THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION SPRING 2025

PLANNING

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF PLANNING MAGAZINE

PLANNING 90

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On the cover: Anna B. Brawley, AICP, an Anchorage Assembly member, helped drive zoning reform in her city. Above: Solutions for small cities from Reykjavík, Iceland.

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Francine S. Romero, PhD
In Texas, an Underground River Runs Through It, page 12

Romero has always been drawn to simple, effective policies for protecting natural resources, especially considering the many obstacles to doing this well. In Texas, protecting aquifers beneath vast private landholdings outside city limits presents major challenges. "To be able not only to work with the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program, but to share its lessons is enormously rewarding," she says.

Jeff Levine, AICP
Think Big, Plan Small: Lessons from Iceland, page 15

Now on the faculty at MIT, this former small town planner and frequent traveler loves finding links between big-picture thinking and how planning is implemented in practice. Levine was thrilled to get funding to explore small city planning in Iceland. "Living in Maine, it's almost a requirement that you visit Iceland at some point," he says.

Brian Adams (Iñupiaq)
How We Made Zoning Change Happen, page 20

An editorial and commercial photographer based in Anchorage, Adams specializes in environmental portraiture. His work documenting Alaskan Native communities has been showcased in galleries across the U.S. and Europe. His most recent book, *I Am Inuit*, was published in December 2017.

PLANNING

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

The American Planning Association will lead the way to equitable, thriving communities by creating unique insights, as well as innovative and practical approaches that enable the planning community to anticipate and successfully adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing world.

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COURTESY SUBJECTS: STEFKAS KASSEL (ADAMS)

FROM THE WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR

APA Is Committed to a Welcoming Environment

CREATING A MORE inclusive and welcoming environment for our members is a core value of APA—one we have been working hard for several years to integrate into everything we do.

It also is something incredibly important to me personally. There have been many times in my life when I have been in situations where I didn't feel entirely welcome or well-received. Unfortunately, I know I am far from alone in that regard. It is for this reason that I don't want any of our members or guests to ever feel that way when attending APA events, meetings, or activities. I feel very strongly that APA should be a space where everyone feels respected and truly embraced.

'I don't want any of our members or guests to ever feel unwelcome. APA should be a space where everyone feels respected and truly embraced.'

—SILVIA VARGAS, FAICP

Recent developments make me feel increasingly confident that our organization can achieve this goal, and the good news is that we are already on our way there.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, a task force—led by chair Wendy Moeller, FAICP; Allison Mouch, AICP; and me—collaborated with APA members, divisions, students, and state chapters to get a better understanding of our policies and processes. During those conversations, we identified ways that APA can be clearer in our anti-harassment and antidiscrimination policy.

Our work culminated this past December, with the APA Board of Directors' approval of new Rules of Conduct that outline the policy, including a process for reporting complaints and acting on violations. This is separate from the AICP Code of Ethics. Additionally, the Board took several other important actions. It appointed a new Welcoming Environment Committee, which is responsible for reviewing complaints made under the new rules; updated policies and procedures related to the National Planning Conference and onboarding of new volunteer leaders; and approved a requirement for annual sexual harassment and antidiscrimination training for volunteer leaders identified in the rules.

These rules apply to all participants—members and nonmembers, guests, sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and exhibitors—in APA activities taking place both in-person and online. They also apply to APA's leaders, including the Board of Directors and the AICP Commission, acting in that capacity when attending any event or speaking as a representative of APA or AICP.

Building on a culture of care

We know that planners by their very nature are respectful, caring, and genuinely interested in engaging all perspectives in their communities. Quite frankly, I hope that this means we will rarely—if ever—have to administer the processes laid out in these rules.

One area this policy does not cover, however, is harassment or discrimination at an APA member's workplace, a non-APA event, or online. For those matters, the appropriate official or office, such as an organization's human resources department, should be contacted. To help members navigate these changes, APA has posted a series of online resources. For more, visit planning.org/conduct.

And while you're there, please join me and other APA members in taking a pledge to stand up against sexual harassment and discrimination. Together, we can make a powerful statement about the importance of having a welcoming space for all.

Silvia Vargas, FAICP, LEED AP, is chair of the Welcoming Environment Committee, director at large on the APA Board of Directors, and principal planner at Calvin, Giordano & Associates.

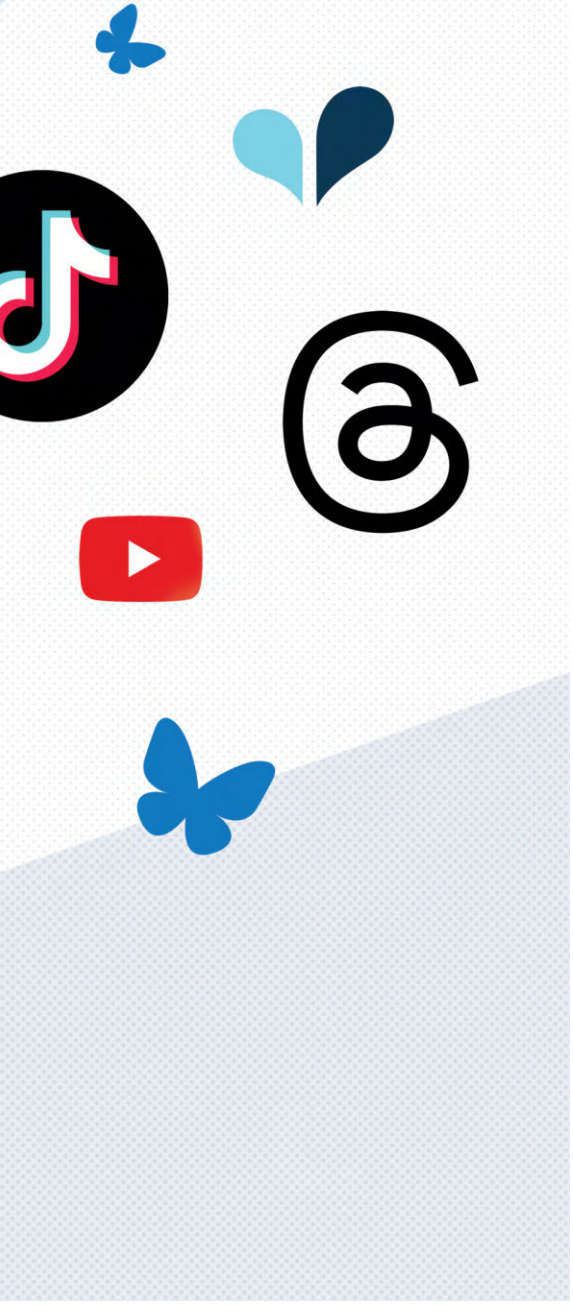
ILLUSTRATION BY CATHERINE BIXLER

Bluesky is the newest major social media platform where planners and urbanists are connecting.
4X6/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS; ILLUSTRATION BY CATHERINE BIXLER

INTER SECTIONS

WHERE PLANNING AND THE WORLD MEET

Engagement | Housing | The Profession | Et cetera



ENGAGEMENT

Is Bluesky the New 'It' Space for Urbanists?

