several months of data collection, planners used the data to develop a bike route choice model. This model became part of the regional travel demand model and was used in preparing the San Francisco Transportation Plan.

Foursquare allows users to check in through their smartphone when they arrive at a destination, and has the potential to be a powerful planning tool. Sarah Williams, now a researcher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was a planning professor at Columbia University when she undertook a study of the Garment District in New York City. This area is under significant redevelopment pressure, but redevelopment could erode the economic system in which fashion designers work with the various suppliers in the garment district. Garment industry workers were asked to check in at each fashion-related destination throughout the course of a week. The results showed that the density of manufacturing in the garment district matters to the industry. The purpose of this study was to help understand the potential economic impacts of rezoning the district to other uses.

Our cities are generating mounds of data, but more is out there. How do cities access data generated every time you swipe your grocery card, use your mobile phone, tweet, or otherwise provide electronic data? Our mobile phones are an incredibly rich source of data. The North Carolina Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has found this data highly valuable in its effort to plan the region's transportation system. The MPO used to send surveys to 5,000 households asking them to log their daily trips. This was time consuming, and only a portion of the households would respond. Further, respondents didn't always provide accurate information about their daily trips. In the most recent study reported in *The Atlantic Cities*, the MPO contracted with AirSage, a company with access to mobile phone data, to undertake an origin-destination study of travel patterns and traffic speeds. Using mobile phone data, the study was conducted with greater accuracy, allowing the MPO to understand how far people commute, where the common work nodes are located, and where transportation investment could provide the greatest benefit.

In my own work, I've used Big Data to assist in understanding public sentiment. In a project analyzing 50,000 tweets about transportation in Austin, Texas, we were able to understand how large volumes of tweets expressed sentiment about modes of transportation, for example positive expressions about cycling opportunities and frustration over traffic congestion at key nodes in the city. These tweets were used in the Austin's strategic mobility planning process.

Making large-scale datasets publicly available is intended both to help cities make better decisions and allow the public to take advantage of the data. Open data initiatives such as the one in Seattle offer the opportunity for application developers to create smartphone apps. For example, the number of mobile transit apps has exploded since transit agencies made their data available. Emily Badger's recent article in *The Atlantic Cities*, "Urban Planning in the Age of the iPhone," highlights mobile applications developed to help support information sharing and data collection.



Sarah Williams, now associated with MIT, mapped the density of manufacturing and industry workers' interactions in the New York City garment district using Foursquare.

While Big Data does offer big promise in supporting more intelligent cities, it's not a panacea. In a Twitter dialogue with me, Anthony Townsend of the Institute for the Future notes that Big Data "is a distraction from the really intractable problems with planning today." The focus can't be simply on what the data can show us; it has to be combined with the people side of planning. Otherwise, Big Data simply takes us back to the modernist, rational approach to planning that led to some of the problems we see today, argues Townsend. For cities to be intelligent, planning agencies have to use data wisely while actively engaging with the public.

Some Courts Are Rethinking Rules for Zoning Adult Entertainment Businesses

Alan C. Weinstein



Carolyn Thomas

Local governments must exercise care when zoning adult entertainment businesses. Below, I discuss what planning commissioners should know about how courts view locational restrictions on adult entertainment businesses and note recent rulings that may add some flexibility when courts review those restrictions.

While local governments cannot expressly prohibit adult businesses, they can lawfully impose significant locational restrictions on them, provided the restrictions are not a subterfuge to suppress or restrict those businesses based on distaste for their mode of expression. Such restrictions typically impose distancing requirements between adult businesses and uses such as schools, churches, residences, and parks or playgrounds, and also require that adult businesses be distanced from one another. Planning commissions need to insure that such distancing requirements are not so excessive that they effectively preclude adult businesses from locating in their community. The Supreme Court made that clear in *City of Renton v. Playtime Theatres, Inc.*, 475 U.S. 41 (1986), ruling that cities must “refrain from effectively denying [adult businesses] a reasonable opportunity to open and operate” within a community. There is no “one-size-fits-all” rule; a rural community could likely provide ample locations for adult businesses with a 1,500-foot distancing requirement while inner-ring suburbs may find that a mere 150-foot requirement provides only a handful of locations.

