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Funding Planning within a Regional Context **Robert M. Dean** Local governments have been hit hard by the national economic downturn. It has become increasingly difficult for communities to fund planning activities, and many have downsized planning staff or deferred planning projects as they try to meet immediate needs. To help address this problem, a new program has been introduced in the Chicago metropolitan area to provide planning assistance to local governments. Termed the Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, it is being led by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the regional planning agency.

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*The regional planning
and funding strategy is
the implementation of
the Go to 2040 Plan.*

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



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The Chicago region contains 284 municipalities that vary dramatically in size and technical capacity. Approximately one-fifth of the region's municipalities do not have comprehensive plans. Among those that do, only half have plans that have been updated within 10 years, the general standard for plan updates. Many communities with up-to-date plans have antiquated zoning ordinances that contradict their comprehensive plan or are internally inconsistent.

"While development has slowed now, it is certain to accelerate again in the future," says Rolf Fredrick, the plan commission chair of the Village of Campton Hills, a newly incorporated rural community that is overhauling its comprehensive plan with CMAP's help. "It's important for us to have an up-to-date plan to proactively identify the right locations for growth. We have valuable environmental and cultural assets that we need to protect, and that can only happen if we plan ahead."

The LTA Program

The purpose of the LTA program is to help local governments conduct planning activities like comprehensive plans, zoning ordinance updates, or similar projects. The program is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), through the multiagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities initiated by HUD, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

CMAP has used its three-year, \$4.25 million grant to hire professional planners and outreach specialists to provide the services offered through the LTA program. A team of CMAP staff works closely with the community to establish a scope of work, schedule, and deliverables, beginning a collaboration that continues throughout the planning process. CMAP also offers a complementary grant program, through which local governments can receive grant funding to hire consulting firms for planning projects.

CMAP is helping Park Forest, Illinois, examine the built environment, natural resources, and energy use within the community, as well as the broader issues of economic development, health, and arts and culture.

GO TO 2040

The LTA program is meant to implement GO TO 2040, the long-range regional comprehensive plan, which was adopted by CMAP in Fall 2010. GO TO 2040 describes general principles of livability and land-use planning, but acknowledges that the interpretation and application of regional principles varies by community. The plan recognizes that "there is no 'one size fits all' in the implementation of livability principles," reinforcing the importance of planning at the local level.

Correspondingly, there is a wide diversity of LTA projects. Some are general comprehensive plans; others focus on issues of particular interest to a community, such as housing choice or water conservation. Even projects of the same type—comprehensive plans, for example—vary tremendously based on the issues in different communities. The LTA program has allowed for local customization of projects within the general framework of consistency with GO TO 2040.

More than 20 local projects are actively under way, with more to be kicked off early this year. Some, like Campton Hills, are in rural areas, but most are in established communities dealing with issues of demographic change and the need for reinvestment. For example, the Village of Park Forest in Chicago's southern suburbs, one of the first planned communities in the nation, is using CMAP's assistance to develop a sustainability plan. "We are trying to improve the sustainability of both the village's internal operations and the entire community," says Mayor John Ostenburg. "CMAP is helping us to examine the built environment, natural resources, and energy use within our community, as well as broader issues like economic development, health, and arts and culture." Set for completion in spring 2012, the Park Forest Sustainability Plan includes technical research components and a significant public outreach effort using interactive web software.

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The Rise of Form-Based Codes

Mark White, AICP

(Left) Conventional zoning;
(right) Form-based zoning.



Mark White



Mark White

Form-Based Codes (FBCs) are one of the most influential and popular approaches to land development regulation in recent years.

It is now common for communities to update zoning or development codes with elements of form-based coding, and some (such as Miami) have replaced their entire zoning code with form-based zoning. This article defines this new approach to zoning, and describes some of the major policy issues that communities need to resolve when considering this approach.

What is a Form-Based Code?

The Form-Based Codes Institute (an advocacy group) defines FBCs as land development regulations that use “physical form, rather than separation of land uses, as their organizing principle.” Obviously, many modern codes have a series of design standards, ranging from the old-fashioned design review board to building fenestration and modulation standards. However, districts and corridors in a FBC regulate building and frontage type regulations, rather than uses and conventional zoning standards. They can build from the region and regulate down to the district, corridor, block, lot, and building scale.