Planners are turning to the up-and-coming platform to expand their reach and target their audience. By Jon DePaolis

AS THE SUN began to set on 2024, planners and others were waking up to the ideas, conversations, and community-building opportunities on Bluesky.

The up-and-coming platform began as an initiative of Twitter (now X) in 2019 but split off in 2022. The next year it began sending out invitations to join, but it wasn't until late 2024 that Bluesky's user base seemed to explode. Between October 2024 and January 2025, the platform doubled from 13 million to 26 million users.

Chicago-based transportation planner Ryan Richter, AICP, created an account in late 2023 but says there were few planners and urbanists on it then, which was a drawback. "That's really the value of social media," he says. "There has to be some number of people that make this a viable community; otherwise you're just talking to yourself."

Brent Toderian, founder and principal of TODERIAN UrbanWORKS, joined Bluesky last year. At that time, he was hedging his social media bets by also joining Mastodon, Spoutible, Threads, TikTok, and Instagram, but he sees Bluesky as a successor to what X used to be in the urbanism space.

"I use social media to refine the messaging that I use in my practice and in my presentations and communications," he says. "Twitter had been, and now Bluesky is, the best way for me to test and refine my message."

Planner Anna Brawley, AICP, says she finds Bluesky and X useful for the urbanism community. "I would say Bluesky has a lot of the good features and energy of X—it's short-format and a great way to get breaking news or updates on what's happening," says Brawley, who also is an elected official in Anchorage.

While it's a good place to follow local news outlets, she notes that "not all of the local folks who were active on other platforms migrated over."

In 2024, Bluesky introduced a new feature, which could have contributed to its growth. Its "starter packs" allowed users to

curate lists of people to follow on the platform with the ease of a single click. It had a big impact, Toderian says. "It was the perfect tool for the moment," he says, because it allowed people to find their community. He has created seven starter packs to date, including one with climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, to help "connect the dots" for new users.

Leveraging the total app ecosystem

Bluesky isn't the only social media platform planners are leaning into.

Thomas Sanchez, PHD, AICP, a professor of landscape architecture and urban planning at Texas A&M University, has been encouraging his students to join LinkedIn to find people doing interesting work in students' areas of interest. "Look at what they are posting. Look at what some of the conversations are about. It gives students the ability to see what opportunities are out there in planning," Sanchez says.

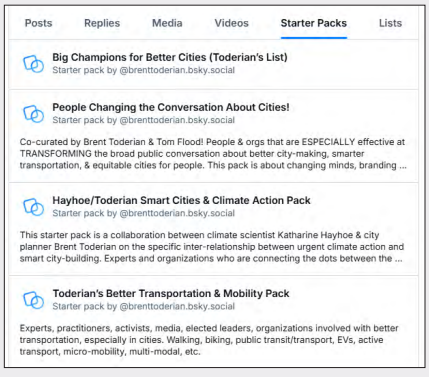
Pete Saunders, an Illinois-based planner, has found similar success on Substack with his blog *The Corner Side Yard*. "I did not realize how much of Substack is a social media platform that has a blogging and newsletter basis to it," he says.

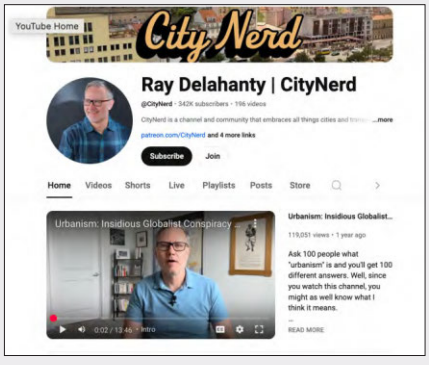
Saunders began writing because it gave him the chance to look at planning in a different way and to explore issues that don't get the kind of attention they deserve. "That's what I think social media really has to offer to planners," he says. "It's that place where planners can say, 'Where does this fit in the perspective of the work that I'm doing?' I think it gives planners an opportunity to think more broadly."

That ability to share and explore perspectives is why Ray Delahanty, AICP, became a YouTube creator. His series *CityNerd* now has 339,000 followers, but he never expected it to take off that way. "It started snowballing," he says, in part because the YouTube algorithm "is just so powerful."

FINDING COMMUNITY

Brent Toderian uses Bluesky's starter packs (top) to help others build their networks. On YouTube, Ray Delahanty uses his *CityNerd* channel to share different perspectives.





SOURCE: BLUESKY, YOUTUBE

What's next for Bluesky?

Mitchell Silver, FAICP, a former president of APA and former commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, was recruited to Bluesky by Toderian. Silver's X account has close to 11,000 followers, but he intends to close it later this year. "X is not the same platform as Twitter, which was a place to follow thought leaders … and find important news and trends from trusted sources," he says.

As for Brawley, she currently has only a personal account on Bluesky. Comparatively, on Facebook and Instagram, she has both a personal account and professional-facing ones for her role as an Anchorage Assembly member. When she posts on Bluesky, it is mostly about advocacy information, calls to action, news articles or relevant information, or giving her opinion on local or state issues.

But, like Toderian, she also uses the platform for informal message-testing, "just workshopping some talking points or metaphors I want to use in other contexts." More and more users are engaging on Bluesky for those practical uses, like thinking through concepts and new ideas.

"I've been in conversations with people about something where a new point of view has made me rethink my decision or refine my position," Richter says. "So, in my day-to-day, that's probably made me a more effective communicator."

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

HOUSING

Easy-Access ADU Plans Pave the Way for Speedy Building

Preapproved design plans make it easier and less expensive for community members to build this affordable housing option in their backyard. By Jon DePaolis

COURTESY COMMUNITY PLANNING COLLABORATIVE

The Adobu Dwell House model is a 540-square-foot, one-bedroom, one-bathroom, prefabricated home that is one of the preapproved plans available from the new California ADU Plans Gallery.

THE APPETITE FOR more affordable housing is leading a boom for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). In California, that type of housing has doubled since 2020, according to state estimates. A state law going into effect in 2025 also will require communities to come up with processes for preapproving ADU plans.

As the demand has increased, so has the need for turnkey designs to help local governments and homeowners join the party. The California ADU Plans Gallery, created by the Community Planning Collaborative (CPC), was released in August 2024. The web application tool gives users a way to search through both prefabricated and traditional site-built designs. The website also has a demo available for local governments planning to launch their own custom tool.