Five years before *Renton*, the Supreme Court had ruled in *Schad v. Borough of Mount Ephraim*, 452 U.S. 61 (1981), that a city could not

justify prohibiting adult businesses on the ground that adult entertainment was readily available in nearby communities. Thus, *Schad*, combined with *Renton*, says to local governments: You have an obligation to provide a reasonable opportunity for adult businesses to operate in your community, even if there are ample opportunities for adult businesses to operate in other communities nearby.

In the last few years, however, several federal courts have taken a second look at the *Schad/Renton* approach and questioned whether *every* community, regardless of circumstance or location, must provide sites for adult businesses. And the New Jersey Supreme Court has interpreted a state statute as normally requiring consideration of the sites available for adult businesses in nearby jurisdictions when the restrictions in any given community are challenged.

Two recent federal Court of Appeals decisions have, in *dicta*, questioned the *Schad* Court’s rejection of looking outside a local government’s boundaries to determine whether an opportunity exists for an adult business to locate. In *Illinois One News, Inc. v. City of Marshall, Illinois*, 477 F.3d 461 (7th Cir. 2007), the Seventh Circuit questioned why a local government must provide sites for an adult busi-

ness within its borders if sites are readily available for an adult business just outside the city’s boundaries.

The Ninth Circuit, in *Tollis, Inc. v. County of San Diego*, 505 F.3d 935 (9th Cir. 2007), noted that challenges to the number of sites might be viewed differently when the regulating government is a county versus a municipality. In *Tollis*, the court suggested that it was lawful to consider sites in municipalities located geographically within San Diego County, but, of course, outside the county’s zoning jurisdiction. In the court’s view, because the unincorporated area of San Diego County subject to county zoning was geographically large and sparsely populated, it was quite likely that most of the commercial property suitable for adult businesses would be located within municipalities and thus outside the territory controlled by the county government. In that circumstance, the court suggested “it is appropriate to recognize the likely availability of other locations within the same economic market in neighboring municipalities.” (*Tollis*, 505 F.3d at 942.)

The Supreme Court of New Jersey has not merely discussed the “same economic market” concept mentioned in *Tollis*, but, since 1999, has instructed the lower courts in New Jersey to apply it in determining whether a municipality has complied with a state

statute governing the location of adult businesses. This year, in *Borough of Sayreville v. 35 Club LLC*, 208 N.J. 491, 33 A3d 1200 (2012), the court extended that concept and ruled that the state’s lower courts could consider potential sites in “neighboring communities” that are beyond the borders of New Jersey. (*Id.*, 208 N.J. at 511, 33 A.3d at 1212.)

Finally, although *Renton* seemed to indicate that every city must provide locations for adult businesses, a Minnesota federal district court suggested that this obligation does not extend to communities that are exclusively residential. In *Peterson v. City of Florence*, 2011 WL 4640885 (D. Minn.), the court rejected a claim that it is unconstitutional for any city, regardless of its size, to adopt zoning that is entirely residential so as to provide no opportunity for an adult entertainment business to locate in the city. In short, the court ruled that an exclusively residential community has no obligation to provide sites for adult businesses.

The bottom line here is that while some courts are adopting a more flexible approach to zoning adult businesses, planning commissioners still need to use great care when considering locational restrictions on these businesses.



From left to right are Jeff Goulet, community planner; Melissa McLaughlin, Craig Engel, Brad Cambridge, Sue Didson, and Greg Greene, commissioners; Angela Wolosiewicz, AICP, planner. Not pictured are Ron Lieberman and Damon Garrett, commissioners, and Judy Bocklage, AICP, senior planner.

C Canton, Michigan, Planning Commission

Karen Finucan Clarkson

Consistency is key to the planning commission's success in the Charter Township of Canton, Michigan. "The commission has never made a decision inconsistent with the [comprehensive] plan—and that's phenomenal," says Jeffrey A. Goulet, Canton's community planner. "The plan is used to communicate goals and guide decisions."

"It's important to maintain consistency—to understand what was done in the past and how, if you make a change, it will affect the future. There must be a sense of fairness. With fairness comes respect," says Craig Engel, vice chair of the township's planning commission.