There are even different types of FBCs—such as frontage codes, building typology codes, and the Smartcode, a FBC based on the “transect.” Codes that include both FBC and conventional zoning elements are often referred to as “hybrid codes.” The table above includes a summary of the differences between a FBC and conventional code.

A number of states—such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Virginia, and California—now expressly authorize FBCs.

Why Form-Based Codes?

Form based codes offer the several advantages over conventional zoning and subdivision codes:

Sustainability. A more compact footprint for buildings and streets reduces the environmental impacts of cars and provides a more efficient use of land.

Better Design. Because they emphasize the key design elements of buildings and the “public realm” (such as streets, parks, and other infrastructure or public gathering places or connections), these codes can improve a community’s appearance.

Conventional Code

- Separation of uses
- Maximum densities
- Street standards designed for cars
- Curvilinear streets
- Private open space
- Wide setbacks
- Private orientation
- Minimum parking

Form-Based Code

- Mixed uses
- Scale controlled through building envelope
- Street standards designed for pedestrians
- Interconnected streets
- Public open space
- Build-to lines
- Orientation to public realm
- Maximum parking

Walkability. Because they do not separate uses by district, FBCs provide a way to functionally mix uses, placing residences within walking distance of employment, entertainment, or service destinations.

Flexibility. Form-based codes avoid rigid restrictions on use, allowing a variety of building types that can host a variety of uses. However, they can also add new metrics (such as “build-to” lines or maximum front setbacks) that are more prescriptive than conventional standards.

Economic Development. Because they accommodate a wide variety of uses, FBCs can allow small businesses to occupy a number of spaces that are off-limits under a conventional code.

Housing. A richer palette of residential building types accommodates households with a variety of income levels in the same neighborhood. This provides a market-driven approach to accommodating workforce housing throughout a community.

A Better Read. While most modern codes have graphics, most FBCs integrate graphics and text in more comprehensible way than older, text-based codes.

Streamlining. Because FBCs are prescriptive, communities can delegate decisions to staff about mixed use

Effectiveness. Is your community already achieving high-quality design with an existing code, such as through planned development or design review? If so, is a FBC really worth the time and effort?

Community Support. Is your community willing to embrace the degree of change required by a FBC?

Administration. Many FBCs use terminology and concepts that are unfamiliar to the general public or administrators. Should the community use these terms, or retool conventional and known concepts to reshape development?

Neighborhood Review. Administrative review can cut neighborhoods out of processes that used to be discretionary. While this avoids some unnecessary delays, it can also make the public feel disenfranchised.

Uses. Some uses, by their nature, have impacts on community character regardless of their design. Does the community really want to reduce its control over these issues?

Conclusions

Form-based codes are increasingly popular and offer distinct advantages over conventional zoning. However, they also can lead to administrative problems and raise issues about community character. While they may be right for your community, they should be adopted only after careful consideration of their impacts and administrative issues.

What Should We Consider When Adopting a Form-Based Code?

The reasons to adopt a FBC also suggest some of their disadvantages. Many of these are solvable during the drafting process, but require careful consideration:

Flexibility. The prescriptive standards in a FBC can limit flexibility of where buildings are placed on lot or how they are designed. They do not prescribe architectural styles, but are also less flexible than conventional zoning.



Boone County Planning Commission

(Left) Mike Ford, vice-chairman; Dale Wilson, attorney; Charlie Rolfsen, chairman; Kevin Costello, AICP, planning director; Kim Burger, secretary/treasurer. (Below, right) Susan Poston, temporary presiding officer; Mark Hicks; Bob Schwenke

Not pictured: Ben Brandstetter; Janet Kegley; Greg Breetz; Lisa Reeves; Charlie Reynolds; Susan Schultz; Jim Longano; Steve Turner; Don McMillian



Boone County, Kentucky, Planning Commission

Karen Finucan Clarkson

“W

e are a very hands-on commission,” says Charlie Rolfsen, chair of the Boone County Planning Commission in Northern Kentucky. “We bend over backwards to hear concerns and make sure all issues that are brought up in a public hearing are addressed. All the commissioners have lived in this community for many years and are committed to making it the best it can be.”