"The California ADU Plans Gallery gives local governments a place to demonstrate what's possible for their communities while providing a publicly accessible database of prefabricated plans approved for use statewide," said David Driskell, principal at CPC, in a press release about the launch. "Digital tools like the ADU Plans Gallery help local governments assist their residents through the challenging ADU process and expand housing supply in their existing neighborhoods."

Permit-ready in Arkansas

California isn't the only place where this type of program is making headlines. The Permit-Ready Building Design Program in Fayetteville, Arkansas, puts turnkey architectural designs for residential construction into the hands of residents wanting to build in the community's downtown and Walker Park neighborhoods. The program was approved in early 2024 and is in development.

The city hopes the program will help save residents time and money while also providing new, affordable housing for a growing population, which at the last census was nearly 100,000 people. Applicants will be able to choose from 30 designs, ranging from single family to townhomes and duplexes. All of them were preapproved by the city's development services department.

The program has received positive feedback from the community, with a lot of the excitement stemming from how nice the designs are, says Britin Bostick, AICP, Fayetteville's long-range planning and special projects manager. "One of the most attractive things about the variety of buildings we are offering is that we have duplexes that look like regular houses, and that gives us a couple of options," Bostick says.

She notes that ADUs are allowed by right citywide in Fayetteville and can be up to 1,200 square feet total, attached or detached. Therefore, a duplex that has one unit below the 1,200-square-foot threshold would be allowed in single-family-zoning districts. "We've had a lot of excitement about that

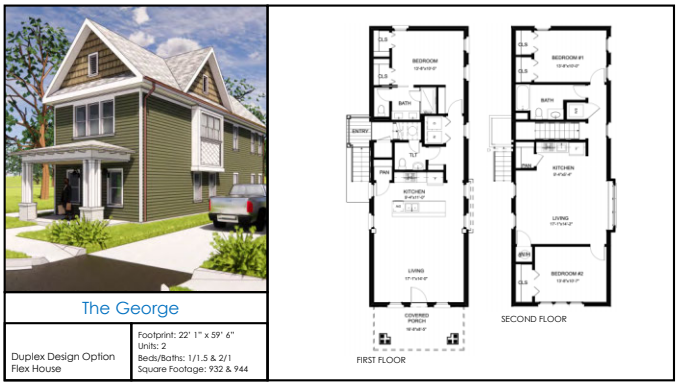
FIND MORE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

The *Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook*, a collaboration by the National League of Cities and APA, highlights ideas being applied in local communities. To download, go to plnn.org/hsaplbk.

and small cottage designs," Bostick says. "The interest—and support—have been incredible."

Bostick says there is already a waitlist of residents wanting to take advantage of the program. "One of the benefits of this project and hopefully similar future projects is showing options for attractive housing that adds gentle density to neighborhoods where there is a lot of available land," she says.

"One of the important deliverables was an analysis of the project area to see how much opportunity exists to add housing because of large lots and zoning entitlements. This gives owners more options, can make space for more renters, and—in a context of high land values—gives us options that are more focused on the existing scale of the neighborhood than just demolishing existing homes and building back much larger structures."



One of the preapproved duplex designs curated by Pattern Zones Co. for Fayetteville, Arkansas. Making it easier to build ADUs and duplexes is helping the city add gentle density.

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

COURTESY FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS; DESIGN BY MBL PLANNING

When Planners Let the Good Times Roll

Meet the man building community through parades, berets, and zany French zoning puns. By Meghan Stromberg

PLANNERS ARE used to engaging with people in the communities they serve, but what about connecting with one another? Whether you gather to swap war stories, share ideas, or just have some fun, spending time with fellow planning colleagues is important for many reasons, not the least of which is staying mentally healthy in an increasingly chaotic world.

Jeffrey Goodman, AICP, knows this—and he certainly knows how to let the good times roll. For nearly a decade, the New Orleans–based planner has been the captain of Krewe D'Ensité, a group of planners who gather in French garb to march during the Mardi Gras parade season. Their tagline: affordabilité, walkabilité, vibrancé. (None of those, by the way, are real French words.)

Jeffrey Goodman is the captain of Krewe D'Ensité.

In an episode of the APA Podcast series *Short Takes*, Goodman shared how he builds community through humor, zany French puns, and taking planning to the streets—quite literally. His story has been edited for length and clarity.

JEFFREY GOODMAN: Krewe D'Ensité—pronounced "density" with a French accent—is an urban planning–themed walking krewe of about 150 people. While other Carnival krewes march in elaborately decorated costumes or with complicated dance moves, we parade through the streets of New Orleans dressed as French protesters—think berets, Breton-striped shirts, and printed signs—with puns about zoning.

With Carnival and all the parades, New Orleans is a place where everyone participates, where everyone is gathered for Mardi Gras, and if this isn't the place and time to put planners and planning topics in front of thousands of people at once, I don't know what is.

So, in Carnival, every krewe has a signature throw, a unique trinket we give out as we march. The Krewe of Muses has hand-glittered shoes, Zulu has coconuts, and we give out miniature protest signs made with popsicle sticks. All the signs are jokes about urban planning, local real estate issues, resiliency, local government—usually with some sort of French twist.

People really love puns. I love puns. I'm glad I'm a father so I can make them with free abandon.

HEAR THE FULL STORY

Scan the QR code below or go to planning.org/podcast to learn more about innovative community engagement in an episode of *Short Takes*.

'Gentrifiers against gentrification'

Some of my favorites? Well, there's *Master of My Eminent Domain*. Or, *The More Things Climate Change, the More They Stay the Same*. How about *What I Love About Tourism Jobs Is that I Get Older, and They Stay the Same Wage*? We had a René Magritte–themed float telling everyone to *Invest in Surreal Estate*. There are a lot of good ones: *The Suburbs: Pedestrian But Not Walkable*. Or asking, *Public Comment Allez-vous*?

This year, our parade fell on Valentine's Day so we tried to make planning a little sexier. Our signature throw was a folded paper fortune teller for the *Erogenous Zoning Review Board*.

One year our theme was "Gentrifiers Against Gentrification," poking fun at a certain attitude we hear at public meetings. It was fascinating to see the theme play out as the parade was going past. On one side of the street is an area that really hasn't gentrified very much, and those parade-goers recognized it as a joke, as a type of person

COURTESY JEFFREY GOODMAN

they know. The other side was from an area that had gentrified, and I don't think some of them knew it was a joke. Some of them were just like, "Yes, so true. Like, we've got to do better."

It's fun, but if it can also get some wheels turning, I'm OK with that. You look at parts of New Orleans and a lot of other major cities, and they are gentrifying. But if you ask individuals, "Are you a gentrifier?" no one would say they are. But someone is! We often talk about planning processes as if they are happening on their own without people making choices. So, we're making fun of ourselves as planners, too.