Although it lacks authority to make final determinations on anything other than the comprehensive plan, Canton's commission is a highly regarded and trusted advisor on planning and land-use matters. Township "trustees have enough on their agenda so, when it comes to new development or ordinance updates, they count on us to have gone through things with a fine-tooth comb," says Greg Greene, commission chairman.

"The board doesn't usually make changes," says Goulet, noting that trustees recognize that the commission's decisions reflect community aspirations. Those decisions often follow negotiations with developers. "That might mean requesting additional landscaping, buffers, or amenities. Most developers don't want to be held up and will do what the planning commission asks, provided it's within reason," he says.

"It's rare that project sponsors come before us and try to railroad an inferior product," says Greene. "They know we're looking for projects with elements that will benefit the community." One of those elements is compatibility. "We always ask ourselves, 'What will this look like to the rest of the community?' Compatibility is more subjective but we feel it's important to consider as we grow as a community."

The planning commission's seven members are appointed by the township supervisor and ratified by the trustees. One member must be township trustee; another must sit on the Zoning Board of Appeals. "As a result of those liaisons, we have three boards communicating well with one another," says Goulet.

Planning commissioners serve three-year staggered terms with no limit on reappointment. "We try to get a broad spectrum of backgrounds and experiences as the commission is supposed to be representative of the entire 36 square-mile township," says Goulet.

While some have prior knowledge of the built environment, others have only a passion for community service. "We require new commissioners to go through the [APA] Michigan Chapter training program," says Goulet. "Some go beyond that." Engel, the commission liaison to the zoning board of appeals, opted for a two-month citizen-planner course through Michigan State University Extension.

While commissioners receive a \$65-per-meeting stipend, they are expected "to drive the community and look at sites to gain perspective and understand the context of applications," says Goulet. "That understanding helps them come up with questions that will pull out the intent of the developer and make decisions that reflect the community's wishes."

Looking to Canton's Future

IN THE THROES OF UPDATING ITS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, the planning commission in the Charter Township of Canton, Michigan, will pay close attention to the new census data and trend analysis prepared by the municipality's Planning Services Division. In Canton, "the plan drives decision making," says Jeffrey A. Goulet, Canton's community planner, "so it needs to reflect community needs and desires."

Michigan law requires comprehensive plan updates every five years. "We're looking at adjustments in density limits or changes that will allow more or less flexibility in order to drive development in the right direction," says Goulet. Still, he adds, "we don't see many changes to the future land-use map."

While residential development has dramatically decreased over the past few years, demand is slowly rising. So, during the plan update, the commission will "look at density levels and the type of product to determine where development is best suited. . . . Our master plan dovetails very closely with the utility master plan to make sure we don't get in trouble from a public utility standpoint," says Goulet.

Situated midway between Detroit and Ann Arbor, Canton is home to more than 90,000 people. The median household income—above \$80,000—makes the community attractive to retailers. IKEA, one of Canton's

largest employers, is among some 300-plus retail enterprises in the community. While there is some room for redevelopment in the central business district, it's in southern and southwestern Canton "along Michigan Avenue where there's a lot of open area and former farmland not being utilized," says Greg Greene, planning commission chairman. "If the economy starts picking up, we'll see a lot more residential there as well as retail and other business uses."

An improved economy might also lead to the revival of plans to build a hospital in Canton. "Given the population of the township, a major hospital would be most attractive. It's a 25- or 30-minute drive to the University of Michigan Hospital. So having one here is something we're working toward," says Craig Engel, planning commission vice chairman.

"We're always trying to maintain the right type of mix between industrial, retail, commercial, and residential," says Engel. "What we have in Canton is a well-maintained community with different industries and a housing stock of as high a quality as it can be. It's a very stable community."

The development of Cherry Hill Village, begun in 2000, complements the historic crossroads hamlet dating from the 19th century.



New Moon Visions, Milford, Michigan



Parks and Open Space in the Comprehensive Plan

Megan Lewis, AICP

Comprehensive plans provide a road map for communities for future development decisions. To truly be comprehensive, these plans need to also address conservation as well as development. Planning for parks and open space needs to be done intentionally and thoughtfully, to provide the balance between built and open areas. Today's development climate provides an opportunity for planning commissioners to be more thoughtful—and perhaps more creative—in the types of and locations for parks in their communities.