The 15-member planning commission draws members with varied backgrounds from throughout this 256-square-mile county on the Ohio River. The commission includes a university information technology specialist, a sheriff’s department lieutenant, a farmer, a golf course superintendent, a board of education staff member, retirees, civil engineers, a home builder, and a restaurateur, among others.

Such diversity is one of the commission’s strengths, says Mike Ford, the panel’s vice-chairman. “It allows us to maintain positive working relationships, in my case between the commission and the school district,” he says.



“We’re a joint city-county planning commission,” adds Kevin P. Costello, AICP, the commission’s executive director. “Each member is appointed by the chief elected official in one of four jurisdictions.” The Boone County Fiscal Court’s judge executive has six appointments, as does the mayor of Florence. The mayor of Walton makes two appointments and the mayor of Union makes one. Terms are for four years with no limit on reappointment.

“The current composition is based on an agreement made in 1966,” says Costello. “Until then we had four different planning commissions. It was a progressive decision back then.”

In its quest to address planning issues as thoroughly and fairly as possible, commission members spend an average of 12 hours a month reviewing staff reports, visiting development or zone-change sites, and attending committee and commission meetings. They receive a stipend of roughly \$100 per month. “When the economy went bad, the commission voted to suspend members’ pay,” says Costello. The stipend recently was reinstated.



Boone County, Kentucky, Planning Commission



Boone County, Kentucky, Planning Commission

(Above) Dinsmore Homestead is a 30-acre historic site and nature preserve owned by Boone County Parks Department and the Kentucky Nature conservancy.

(Left) The World of Golf in Florence is a new city recreation facility.

Maintaining Boone County's Integrity

"I think the issues we're seeing stem from the economic times," says Charlie Rolfsen, chair of the Boone County Planning Commission. "I don't know if we're digging out or treading water, but we're getting some pressure from segments of the community that are struggling, such as home builders. They want us to lighten up and cut corners so they can make a profit." An example, he says, is loosening the requirement for sidewalks on both sides of the street or allowing narrower streets.

"We are consistent in how we do things," says Rolfsen. "We can't compromise on issues of public safety or move away from what's been done in the past."

"We all want the county to grow, be lucrative, and provide opportunities, but we don't want to jeopardize the integrity of our county," adds Mike Ford, the commission's vice chair.

"The residential boom that we experienced five to 10 years ago has slowed dramatically," says Kevin P. Costello, AICP, the commission's executive director. "In the old days we'd have 100 to 150 single-family homes per month. Now that number is between 25 and 45."

"We have 9,000 lots already approved for development just sitting there due to the economic downturn," says Rolfsen. "Some of that has to be developed before we can approve anything else."

Despite the slowdown, Boone County remains Kentucky's fastest growing county. Its population jumped almost 38 percent from 2000 to 2009 and currently stands around 120,000. That number is expected to rise to more than 186,000 by 2030.

"We're still growing but not as significantly," says Costello. "And that's reflected in the focus of our comprehensive plan update. We're focused more on what can be done to expand the business base—either attracting new or expanding existing."

Costello says Boone County is fortunate because it has a diverse economy. "Toyota Motors has its national headquarters in our county and there are several other international firms here. We've had good results in the last year or so as we explore opportunities for economic development," he says.

A suburb of Cincinnati, Boone County boasts the highest median household income among Northern Kentucky's 12 counties—\$68,369 in 2009—and the lowest poverty rate, 8.1 percent.

Planning commission decisions play a significant role in the county's economic development. "It's quality of life, something we strive to maintain, that helps draw businesses," Ford observes. "We won't jeopardize the integrity of our county as that would only serve to limit our attractiveness, and that's not in anyone's best interest."

Kentucky law requires an orientation for planning commissioners and Boone County obliges. "They explain the history as well as the expectations," says Rolfsen. "And they give you a variety of books—dealing with all aspects of planning—as well as KRS (Kentucky Revised Statutes), zoning regs, municipal plans, and more. As a responsible commissioner, it's your job to get up to speed." Commissioners also are required to log eight hours of related training every two years.