For our krewe members, the parade is about being able to blow off some steam in a safe place. As planners, we often are in positions where we have to be pretty even-handed in how we communicate. I think it's important as a discipline to have a space where you can have fun, where you can joke about these topics—even where you can point out where the profession isn't doing a great job.

> 'For our krewe members, the parade is about being able to blow off some steam in a safe place.'
>
> —JEFFREY GOODMAN, AICP

It's not just the parade, which is wonderful. It's also about sitting around the table making the throws, gluing popsicle sticks together. We've got people who are 22 years old and straight out of college, and we've got people who are retired. There are planners in the housing space and others in resilience.

We have all sorts of different people, and it's just great to have conversations and be able to talk about what we do, our interests, and our lives outside of work, all while sitting around making a funny, punny button.

Planning topics can be heavy sometimes, and a lot of the regular ways planners come together is so business or career-focused. I'm very proud to have done this for many years, and we're going to keep doing it until they tell us to stop. Or until I run out of puns, which will never happen.

Meghan Stromberg is APA's editor in chief.

A Haitian immigrant chases the American Dream while he also does his job dismantling homes in his own neighborhood.

PLAN TO WATCH

The Wrenching Dynamics of Neighborhood Change

Mountains explores the life of a demolition man in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. By Ezra Haber Glenn, AICP

Mountains is streaming on Prime Video and Apple TV+. It has won jury and audience awards at several film festivals.

COURTESY MUSIC BOX FILMS

As planners address the nation's growing housing crisis, communities from Minneapolis to Austin are beginning to embrace the wisdom of a pro-development agenda. But while we've started to make progress addressing the root causes and building new housing, there is still a long way to go to make up for decades of chronic under-building.

Paradoxically, a surprisingly high amount of "new construction" is built on the site of existing homes, simply replacing older stock. According to a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders, over 9 percent of new homes resulted from teardowns.

Mountains, a 2023 film by first-time director Monica Sorelle, shines a light on the very human dimensions of the development, displacement, and loss experienced when a neighborhood is transformed, one house at a time. Set in Miami's Little Haiti—a historic, vibrant community full of humble bungalows built over a century ago and home to generations of Haitian and other Caribbean immigrants—the film follows the everyday struggles of Xavier (Atibon Nazaire). The soft-spoken, middle-aged Haitian immigrant works demolition on a construction crew, where steady employment means contributing to the destruction of his own neighborhood.

Xavier is a loving but tired husband, a caring but critical father, a responsible homeowner, a reliable worker, and a frustrated dreamer. He tolerates the frequent indignities that come with being a Black immigrant working for those who make more money. But he is content to be moving toward his own definition of the American Dream. We see the cramped house he calls home, chock-full of color, life, flavorful food, and love thanks to his wife Esperance (Sheila Anozier), who works two jobs to supplement their income. All the while, their neighborhood is slowly changing with each teardown. A family of neighbors is lost, to be replaced by a very different group of residents.

Sorelle grew up in North Miami and experienced these processes firsthand. She clearly understands the complexity planners and activists face in confronting the dynamics of neighborhood change. Her directorial style is one of hopeful-realist, shying away from a simplistic, black-and-white analysis and resting with the gray in-between emotions felt by all the characters.

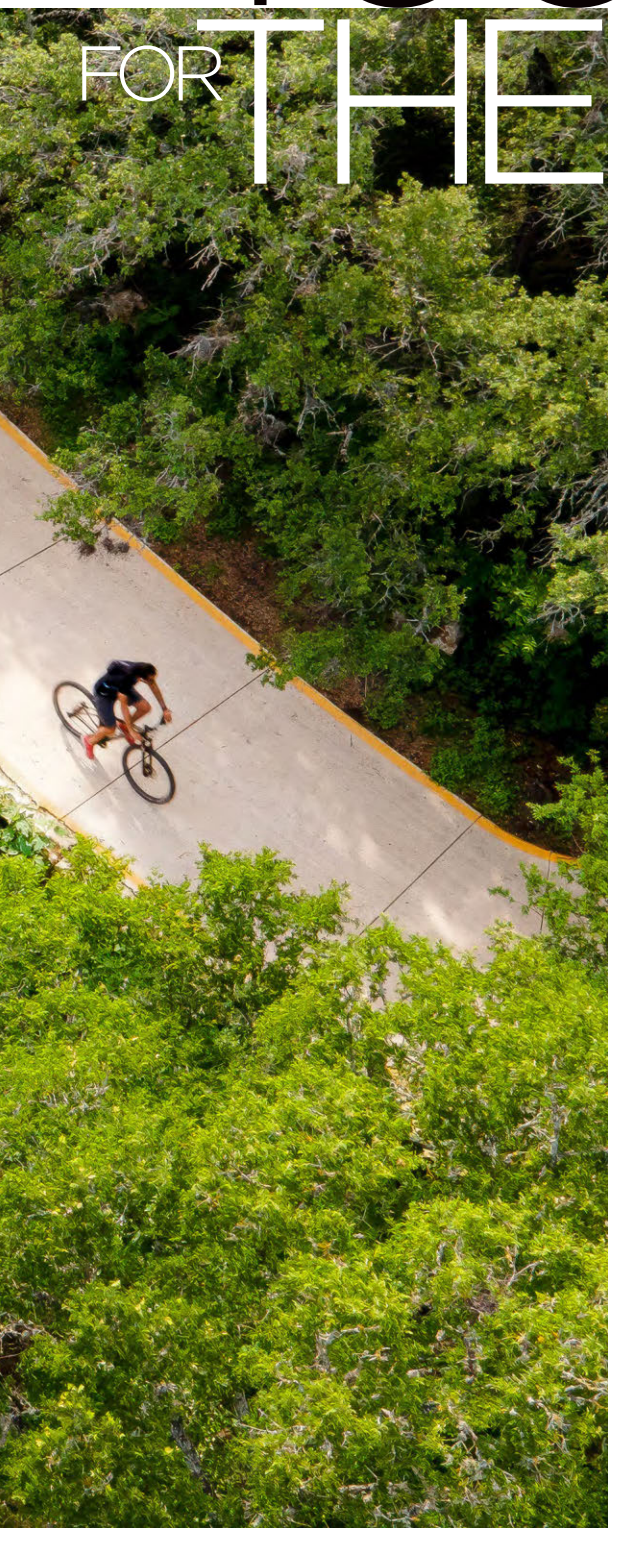
Through the subtle and slow tracking and some wonderful wordless acting (despite a few clunkier moments bordering on stereotype when showing the "gentrifiers"), *Mountains* renders a rich portrait of community change in an ethnic immigrant neighborhood. The film doesn't give simple solutions to these complicated issues, some of which planners, neighbors, and a new generation of community organizers will likely have to contend with while navigating the tradeoffs between growth, development, stability, and community.