While these components are well-accepted parts of the planning process, parks and open space planning continue to be challenged by limited resources and lack of connection to communitywide needs. It still tends to be taken off the table if other issues are seen as higher priorities.

To help planning commissioners support parks and open space planning in their communities, this article provides some reasons to include these resources in comprehensive plans, explains how parks and open spaces help address other community issues, and discusses their role in other community plans. The sidebar on page 9 describes some of the emerging issues and approaches in park and open space planning.

Reasons to Include Parks and Open Space in a Comprehensive Plan

Typically developed to cover a long time horizon, often 20 years or more, a comprehensive plan is prepared for various reasons. *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, published in 2006 by John Wiley & Sons, provides the following intentions for preparing a comprehensive plan, which all have particular meaning as related to planning for parks and open spaces:

View the “Big Picture.” A comprehensive plan allows communities to look broadly at their key issues, and do so within the trends occurring in the larger region and the state. The context for parks and open space needs to be made in relation to what already exists and what is happening in the larger region. Large regional conservation efforts, for example, inform the need for park resources in adjacent communities.

Coordinate Local Decision Making. As a reference tool, a comprehensive plan should be the “go-to” document for decisions regarding locating, funding, and scheduling public improvements and revitalization actions. Because parks and open space require public expenditures and are key elements in revitalization, they need to be part of this important reference document.

Give Guidance to Landowners and Developers. The private sector should be able to use a comprehensive plan to understand the direction a community is heading and make informed decisions as a result. If a property has been identified as a priority for conservation or for programmed recreation use, this condition helps to inform how adjacent land might be developed (with applicable regulations also taken into consideration).

Establish a Sound Basis in Fact for Decisions. Development of a comprehensive plan involves extensive data collection and analysis. Performing this work for all community elements, including parks and open spaces, provides for overall efficiencies, as the comprehensive plan can be used as an approved data resource for future decisions—and often support grant applications to both governmental and private funding entities.

Within a comprehensive plan, a parks and open space element often contains the following components:

- Inventory of existing parks according to various categories, including type of facility, condition of each park, population group being served, functions provided, ownership status, and other factors.

- An expanded inventory that possibly includes other natural resource areas, such as critical and sensitive areas, forestland, and (if present) agricultural land, and open space with historic or cultural significance.
- Criteria to determine whether enough parkland is being provided, based on population forecasts developed for use throughout the plan and level of service calculations.
- Recommendations for actions to take to achieve any goals and objectives related to parks and open space and implementation options.



Chicago Park District Special Collections

Many public parks were designed for active recreation in the period from 1880 to 1920. Here, young children crowd the wading pool at Eckhart Park in Chicago in 1910.

*Henderson, Nevada,
created this multipurpose
recreational greenway
along a stormwater wash.*

Involve a Broad Array of Interests. While data are an important part of establishing the basis for a comprehensive plan's goals and objectives, a successful plan also needs to have meaningful stakeholder involvement from a wide array of interests. Engaging these groups helps everyone to share and clarify their ideas and to address any possible conflicts early on. As parks and open space are often considered after other decisions are made, making sure this constituency, such as "friends of" groups and environmental organizations, are at the table with all the other interests helps to address this situation.

Build an Informed Constituency. The ultimate outcome from a comprehensive plan might be the process of creating, sharing, and conveying a common vision for the future of a community, where all who are involved are on board with the plan's grand vision and how they will get there. Making sure that parks and open space resources are included here keeps that vision truly comprehensive—and helps ensure that parks are part of any implementation actions.

Making the Case for Parks and Open Space

While the reasons for addressing parks and open space as one of the main elements in a comprehensive plan are relatively clear, it still remains that planners must "make the case" for parks and open space with respect to their importance relative to other land-use elements, so that they aren't considered optional elements.

To show how these resources are interconnected to other community issues, APA's City Parks Forum project developed a series of briefing papers on "how cities use parks" on a variety of key issues that communities face. The series, which included 11 papers, addresses topics that are key concerns in today's communities. Excerpts from six of those papers are provided here. When the relationship that parks have to other issues is clearly shown, planning for parks often becomes clearer and easier.