State law compels commissioners to "evaluate the comprehensive plan every five years and, sometimes, update based on changes," says Costello. "They act on zone changes but serve as a recommending body to the legislative unit."

Both Rolfsen and Ford find their service gratifying, but admit there are challenges. "Time is a factor," says Ford. "We all feel the pinch sometimes because our jobs are demanding. But we owe it to the community."

"With every decision you make there's the likelihood that someone will leave mad," adds Rolfsen. "I have to put my emotions aside—even if it's a long-term friend being affected—and follow the rules. You have to be consistent and do what's right for the community."

Grounding Planning and Communication Value

Jason Jordan

Angry shouts shutting down public meetings. Charges of global conspiracy to take land. Organized activists' campaigns targeting public officials. Furious Facebook posts. Hidden video destined for YouTube. It all sounds more like a good novel than a local planning discussion, but times have changed.

The *Washington Post* recently highlighted an example that's becoming an all-too-common occurrence. In coastal Virginia, plans to address future flood zone issues devolved into attacks on planners as agents of Agenda 21. A prominent state tea party activist and critic of planning has charged that coastal zoning decisions are part of "an agenda to put nature above man" and a trick to take private property. Planners have been publically attacked and town meetings shouted into chaos.

Planning commissions are no stranger to controversy. A certain amount of debate and acrimony are typical given the fact that commissioners are weighing important planning decisions about the shape of the community's future. Mostly these are civil and thoughtful discussions about planning. But today, in many places across the country, the nature of this debate is changing. Plans and planning decisions are frequently becoming ground zero for major, sometimes hostile, often personal, conflict. Planning commissioners are finding themselves at the center of the storm.

Stories from around the country have become unsettlingly familiar. Communities are seeing public meetings disrupted, plans rejected, projects attacked, federal grants under fire, and charges of global conspiracy. New tactics are being used, including aggressive use of social media, combative (and occasionally deceptive) online video, and orchestrated attacks in public meetings. Planning has become, in many places, an explosive political issue.

Robin Rather provided guidance on communications strategies at the 2011 National Planning Conference and through the ongoing APA Communications Boot Camp.



Joe Szurszewski

Communications Boot Camp

This series is **free** but available only to APA members.

Click on the orange link to access webinar registration, previous programs, or the how-to guides.

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Communications Boot Camp Schedule

Date	Activity	Topic
November 4, 2011	Webinar	Previously Recorded Session First Steps in Responding to Critics and Reframing Planning
November 11, 2011	How-to guide	Download Agenda 21 and Planning: Myths and Facts
November 18, 2011	Webinar	Previously Recorded Session Successful Public Meetings and Managing Contentious Situations
November 25, 2011	How-to guide	Download Glossary for the Public
December 2, 2011	Webinar	Previously Recorded Session Mastering the Pivot: Message Discipline and Effective Media Response
December 9, 2011	How-to-guide	Download Making the Economic Case for Planning
December 16, 2011	Webinar	Previously Recorded Session Effective Coalitions, Outreach, and Engagement
December 21, 2011	How-to guide	Download Effective Media Relations

Find out more at www.Planning.org

Plans and planning decisions are frequently becoming ground zero for major, sometimes hostile, often personal, conflict.

Opponents are diffuse but highly networked. They don't belong to any single organization or group, but they are actively sharing information and tactics. For these new activists, distrust of government is high. A review of these new controversies reveals some common themes in the attacks being leveled by planning critics.

- They frequently attempt to link local planning to the United Nations through "Agenda 21."
- They fear the loss of private property rights and believe that planning and related policies are eroding these rights.
- Further, they say planning leads to far-fetched outcomes like government-enforced housing decisions and global government.

In the view of these critics, planning is linked to a series of policies they oppose, from government debt to corporate bailouts. They posit a chain of events that lead from a local planning decision to a loss of freedom and overweening government. While it may strike planning professionals and those civic leaders involved in the process as a wild and unfounded claim, these critics are bringing plenty of passion and political activism to communities and planning commissions.

It should probably come as no surprise that emotions are running high. The economic uncertainty of recent years has generated understandable anxiety. Estimates are that nearly 15 million mortgages, almost one-fourth of all mortgages, are underwater. Foreclosure filings reached record numbers in 2010. Of course, unemployment remains stubbornly high. And, some communities are suffering some deep declines in core local industries. Even people who haven't been personally affected by these unsettling times almost certainly know friends and family who have been hurt.