Ezra Haber Glenn, AICP, is Planning's *regular film reviewer. He teaches at MIT's Department of Urban Studies & Planning and writes about cities and film. Follow him at thecityinfilm.org.*

Salado Creek is part of the natural recharge system for San Antonio's Edwards Aquifer. A 20-mile multiuse trail runs alongside it, connecting people to the region's waterways.
NICK WAGNER/*SAN ANTONIO REPORT*

TOOLS FOR THE TRADE

KNOWLEDGE YOU CAN PUT TO WORK
How-To | Viewpoint | Planners Library



HOW-TO

IN TEXAS, AN UNDERGROUND RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

A proven aquifer protection program offers tips for creating an effective conservation initiative. *By Francine S. Romero, PhD*

THE SAN ANTONIO region sits atop a precious resource. Stretching across thousands of acres in south central Texas, the Edwards Aquifer provides an abundant source of groundwater vital to the livelihood of the region's growing population, expanding economy, and surging development. However, that rapid growth continues to impact the aquifer—San Antonio's primary water resource—reducing and compromising its ability to replenish, known as recharge.

This year, San Antonio's Edwards Aquifer Protection Program (EAPP) celebrates its 25th anniversary, having placed more than 187,000 acres under protection since it began. While rules regulate development and pollution, the local community also knows that the best way to protect the aquifer is to conserve the sensitive and irreplaceable land over its recharge and contributing zones.

"One of the guiding principles in the City of San Antonio's *SA Tomorrow* comprehensive plan adopted in 2016 is 'Conserve, protect, and manage San Antonio's natural, cultural, and historic resources, and open space,'" notes Planning Director Bridgett White, AICP. "The EAPP is an important tool in ensuring that growth and development is balanced with protecting natural resources such as the Edwards Aquifer."

With a national and international reputation for effectiveness, San Antonio's EAPP offers lessons for planners confronting the challenge of open space protection.

1 **KNOW YOUR STATE LAW.** State laws governing municipal powers and allowable funding sources may facilitate or frustrate open space protection. Planners familiar with these rules—and willing to suggest tactical alterations—may find them useful for land acquisition.

The EAPP originated in 2000 with a municipal sales tax increase of one-eighth cent on the dollar (called Proposition 3, for $45 million total), using the state's allowance of a voter-approved "venue" tax to fund acquisition of parkland.

This was a creative initial step—expanding a tool intended only to create municipal parks to the

complementary objective of targeted land preservation.

But state law restricted the use of funds to the creation of parks within the municipality's home county. This initial funding round therefore limited purchases to small, expensive parcels within high-growth Bexar County, which then had to be developed and managed as public parks. But, roughly 70 percent of San Antonio's drinking water originates as recharge occurring outside Bexar County.

In advance of the EAPP reauthorization in 2005, however, local officials successfully lobbied the state legislature to add watershed protection through conservation easements to the venue tax menu. Approved by voters again (as Proposition 1, for $90 million), this innovation enabled acquisition of easements in adjoining counties, allowing for more efficient expenditures. Most importantly, given the aquifer's interjurisdictional flow, recharge to the San Antonio pool of the Edwards Aquifer occurs mainly in these counties, making them the optimal targets for protection.

2 EXECUTE YOUR LAND PROTECTION POLICY PROACTIVELY. As a planning tool, the EAPP provided groundwater protection through land preservation well in advance of predicted growth, providing a boost to the city's sustainability goals. In the intervening years, the EAPP was employed to secure significant recharge land in adjacent counties, before growth spilled into those exurban areas.

Still, one of the challenges with protecting open space proactively is confronting the argument that such outlying land will never be developed anyway. It is always prudent for planners to prepare population and land price projections for the targeted area.

3 BUILD AN ADVOCACY COALITION. In promoting the EAPP over the years, the program's pioneers had fostered strong citizen advocacy of the need to protect recharge land. In 2020, when supporters backed the tax for a fourth reauthorization vote (all previous rounds received overwhelming support), the mayor endorsed shifting the tax revenue away from the EAPP to an entirely different use. Public outcry triggered a compromise: City leaders approved a stream of income from the local water utility to the city's general fund as the new funding source.

Another essential coalition came in the form of property owners in outlying counties, typically large-acreage ranchers, who have sold easements to the EAPP. They in turn recruit other landowning friends, family, and neighbors who might be reluctant to participate.

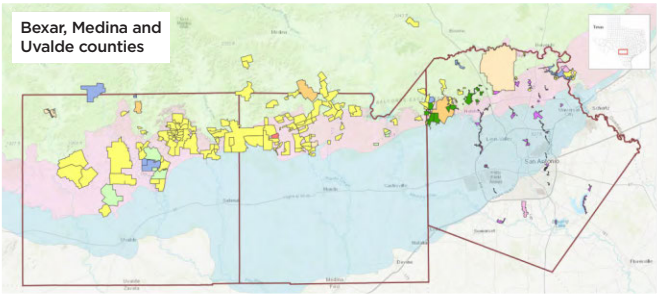
These owners ensure a continued supply of land and easements to purchase. Fueling this dynamic is an ethos of sustainability advocated by rural landowners increasingly challenged by drought and encroaching development.

4 SEEK OUT TECHNICAL AND FUNDING PARTNERS. The EAPP infrastructure includes an external land acquisition team comprised of a national nonprofit, The Nature Conservancy, and the local Green Spaces Alliance, which work directly with potential participants. Relying on their experience in relationship building and negotiating easements is an important efficiency of the program.

Another crucial strategy is bolstering the primary funding source through grants and collaborations. The EAPP has partnered with the U.S. Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to purchase recharge property that buffers military facilities. "Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) is very fortunate to have great partnerships with the nexus goals of conservation and protecting the mission through the EAPP and REPI programs," says Richard King, program manager for the JBSA Community Mission Integration Team. "Together everyone accomplishes more."

MULTICOUNTY CONSERVATION

The voter-approved Proposition 1 from 2005 allowed the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program to acquire easements (shown in yellow) across three counties in the San Antonio area.



SOURCE: EAPP

A grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service facilitated acquisition of a particularly expensive easement. The city's Development Services Department has contributed to the EAPP because it helps meet the regional habitat conservation plan's objectives.

5 **STICK TO YOUR CONSERVATION MISSION.** Open space protection presents a multitude of benefits, but in the absence of one clearly defined goal it can be vulnerable to mission drift.

The EAPP's focus on recharge conservation has many co-benefits, including the sustenance of generational ranching operations, scenic value, habitat protection, and so on. To keep those side benefits from diluting the primary goal of protecting the aquifer's recharge—rather than, say, pursuing a property solely for its scenic beauty—it is vital to nail down and continually advance that foundational mission.