Carolyn Terna

Community Revitalization

Parks can stem the downturn of a commercial area, support the stabilization of faltering neighborhoods, and provide a landmark element and a point of pride for constituents. For all these things to happen, a community needs to be open and aware of parks' potential to spur revival, and support the elements that are needed to make that happen. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/communityrevitalization.htm)

Economic Development

In addition to providing intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits, parks are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in home buyers and workers, and

attract retirees. At the bottom line, parks are a good financial investment for a community. Understanding the economic impacts of parks can help decision makers better evaluate the creation and maintenance of urban parks. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/economicdevelopment.htm)

Crime Prevention

For those concerned that green spaces may foster crime and illegal activity, evidence now exists that the opposite may be true. When adjacent to residential areas, green spaces have been shown to create neighborhoods with fewer violent and property crimes, where neighbors tend to support and protect one another. Time spent in natural surroundings relieves mental fatigue, which in turn can potentially positively affect inattentiveness, irritability, and impulsivity. Green spaces also support frequent, casual contact among neighbors. This leads to the formation of neighborhood social ties, the building blocks of strong, secure neighborhoods where people tend to support, care about, and protect one another. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/saferneighborhoods.htm)

Green Infrastructure

Just as communities need to upgrade and expand their built infrastructure of roads, sewers, and utilities, they also need to upgrade and expand their green infrastructure, the interconnected system of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clear air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife. Green infrastructure is a community's natural life support system, the ecological framework needed for environmental and economic sustainability.

In their role as green infrastructure, parks and open space are a community necessity. By planning and managing urban parks as parts of an interconnected green space system, cities can reduce flood control and stormwater management costs. Parks can also protect biological diversity and preserve essential ecological functions while serving as a place for recreation and civic engagement. They can even help shape urban form and reduce opposition to development, especially when planned in concert with other open spaces. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/greeninfrastructure.htm)



Carolyn Torma

Millennium Park in downtown Chicago has become a major tourist destination and is also used by tens of thousands of residents who attend concerts, play in the video installation fountain, or stroll through Lurie Garden on their way to the Art Institute of Chicago.

Public Health

People value the time they spend in city parks, whether walking a dog, playing basketball, or having a picnic. Along with these expected leisure amenities, parks can also provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Because of the different ways people experience parks, communities need to provide all types, from neighborhood facilities to large natural areas. Many health benefits can be best achieved through small-scale, readily accessible sites. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/physicalactivity.htm)

Smart Growth

Urban parks, which broadly include parkland, plazas, landscaped boulevards, waterfront promenades, and public gardens, significantly define the layout, real estate value, traffic flow, public events, and the civic culture of our communities. With open spaces, cities, towns, and neighborhoods take on structure, beauty, breathing room, and value.



Carolyn Torma

City parks are an important element of smart growth that addresses both the public's need for green space and the role of green space in mitigating higher development density. The smart growth concerns of the public create opportuni-

ties for public agencies and private foundations to leverage support for smart growth, by making and remaking city parks that both strengthen urban cores and protect the fringe. (www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/smartgrowth.htm)

Climate Change Management

The urban heat island effect, and its mostly negative consequences of modified temperature, wind, precipitation, and air quality patterns, is the primary instigator of local climate change. Continued urbanization of the global population will only hasten further change. The increasing impact of urban heat islands on local climates may eventually translate to more widespread climate change, possibly global, if left unchecked.

Parks are the first and best line of defense against these changes. Urban parks cool and clean the air, improve and modify local wind circulations, and better regulate precipitation patterns. Well-vegetated parks, in a variety of forms and sizes, mitigate the impact of the urban heat island and minimize local

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One of the latest trends in park development is recycling industrial sites and infrastructure. The immensely popular High Line Park in New York City was a freight rail line that a nonprofit group began promoting as a new style park in 1999.

Emerging Ideas

While many of the approaches to parks and open space planning are tried and true, emerging areas are impacting the future planning for parks, including planning for the aging population, defining ecosystem services, creating customized park “standards,” and reclaiming elevated railways as linear parks.