For some of these people, government appears not as a potential solution but rather part of the problem. As economic anxiety has risen, so too has antagonism toward the public sector. In such an environment, planning has become an inviting target of disaffection. This is particularly true because planning involves direct engagement with the public. It is one of the most immediate ways that people engage with each other and their government.

Instead of seeing the planning process as a tool for crafting a local vision for the future and a way to rebuild lost prosperity, these critics see the opposite: the hand of government working to further the agenda of some distant elite. For these groups, every prosaic discussion of local planning becomes a fight against larger, conspiratorial forces.

Despite the furor, planning remains one the best tools available to help communities. Planning also enables people to come together to make decisions that affect them—elected and appointed officials, engaged citizens, leaders of all types; those with special interests; and those who at least attempt to consider the public interest as well as those who seek to dominate, disrupt, or destroy the process.

Beyond the importance of planning as the best way to give local people a voice in the future of their community, planning is also critical to restoring economic strength and prosperity. It is ironic that activists driven by economic uncertainty would attack one of the best tools for bolstering long-term economic growth and competitiveness. Successful places don't happen by accident. They require thoughtful planning.

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In fact, planning is especially vital during economic downturns. Plans provide the foundation for smart investments by both the private and public sectors. Towns and cities across the nation are struggling with how to create a place that attracts investment, generates jobs, and allows young people and future generations to remain in the community and thrive. Planning is the best way to tackle a tough economy.

Given the challenges of planning in today's political environment, what can planners and planning officials do to promote good planning and public engagement?

Be Prepared. The first reaction in many places when attacks on planning begin is shock. Prepare in advance for aggressive tactics and questions. What would you say if challenged in public that planning is a UN plot? How would you respond if you were surprised with a video camera and questions about taking property and government debt?



John Reinhardt

You can't control the critics, but you can be ready. Take the time to carefully review the details of the planning process and the specific benefits of the plan. Be able to calmly describe how the process works, why it is fair, and how it will help residents and the economy. Write out a list of potential attacks and how you would respond with comments that don't reinforce the negative charge but highlight the benefits and value of planning to the community. In advance of any public meeting, prepare a strategy for dealing with disruption in a way that seeks to both respect the public's ability to voice ideas and opinions and reject flatly false claims.

Get the Facts. Information is your most helpful ally. Part of being well prepared for attacks is working closely in advance with planners, elected officials, other local officials and key civic leaders. It is important for commissioners and other appointed officials to be fully briefed on the plan or planning initiative. Likewise, make sure that background briefings are provided to local leaders. Make sure to keep elected officials well informed throughout the process. Ask hard questions of the planners involved so that you can answer hard questions. As you consider the facts of the plan, avoid the trap of relying on jargon. Everyone involved in the planning process should understand and communicate about the plan in clear, plain language.

Don't Overreact. It is a natural instinct to assume that the most intense views are also the most pervasive views. In the context of attacks on planning, it is important to keep in mind that many of the most aggressive opinions and criticisms, while valid public input, don't usually represent a majority opinion. It is possible to "over respond" to the critic's point of view, particularly for elected officials. A key strategy for supporters of planning should be to ensure that elected leaders understand that there are diverse views on planning issues and that planning has strong champions in the community.

Likewise, the media are drawn to conflict, and these disputes make a good story. Work proactively with reporters and nontraditional media outlets to encourage balanced coverage that includes a discussion of the substance of the plan, not just the theatrics of individual meetings. Don't blow out of proportion the positions and power of a vocal minority.

*Congressman Stephen L. Lynch
of Massachusetts's 9th District
addressed the importance of
planning programs and the federal
government at the 2011 National
Planning Conference.*

When conducting public events or meetings, it is tempting to rise to the emotional level of a disruptive critic. A better course is to remain calm and as positive as possible. Reinforce the benefit of public input, the fairness and openness of the process, and the core benefits to the community. While it is a good idea to immediately refute false accusations, it is important to quickly pivot back to your main, positive message.