State law may help if it narrowly restricts the use of funds. If it does not, then it is important to codify that mission into the local enabling ordinance. This allows planners to focus on a holistic outcome rather than justify open space protection on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

As drought, development, and other threats to the Edwards Aquifer grow in intensity, the EAPP remains a vital tool in conserving and ensuring the sustainability of groundwater resources for generations to come. Its success over 25 years offers planners and leaders across the country lessons for proactive planning, coalition building, and leveraging state laws to protect important open spaces.

Francine S. Romero, PhD, is a professor and the chair of the Department of Public Administration in the College for Health, Community and Policy at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She chairs the advisory that administers the EAPP.

RENDERING COURTESY MYNDIR/EFLA/BEAM ARCHITECTS

Development in Kópavogur will help accomodate Reykjavik's growth. A new bridge between the cities will include bus rapid transit and cycling and walking lanes.

VIEWPOINT

THINK BIG, PLAN SMALL: LESSONS FROM ICELAND

Growing small cities abroad offer successful mobility and housing solutions. *By Jeff Levine, AICP*

WHEN WE THINK about urban planning, do small cities typically come to mind or big metropolitan areas? For me, it's the smaller places; the U.S. has so many smaller cities that are attractive, walkable, and people-friendly.

These places, with populations between 25,000 and 150,000, are an important part of how the country can grow sustainably over the next century. From 2010 to 2022, these communities grew from 78.5 million to 89.5 million residents—a 14 percent increase that is nearly double the the U.S. overall.

I've spent a lot of my career as a planner in small cities, and this growth doesn't surprise me. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people flocked from larger metros to smaller communities for their scale, walkability, and access to natural spaces.

European countries have a long history of planning for small cities. While Europe's strong central planning model differs from that of the U.S., it is nonetheless revealing to study places that boomed after the automobile. Iceland is one of them, and it shares a lot of characteristics with the U.S., with its cities centered on driving and local-level planning. In May 2024, I spent 10 days there to see what lessons I could bring back.

Sustainable transit and housing

All of Iceland's cities are small. The capital, Reykjavík, is the largest, with just under 140,000 people. The next biggest city, Kópavogur, has a population of 40,000. But Icelandic cities are growing rapidly, and these thriving small cities are doing interesting and innovative planning in transportation, placemaking, and infrastructure.

Transport for the Capital Area is a joint effort by the national government and six municipalities to ensure

two-thirds of people live within a five-minute walk of transit by 2040. A recent treaty seeks to construct an ambitious bus rapid transit (BRT) system named Borgarlínan ("City Line"). The first Borgarlínan will connect Kópavogur from the south to downtown Reykjavík over a new BRT bridge across the harbor, then continue east.

A new neighborhood, Keldur, is a transit-oriented development planned for the line's eastern end on state-controlled land. According to Thorsteinn Hermannsson, director of development for the transit system, Keldur will become home to 13,000 residents and 8,000 jobs. The plan includes three BRT stations surrounded by three- to five-story buildings, with parking at the periphery, except for loading and those with disabilities.

In Kópavogur, the Kársnes district is poised for growth. It sits between city hall and the bays and includes single-family homes inland and underdeveloped waterfront land. The winning plan from the Nordic Built Cities challenge in 2015 called for development focused on transit, water, open space, and housing for 4,550 residents.

Planners there say the plan seeks to preserve the raw, close nature of the oceanfront, increase walkability and access to new BRT, provide public spaces, and create a diverse and interesting built appearance. It also includes preparations for climate adaptation and preserving the existing marina. So far, development has started on 13 parcels.

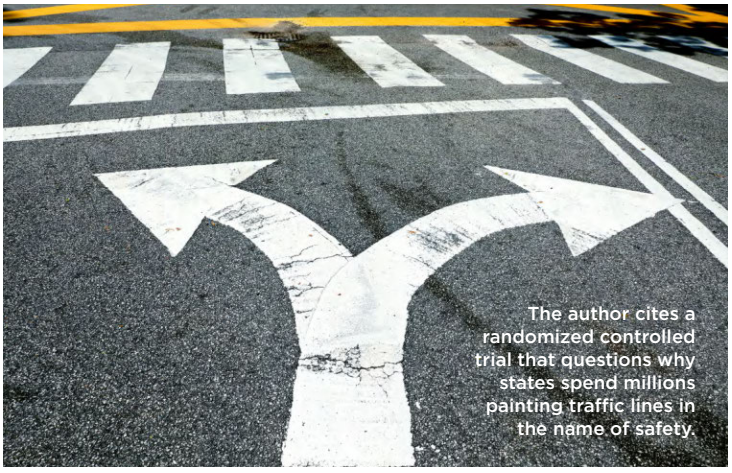
In Kársnes, the neighborhood scale will be taller than surrounding neighborhoods. Growing sustainably, especially when you aim to keep housing affordable and transit accessible, sometimes means peeking above the existing skyline.

Committing to bold action

While Iceland might seem remote, its challenges likely hit close to home. Its solutions could be revealing for the sustainable growth of small U.S. cities. To work, bold ideas backed by implementation, like improved transit service and density to match, are needed. To provide affordability and make transit viable, U.S. cities may have to allow more height and density, even if it doesn't exactly match the existing fabric.

The future for small cities in America can be bright if they are planned well. Small city planners should think big.

Jeff Levine, AICP, is an associate professor in MIT's Department of Urban Studies & Planning and owner of Levine Planning Strategies.



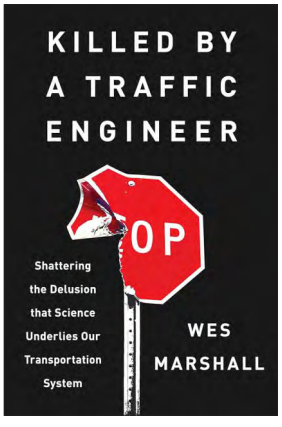
The author cites a randomized controlled trial that questions why states spend millions painting traffic lines in the name of safety.

IMAGEDEPOTPRO/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

PLANNERS LIBRARY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AREN'T BASED ON SCIENCE

This author says engineers rely on old manuals, practices, and pure conjecture to guide safety decisions. *By Erick Guerra*



Killed by a Traffic Engineer: Shattering the Delusion that Science Underlies Our Transportation System
Wes Marshall, 2024, Island Press, 344 pp, $35

ALTHOUGH IMPROVING traffic safety is the top stated priority of the federal and many state departments of transportation, the U.S. has the highest traffic fatality rate of its wealthy democratic peers. In 88 short, punchy chapters, Wes Marshall—a licensed professional engineer and civil engineering professor—provides plenty of evidence of how the traffic engineering profession relies on, rather than science, a host of manuals and practices developed on shaky research or pure conjecture over the past century. He likens contemporary traffic engineering to the early days of medicine when doctors and other practitioners likely killed as many patients as they saved.

By tracing a host of practices, Marshall convincingly shows that much of what traffic engineers claim improves safety is uncertain, contested, and synonymous with increasing capacity. I highly recommend it for anyone who cares about traffic safety or wants examples of how poor practices can become embedded in the daily practices of institutions.