AGING POPULATION As the baby boomer generation continues to age—the generation is defined as anyone born between 1946 and 1964—communities need to continue to provide parks that are accessible to all abilities—and for people who are living even longer. In addition, retirees are often choosing to retire in place—or downsize to smaller homes in urban centers. Conducting detailed population forecasts will help to plan for these populations. Stakeholder engagement processes need to make sure they include this demographic group.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES Green spaces are nature’s multitaskers, providing numerous benefits such as flood mitigation, climate change management, and air quality improvements, as well as their other traditional benefits. Development decisions are increasingly using an assessment of ecosystem services to identify areas with high conservation value to help guide development decisions. While these uses are often captured as part of green infrastructure, as that element is still emerging in community planning, often these benefits are captured through parks and open space planning.

LEVEL OF SERVICE Traditionally the method used to determine if a community had enough parks was to use standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association, which states park needs in terms of acres per 1,000 persons. The current state of the art is to express this need more as a function of distance, to provide a park within a certain distance of every resident. For example, Bellevue, Washington, has an ultimate goal of providing a park within one-half mile of every citizen. While such analysis is usually conducted as part of a stand-alone parks and open space plan, it could also be incorporated into a comprehensive plan.

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR PARK SYSTEMS Some jurisdictions are producing design guidelines for parks. The guidelines help create an aesthetic and natural resource management standard for the development while visually connecting the park with its surroundings. They may address:

PARK SITING

- Pedestrian, vehicular, and transit access
- Utilities
- Site furnishings such as fencing, seating, and playground equipment
- Landscaping
- Building materials
- Signage
- Environmental sustainability

SPECIAL USE PARKS A number of recent cultural and technological trends have created new demands on today’s park systems. These can include dog parks, skateboard parks, off-road vehicle parks, mountain bike trails, water trails (blueways), and wireless technology availability in parks. Plan commissions should ask their staff to conduct specific research to determine the planning needs of these types of parks and park functions.

LINKAGES Much like the park and parkway systems designed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there is growing recognition that a good park system is one where individual park nodes are connected to linear green corridors. Linkages may be achieved through riparian buffers, street design, transit paths, utility rights-of-way, or any other linear corridor. These linkages are also related to green infrastructure, which often follows the pattern of hubs and nodes of open space connected by linkages.

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climate change. Reducing the impact of the urban heat island may even prevent more widespread global climate change as cities continue to increase in both size and number. (www.planning.org/city_parks/briefingpapers/climatechange.htm)

Integrating Park and Open Space Planning into Overall Community Planning

In *From Recreation to Re-creation: New Directions in Parks and Open Space System Planning* (PAS Report no. 551), Mary Eysenbach and I outlined how parks and open space can be integrated at all stages of the planning process. Here are our recommendations for integrating parks into plans:

- Consider how the park system is integrated in the community and how it is linked to the various resources in the community, including the community's natural systems, infrastructure, and land use.
- In addition to comprehensive plans, incorporate the park system needs and issues into subarea (neighborhood) plans and functional (transportation) plans.
- Create a stand-alone park system plan to more specifically address the goals in the other plans. This plan should explicitly describe the relationship between this plan and all other community plans.
- Connect specific community goals to park creation and support, such as the examples provided from the City Parks Forum briefing papers.
- Use the park system—not each park—to meet the community needs.
- Develop specific strategies and a detailed plan of action to implement the plan.
- Include an evaluation process.

Intelligent Cities/Social Media

A popular term these days, “intelligent cities” means linking systems of electronic management, data collection, and citizen participation for better decision making and management for cities.

APA Publications

APAPanningBooks.com

Planning and Broadband: Infrastructure, Policy, and Sustainability
Kathleen McMahon, Ronald Thomas, and Charles Kaylor
PAS Report no. 569

Books

Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn, and Innovate
Tim Campbell
Earthscan, 2012

Intelligent Cities

Susan Piedmont-Palladino, ed.
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Social Media in Action: Comprehensive Guide for Architecture, Engineering, Planning, and Environmental Consulting Firms

Amanda Walter
Watermelon Books, 2012

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Cities Share Data, Software Applications

Steve Towns
Governing, May 2012
www.governing.com/columns/tech-talk/cities-share-data-software-applications.html

Four Big Cities Launch Shared Data Platform

Noelle Knell
Digital Communities, August 1, 2012
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Urban Planners and Open Data: Making the Connection

Karen Quinn Fung
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Urban Systems Collaborative
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Blogs on Planning

These blogs will be of interest to planning commissioners and their staff.