Involve Partners. Any good planning process involves active participation from a wide variety of local organizations and stakeholders. Today, it is especially important to build a robust coalition of supporters and to conduct deep outreach to local leaders and organizations. Many local government services or activities have built-in advocacy organizations in the community, such as "friends of the library" or "friends of the parks" organizations. Planning typically attracts interest and support in the midst of a planning initiative but not always on an ongoing basis.

A good strategy is to work to build a strong coalition in support of planning. These partners can be effective and helpful in delivering targeted messages, helping build support among elected leaders, activating grassroots networks, working with the media, identifying potential opposition, meeting with important civic leaders and organizations, sharing information, and supporting outreach activities. In identifying potential partners, take an inclusive approach and think carefully about what audiences you need to reach and what skills might be needed in support of the plan. A diverse set of allies and partners amplifies your message and gives enhanced credibility to planning.

Like coalition building, outreach is equally vital. Good outreach is akin to extensive market research. If you listen carefully and take care to approach a wide array of views and interests, you will often be able to identify and address early areas of opposition or concern. You can also use outreach to demonstrate openness and willingness to work through contentious problems. Effective outreach may not eliminate activist critics but will provide you with invaluable insights and support as you cope with opposition.

Get a Message and Stick to It. A good communications strategy is a big part of dealing successfully with attacks on planning. Your communications strategy should include the careful development of a small number of core messages with each message supported by discrete “proof points.” The messages themselves should be succinct, positive, and tell a compelling story. Think about messages that speak to the values of local citizens and the value of the plan to the community.

Look closely at your data and local trends, but incorporate this information into your “story.” Consider, too, the audiences that you need to reach with these messages. Paul Farmer, FAICP, CEO of the American Planning Association, has said that good plans tell a story and good planning is a conversation. That’s good advice in today’s environment.

Once you’ve developed some good messages, test them out with partners and your target audiences. When you refine the messages, look for good messengers. While it is vital that planners and planning officials use these messages, external messengers often can be the most effective in reaching and persuading your targeted audiences. Leaders from local businesses, major institutions (e.g., hospitals and universities), civic or religious organizations, and neighborhood groups can all be effective messengers.

In today’s environment, economically focused messages can be especially resonant with the public and elected leaders. A recent Ford Foundation poll found that substantial majorities of voters across the political spectrum believe rebuilding the economy is the nation’s top priority. Happily, the same poll found that majorities also see local planning strategies as keys to improving the economy. However, too often the case for planning isn’t made on economic grounds. In developing your messages, consider the economic impacts and benefits. Critics usually portray planning as an example of wasteful and intrusive government. These claims are most effectively refuted by making the direct and positive economic argument for a plan.

It seems unlikely that these disruptions and attacks will go away any time soon. A slow economic recovery and the heat of an election year seem likely to keep the heat on local planning activities. In spite of the tactics of the opposition, planning officials can—and should—take steps to improve public meetings and build support for good planning.

Resources

Planner’s Communication Guide

www.planning.org/communicationsguide/

Online resource for communicating about planning and promoting the value of planning.

Communications Boot Camp

www.planning.org/policy/communicationsbootcamp

This ongoing series of training programs helps planners and officials anticipate and respond to current criticisms of planning. This program is free and open to APA members.

First Steps in Responding to Critics and Reframing Planning

November 4, 2011

Previously Recorded Webinar

Agenda 21 and Planning—Myths and Facts

November 11, 2011

How-to Guide Download

Successful Public Meetings and Managing Contentious Situations

November 18, 2011

Previously Recorded Webinar

Glossary for the Public

November 25, 2011

How-to Guide Download

Mastering the Pivot: Message Discipline and Effective Media Response

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Previously Recorded Webinar

Making the Economic Case for Planning

December 9, 2011

How-to Guide Download

Effective Coalitions, Outreach, and Engagement

December 16, 2011

Previously Recorded Webinar

Effective Media Relations

December 21, 2011

How-to Guide Download

Planning for the State Legislative Session

January 6, 2012

Previously Recorded Webinar

Working with Elected Officials

January 13, 2012

How-to Guide Download

Social Media Strategies: Using, Organizing, Monitoring, and Responding

January 20, 2012

Previously Recorded Webinar

Building Relationships with Partners and Local Leaders

January 27, 2012

How-to Guide Download

Guide to Building Communications into Your Planning Process

January 31, 2012

How-to Guide Download

CD-ROM Training Packages

Available at APAPanningBooks.com

Creating Successful Public Meetings

APA and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2008

Dealing with an Angry Public

APA and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1997

Great Plans, Great Communities

APA and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2009

The Local Technical Assistance Program (LTA) allows federal resources to be used in ways that are locally appropriate—an important goal in today's financially constrained environment.