—Erick Guerra, University of Pennsylvania

APA members can read the full reviews, originally published in the Journal of the American Planning Association, *at planning.org/japa.*

How Big Things Get Done: The Surprising Factors that Determine the Fate of Every Project, from Home Renovations to Space Exploration and Everything in Between
Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner, 2023, Crown Currency, 304 pp, $28.99

ONE OF THE WAYS planning differs from other task-oriented professions is in how it learns from success and failure. As in previous books, Bent Flyvbjerg encourages urban planners, project managers, and the agencies that fund large-scale projects to be more realistic in their goals, cautious in their projections, and humble in their methods.

Drawing on past and present-day projects—ranging from Terminal 5 at London's Heathrow Airport and high-speed rail in California to an initially modest home renovation in Brooklyn that ended up costing six times the estimate—Flyvbjerg and Gardner deliver a series of concise lessons on how to improve the odds of undertaking successful projects. They show readers that the most important tools in any project management toolkit are experience, a healthy skepticism of optimistic forecasts and the latest-and-greatest technologies, an ability to manage teams, and an understanding of risk sources.

—John Landis, University of Pennsylvania

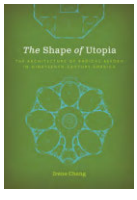
Poverty, By America
Matthew Desmond, 2023, Penguin Random House, 320 pp, $20

MATTHEW DESMOND TAKES a broad and complex issue and attempts to distill it into a concise message in *Poverty, By America*. In short, Desmond argues that poverty persists because we all benefit from it. While this is not a new argument, he updates evidence of the degradation of jobs at the low end of the labor market and the ways people

experiencing poverty—particularly Black Americans—are preyed upon and overpay for essential items like housing and access to cash and credit. Government is part of the problem—and so is the growing aversion that many U.S. residents have to using services we associate with the underserved, which reinforces resistance to investing in it.

Desmond proposes bold solutions, and his arguments are particularly relevant for planners. This ambitious book is ultimately about building a new narrative about poverty, our role in it, and our obligation to act as a powerful diagnosis of our complicity in maintaining poverty.

—Elizabeth Mueller, University of Texas at Austin



The Shape of Utopia: The Architecture of Radical Reform in Nineteenth-Century America
Irene Cheng, 2023, University of Minnesota Press, 376 pp, $35

NARRATED AS AN epic novel, impeccably researched, and richly rendered, *The Shape of Utopia: The Architecture of Radical Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* takes a much-deserved place among planning history classics. It is a masterfully comprehensive account of intertwining the personal and landscape biographies of 19th-century American reformists, their social visions of communitarianism and social coexistence, and their mixed attempts at prototyping them. Far from focusing on old-fashioned, distant stories, Cheng extracts from the past critical lessons for today's planners related to epistemology, representation, standardization, communication, authorship, and responsibility for planning choices.

—Deni Ruggeri, University of Maryland

THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC PLAN REVIEW ON MODERN URBAN PLANNING

Urban planning shapes our cities, influencing everything from housing and businesses to the aesthetics of our communities. As cities evolve, planning departments must ensure that new developments meet current needs and support future goals. This is where electronic plan review steps in, streamlining workflows and supporting collaboration across departments to keep urban planning efficient and aligned with the broader vision for a city.

We take a look at how planners can effectively tackle the challenges of today's urban planning — from rapid growth and vacant commercial spaces, to foster healthy, sustainable communities.

Urban Planning and Long-Term Community Vision

At its core, urban planning manages land use to benefit the community, part of this responsibility means planning departments review proposals for new developments before construction begins.

As Christine Brakefield, former professional planner and Director of Partner Mangement and Enablement at Avolve, explained, "There's a formal review process that happens where it goes before planning, fire, parks, engineering, and more. Planning involves many more stakeholders than building, because they're looking at the whole impact of the project."

Planners ensure developments comply with regulations and zoning laws while supporting the city's long-term vision. "Planners are responsible for this long-range vision, whether it's for new developments or revitalizing older areas to make them more pedestrian-friendly," Brakefield added.

Challenges in Modern Urban Planning

Today's urban planners face a host of challenges. Some regions grapple with rapid growth and infrastructure strain, while others confront shrinking populations and vacant commercial spaces — particularly in downtown areas affected by remote work trends in the post-pandemic world.

Local agencies often struggle with inefficient processes and chronic staffing shortages. Other headaches include convoluted application processes that result in the need for multiple resubmittals, chasing citizens to get the right file type submitted, and managing the plan review process between internal and external stakeholders.

Simultaneously, urban planning professionals are trying to navigate the demands of answering to City Hall, while ensuring a smooth citizen experience for those interfacing with the local government. All of which is to say, they are contending with a lot.

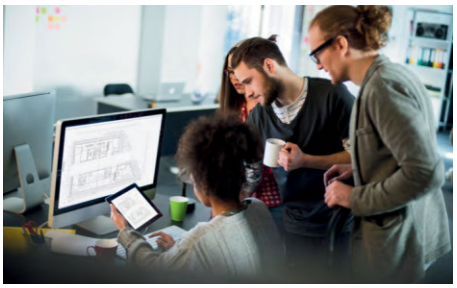
Electronic Plan Review Supports Planning Departments

Electronic plan review solutions help planning departments navigate these various complexities. When developers submit proposals, electronic plan review allows staff to dive into detailed documents more efficiently, as tools like text-based markup, drawing overlays, and search functions simplify review and ensure proposals meet required standards.

As planning departments continue to face complex challenges, electronic plan review systems will be essential in ensuring our urban spaces remain vibrant, healthy, and resilient.

"Pre-development meetings involve developers submitting applications with preliminary plans — like proposed subdivision plans or design documents. Planners review these documents before meetings and provide input based on development standards and long-range plans," Brakefield noted. "The electronic plan review system helps them to manage and review these documents, making the process significantly more efficient," she added.

The ability to seamlessly facilitate collaboration is another of electronic plan review's key strengths for city planners. Urban planning requires input from multiple departments, including public works, engineering, fire, parks and recreation, and



economic development. An electronic plan review solution enables seamless communication between these stakeholders, allowing them to share digital plans and gather real-time feedback. This not only shaves valuable time off the review process but also ensures development proposals are thoroughly reviewed and signed off on by all necessary teams.

Building Sustainable Communities

As cities evolve, strategic urban planning becomes even more crucial. Planning departments are tasked with creating long-term visions for healthy, sustainable communities — this includes promoting green infrastructure and designing communities with public health in mind as the climate continues to change.

Electronic plan review plays a vital role in bringing these visions to life. By streamlining the review process, it allows planners to focus more on creative and strategic elements of their work, developing spaces that meet current needs and anticipate future challenges.