Religious Institutions and Planning

As way of background to our first featured blog, here is some background. To learn about the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act and how it affects planning, see "What Planning Commissioners Need to Know About RLUIPA" by Alan Weinstein (*The Commissioner*, Summer 2005). See also *The RLUIPA Reader*, a publication of the American Bar Association and cosponsored by APA. (To order, visit APAPanningBooks.com)

RLUIPA Defense Blog

www.rluipa-defense.com

The newest blog edited by Dwight Merriam, FAICP, and Evan Seeman of Robinson & Cole LLP. This is a land-use and zoning law resource for anyone wanting to avoid RLUIPA claims or defend the legality of local regulation. The blog tracks news and provides a database of RLUIPA federal and state court decisions, trial materials (oppositions to motions for preliminary injunction, motions for summary judgment, motions to dismiss, jury instructions), and appellate materials (circuit court briefs and petitions for writs of certiorari). It also includes scholarly articles and legislative history concerning RLUIPA. Visitors can register to receive e-mail about news and updates.

Law of the Land

<http://lawoftheland.wordpress.com>

This blog is edited by Patricia Salkin, dean of Tuoro College, Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center, and former chair of the APA amicus committee. The blog covers the spectrum of court cases related to planning and land-use law. The entire blog is indexed and easily searchable for specific topics.

American Planning Association Blogs

www.planning.org

From the APA home page, look on the left side for links to these five blogs:

Policy News for Planners covers legislation and federal programs.

Creative Chicago brings you news and insights into the city hosting the National Planning Conference, and features of the conference program.

Sustaining Places covers the world of sustainability and planning.

Recovery News provides insights and news on hazard mitigation and recovery planning.

Kids' Planning Toolbox is all about youth engagement in planning.



Are Planning Commissions Becoming Less Relevant?

Marc Yeber
Planning Commissioner
City of West Hollywood, California
Planning Commissioner Representative
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As the strain on available land becomes more pronounced, decisions that shape our communities have become more critical and complex. Yet many planning commissioners believe that our function has less influence in determining outcomes than it did a decade ago, as the focus on social-political agendas and revenue generation has trumped our task of effective city making. Fellow commissioners, representing jurisdictions throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area, have frequently shared these concerns about our diminished role. In contrast to elected officials, our appointed positions—coupled with our varying professional backgrounds—inform our deliberations and shape our views on the conservation and growth of our neighborhoods. I approach this topic with the realization that the function and work of commissions (as well as planning staff) differ from state to state and city to city. While these views evolved locally, they may also exist elsewhere. With that said, is the land-use authority vested in planning commissions being usurped in today's political climate and impulse to privatize the public realm?

Several iterated concerns expressed stem from recent trends affecting planning policy. First is the repeated use of entitlement strategies such as development agreements (as they are called in California) that are not supported with sufficient defined public benefit. Another is a growing reluctance to rely on the neighborhood perspective that is considered in commission meetings. Yet another issue is staff report analyses and conclusions that tend to reinforce the applicant's point of view. Last is the disregard for report deficiencies and discount of reasoned testimony in favor of a predetermined outcome. Collectively, these issues undoubtedly diminish our review authority to adjudicate a broad spectrum of land-use issues.

Commissioners are delegated to safeguard the community's character, but now are pinned uncomfortably between the elected officials with a political agenda and city staff with an economic one. Our role as a quasi judicial body is no longer clearly defined.

At a time when the development pressures are great and the political stakes are high, should our role be better utilized as a shield to buffer policy from politics? Can development agreements be applied with more discretion and only in the most extraordinary circumstances? Is it possible for staff reports to be wholly objective and without any recommendation? If our contribution is to be meaningful, we need collaboration. If our perspective is to be germane, then our deliberations must be valued. If our role is to remain relevant, then commission members must be engaged not just from the dais, but from the beginning of the planning discussion.