Current LTA projects were selected from among a much larger pool of applicants. After learning its HUD grant application was successful, CMAP released a call for applications that was aimed at local governments and nonprofit groups around the region. “We expected between 30 and 50 applications,” says CMAP Executive Director Randy Blankenhorn. “We received 220. While this was daunting at the time, it illustrates how much communities need planning assistance.”

Several criteria were used to prioritize applications. Projects that included interjurisdictional collaboration or participation of nonprofit groups were considered higher priorities, as many planning issues cross municipal boundaries. Community need was another major criterion. Many communities in the Chicago region lack professional planning staff or the resources to hire consultant assistance. CMAP estimated community need using median income, poverty rate, and total population. Lower-income and smaller communities—those less likely to have full-time staff—were prioritized. “The assistance being offered by CMAP has made it possible to revise our comprehensive plan,” says Fredrick. “Without this program, we would not have had the resources for this project.”

The Regional Role

The LTA program is an example of an emerging type of partnership between levels of government. In this case, federal funding is provided to a regional agency to pursue projects that have local benefits. Compared with the traditional model of numerous tightly focused federal programs, this new model allows federal resources to be used in ways that are locally appropriate—an important goal in today's financially constrained environment.

“The LTA program provides exactly the kind of help that Park Forest needs,” says Mayor Ostenburg. “Making federal investments that are consistent with regional priorities and reflect local needs—that's just good planning.”

Form-Based Codes

One of the most popular developments in urban design in the past eight years is form-based codes. The concept was influenced by the smart growth concept and evolved from new urbanist principles. It has been expanded and adapted to many circumstances.

Books

Form-Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers

Daniel Parolek
John Wiley & Sons, 2008

APA Articles

Form-Based Development Codes

David Rouse
Zoning Practice, May 2004

Form-Based Zoning

PAS QuickNotes #1, October 2004

APAPanningBooks.com

Form-Based Zoning

AICP CD-ROM Training Package, 2004

Web Resources

Form-Based Codes Institute

www.formbasedcodes.org

SACOG Form-Based Codes Handbook (pdf)

Sacramento Area Council of Governments, 2008
www.sacog.org/projects/form-based-codes.cfm

Form-Based Codes:

Implementing Smart Growth

Local Government Commission
www.lgc.org/freepub/docs/community_design/fact_sheets/form_based_codes.pdf

2012 Los Angeles National Planning Conference

Sustainable Development Through Form-Based Codes

Training Workshop, Saturday, April 14, 2012
www.planning.org/conference/program/search/activity.htm?ActivityID=157470

American Planning Association 2012 National Planning Conference Los Angeles

In an era of belt tightening, APA will provide insights into funding and fiscal strategies in these conference sessions. Equally challenging for planning commissioners, officials, and planners is advocating for funding and making the case for planning. APA also provides sessions and a workshop on communication skills and strategies.

With over 200 sessions plus mobile workshops and other events, the National Planning Conference is the best way to stay current and build critical skills to support planning in your community.

- Communications High Ground for Planners Workshop
- Threatened Planning and the Planning Commission
- A New Transportation Funding Paradigm
- Prioritizing Transit Investments
- Funding Planning
- Local Impacts of Federal Budget Battles
- A New Model for Infrastructure Funding
- Reimagining Infrastructure and Public-Private Partnerships
- TIF in Economic Downturns
- The Odd Couple—Tolls and Transit
- Communicating the Economic Value of Planning
- Economics of Land Use
- Realities and Economies of Transitioning Cities

For complete conference information and to register visit www.planning.org/conference.

You can also follow the Policy News for Planners blog for the most current information on federal programs and funding.

Visit <http://blogs.planning.org/policy>.

Open Letter: Welcome to LA and Thank You!

Bill Roschen
President, Los Angeles City
Planning Commission



Dear Planning Commissioners:

First, a warm welcome to Los Angeles. I will offer a few insights for your visit that are meant to be catalytic to our larger planning dialogues. Today in LA, we could frame five “game-changing” opportunities that provide planning and policy explorations of citywide benefit.

Transit Oriented Districts. LA has 74 newly completed rail stations with 70 more anticipated in the next 10 to 20 years. How to “craft” transit neighborhoods and transit corridor visions creates a new paradigm for our Car City. Key Concept: Value capture for existing communities from this public investment.

Complete Streets /Updated Mobility Element. Sixty percent of downtown land area is devoted to streets and parking. How to balance our LA streets to offer real alternatives to driving, and how to repurpose asphalt for improved health, safety, and a usable public realm? Key Concept: Balanced streets and a small reduction in car use makes for a livable city that restores the “workability” of car travel as well.

Planning with Health. LA planning is currently working on adding a Health Element to its General Plan Framework. This foundational change will support creation of policy and policy tools around nutrition, health facilities, parks, mental health, environmental justice zones, and “healthy” design for buildings. Key Concept: A century ago, city planning was born from health concerns. Now is the time to evolve health and land planning to the next level.

The LA River. The existing LA River is 51 miles of opportunity. As cities across the country turn their “backs” into “fronts” around industrialized river edges, LA can create a continuous linking of river-adjacent communities by natural environments, open spaces, recreation, and urban interventions of river placemaking.

Collaboration between government departments. Under Mayor Villaraigosa, focused interdepartmental collaboration has been a major theme. All of the above opportunities for LA depend entirely on our city and county departments innovatively working together. A few examples include development reform, the mayor’s transit-oriented development cabinet, and the County Department of Public Health as a city champion.

To wrap up, I offer a genuine thank you for your leadership and civic participation. The role we play as planning commissioners may be more important than ever with the complexities of environment, health, transportation, and placemaking combining under the growing canvas of democratic land use and planning.

I am looking forward to our LA discussions and to creating networks that connect us as urban citizens building better communities.

Technology That Revolutionized Planning

Maps are a core tool of planning. Cartography was revolutionized by computers, and Geographic Information Systems allowed planners to make far more informed plans.

In the 1960s planning maps took a step forward when map makers combined layers of information. Many reference Ian McHarg's seminal 1969 book, *Design with Nature*, as a persuasive example of how to use maps to overlay data for environmentally sensitive planning. While McHarg demonstrated what could be done with data and transparency sheets, it was the computer that enabled even more complex mapping.



"Edges 1"; from APA Planners Press book, *Urban Design Reclaimed*

Computer-generated maps had multiple origins in the 1960s including the first GIS-type maps created by the Department of Forestry and Rural Development in Ontario, Canada. Simultaneously at Harvard University, Howard T. Fisher founded the Laboratory for Computer Graphics and Spatial Analysis. The laboratory trained a new generation of cartographers.

GIS not only allowed for the layering of information, but it merged map making with statistical data, thus allowing for analysis at

heretofore unimaginable levels. The first commercial applications of GIS emerged in the early 1980s with ArcInfo and other products. These ran on a mainframe computer.

As technological change accelerated, GIS migrated to desktop computers, becoming both powerful and affordable during the 1980s. More recently, GIS has been adapted to some web-based tools that are open to all users, including the public.

City and regional planners quickly adopted GIS and its web features. The American Planning Association established a division on information technology in 1981. Its initial newsletter was called *MUGS* (Microcomputers Users Group), reflecting the migration of mapping to planners' desktops.

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

Robert Dean is the deputy executive director for local planning with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and former project manager for GO TO 2040. He wrote the article on pages 1, 2, and 10.

Jason Jordan is APA's director of policy and government affairs and writes the *Policy News* blog. He wrote the article on pages 6 to 10.

Bill Roschen is president of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission and a principal of Roschen Van Cleve Architects. He wrote the Commissioner's Voice column on page 11.

Rana Salzmann is the APA knowledge management associate. She wrote the resource finder on page 10.

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