T Enduring Planned Suburbs

Two well-designed cities, Riverside, Illinois, and Mariemont, Ohio, have endured as planned suburbs with unique town and landscape plans. These “special places” were planned by the two preeminent planners and landscape architects of their respective eras: Riverside was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1868; Mariemont, by John Nolen in 1921.

Riverside is located nine miles west of Chicago’s Loop. Laid out in 1868 as an elite railroad suburb, its general plan features a one-of-a kind curvilinear street system accompanied by a significant amount of public open space. It was Olmsted’s intention to create a “middle ground”—a place between the city and the country, a place where tranquility and peacefulness were important attributes.

Mariemont is located 10 miles east of downtown Cincinnati. Intentionally sited between a trolley/streetcar line and an increasingly busy automobile corridor, the town has always been connected to the larger city. Nolen created a grid system punctuated by diagonal and loop streets with a sprinkling of closes (similar to cul-de-sacs). Like Riverside, open space, tree-lined streets, and the natural topography were important features of his town plan.

Both suburbs feature outstanding architecture. Mariemont’s founder, Mary Emery, asked John Nolen to recommend the architects who were chosen to design commercial, civic, and the single-family, duplex, and rental buildings. This focus on high-quality architecture extends to amenities such as a unique Riverside water tower

and the Carillon Bell Tower in Mariemont.

Riverside and Mariemont have both been designated as National Historic Landmarks and remain highly desirable places to live, work, play, and learn. They remain outstanding models of plans that integrated street design, natural settings, accessible transportation, public spaces, and attractive landscape and architecture.

Karen Finucan Clarkson is a public information consultant and journalist in Bethesda, Maryland. She wrote the commission profile on pages 4 and 5.

Jennifer Evans-Cowley, AICP, is a professor of city and regional planning and associate dean for academic affairs and administration in the College of Engineering at The Ohio State University. She wrote the article on pages 1 and 2 and may be contacted at Cowley.11@osu.edu.

Megan Lewis, AICP, project planner with Cardno JFNew, an ecological restoration and environmental consulting firm, wrote the article starting on page 6. While an APA senior research associate, she was assistant director of the City Parks Forum.

Frank Racon, AICP, is a former planning director for communities in Ohio and California. He is the principal of Location Decision Advisors, a consulting firm specializing in retail and restaurant site selection and tenant recruitment. He wrote the history feature on page 12.

Rana Salzmann is the APA manager of content strategy. She wrote the resource finder on page 10.

Alan C. Weinstein is an associate professor and director of the Law and Public Policy Program at Cleveland State University. He is the author of the legal article on page 3.

Marc Yeber is a planning commissioner for the city of West Hollywood, California, and also serves as the planning commissioner representative for the APA California Chapter. He wrote the Commissioner’s Voice column on page 11.

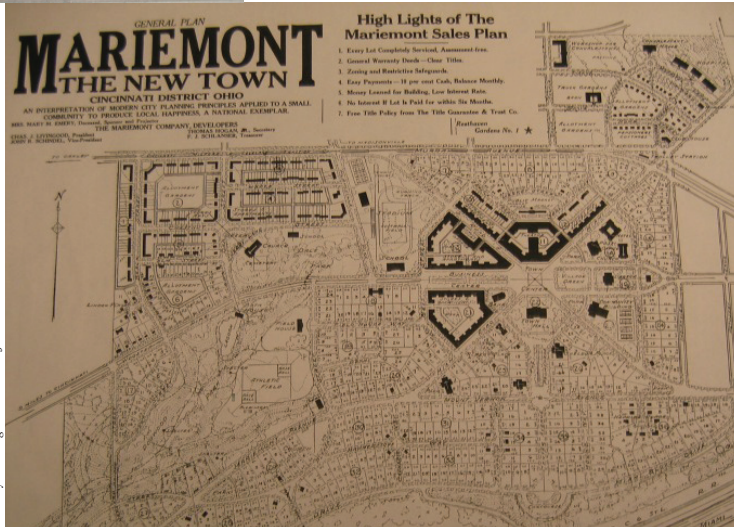


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