By enhancing collaboration, information sharing, and regulatory compliance, electronic plan review supports the development of efficient, sustainable, and future-facing cities. As planning departments continue to face complex challenges, these systems will be essential in ensuring our urban spaces remain vibrant, healthy, and resilient.

Christine Brakefield, MPA, CBO, is the Director of Partner Management and Enablement at Avolve, *where she leverages her experience as a former Chief Building Official and professional planner, by developing enablement strategies for partners to deliver exceptional outcomes for customers.*

THROUGH THE LENS OF PLANNING

SINCE 1935, planners have relied on APA (and its predecessor organizations) for practical advice and to see the world through a planning lens. For decades, APA's publications, educational offerings, events, and other resources have put that information in planners' hands.

The *Planning* team recently dipped into the archives of APA's flagship publication and curated clips to include in this special 90th anniversary edition. The topics covered ran the gamut—from regulating honky-tonks to rebuilding a post-World War II Ukraine to decades of urban renewal. A favorite pairing: The 1958 *American Society of Planning Officials Newsletter's* notice of the "growing phenomenon" of pedestrian malls and *Planning*'s observation in 1990 that the "latest panacea" was to bulldoze them.

The main stories in this section, however, look decidedly forward at the issues and opportunities in front of planners today, as well as the emerging trends to prepare for. I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we loved putting it together.

—Meghan Stromberg,
Editor in Chief

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Erin Baldwin Day, lead organizer of the Mutual Aid Network of Anchorage, says the 97 percent rental occupancy rate, coupled with an aging, ill-maintained housing stock, gives residents few choices.

HOUSING

HOW WE MADE ZONING CHANGE HAPPEN

Planners, politicians, and advocates worked together to eliminate single-family-only zoning and create new housing opportunity.

By JON DEPAOLIS
Photographs by BRIAN ADAMS

How do you fix a housing crisis?

The simple answer—build more housing—isn't always possible. Construction costs, labor shortages, land acquisition, and even shipping delays can make a project infeasible. There may not be a public or governmental appetite for rentals or multifamily developments. Anchorage, Alaska, faces several of these challenges—some of which don't impact communities in the Lower 48 nearly as often.

Solutions do exist, however, and over the past year, three Anchorage Assembly members—including Anna Brawley, AICP, an urban planner who was elected in April 2023—worked hard to overcome NIMBY attitudes and a hard-to-change zoning code to pass the Housing Opportunities in the Municipality for Everyone (HOME) Initiative, which essentially eliminates single-family-only zoning in most of the city.

It was a bold move—and an uphill battle. Read on for the story of how they did it, in their own words.

BUILDING WHILE FLYING THE PLANE

Affordable places to live in Anchorage are hard to come by, with the median home price

estimated at $415,000. It follows a trend nationally, as Redfin reported a record high for home prices in April 2024.

For Assembly Member Daniel Volland, an Anchorage optometrist, some of the key issues that drove him to run for political office—creating more affordable housing and eliminating parking minimums—sure make him sound like a planner. But his support shows that zoning reform issues affect everyone.

DANIEL VOLLAND: "We've had a sort of a general trend, a slow decline in population over the last decade, and I really want to reverse that. I think housing is part of that. Folks aren't going to come to Anchorage if they can't find housing that meets their needs."

It's also hard to build in the city because the housing of the 1970s and '80s has not been kept up to code, making it difficult to reuse existing buildings. Brawley says rules also were designed to prioritize greenfield subdivisions, not infill.

ANNA BRAWLEY: "And the cost of new construction in Anchorage is super high. I mean,

Assembly Member Daniel Volland (above), standing outside the new Block 96 Flats apartment complex, ran for office to try to create more affordable housing and eliminate parking minimums. Anchorage Assembly Vice Chair Meg Zaletel proposed the HOME initiative in 2023, initially seeking to pare down the city's 15 zoning districts to just two.

it's twice the cost per square foot of a lot of other cities."

In May 2023, Assembly Vice Chair Meg Zaletel put forward a proposal to revise the city's land use plan and consolidate all 15 residential zoning districts into just two. To Zaletel, a local lawyer, it was intended to start a very serious conversation about what zoning did or didn't do for the community.

MEG ZALETEL: "What I have found is that until someone affirmatively puts something forward, you don't necessarily get real traction."

To say the proposal caused a stir would be an understatement. Volland says it was referred to by some in the community as a "zoning bomb." While it did spur dialogue, it was too much for the community to even consider. For the second attempt, introduced in August 2023, Volland helped pare

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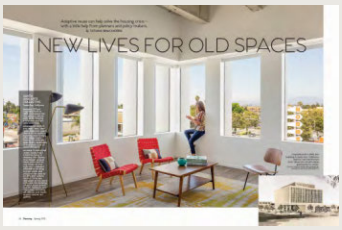
FROM THE ARCHIVE: HOUSING



MAY 2021

New Lives for Old Spaces

Long before the coronavirus pandemic, U.S. cities were already plagued with a housing crisis. Could adaptive reuse resolve our lack of housing and excess of empty, unproductive buildings?

APRIL 2018

Fair Housing at 50

"This law proclaims that fair housing for all—all human beings who live in this country—is now a part of the American way of life," said President Lyndon Johnson in 1968. But 50 years later, Johnson's victory lap reads as exceedingly premature because only part of the Fair Housing Act was ever enforced.

JANUARY 1963

House Edict Signed

On November 20, President Kennedy signed an executive order on Equal Opportunity in Housing that prohibits discrimination because of the race, color, creed, or national origin of housing owned or financially aided by the federal government.

MAY 1946

The Perversion of Zoning

A large proportion of the zoning ordinances now in operation in the U.S. were prepared in the '20s. Most of them were prepared without any basic planning in the community. As a result, many of them are probably unsound.

down the land use plan from the 15 zoning districts to five.

VOLLAND: "Effectively, the biggest thing we would do would be to get rid of single-family zoning."

The August draft also had a new co-sponsor in Brawley. Originally from Columbus, Ohio, the Cornell planning grad was eager to put her skill set to use on this issue.

BRAWLEY: "It's unusual for somebody who is usually a policy expert or someone working in that field to come in and be a decision-maker. So, I feel like that really helped me jump in and not have to ask, 'What is the most effective solution?' I know those things already, so it was more knowing where to focus."

Knowing the path forward was a leg up, especially since Brawley and Co. would see plenty of potholes along the way.

ACTIVATING ADVOCATES AND ALLIES

While they worked through the process, the sponsors put forward two substitute versions of the ordinance in September 2023 and January 2024. During that time, they tried working with city staff and the mayor's office but found resistance.

BRAWLEY: "It's not common for an Assembly member to initiate a change to our zoning code.

"We continued to make attempts to work together, but we were not willing to simply slow the process down or make it take another year. We did what we could to keep it on track."

However, that created an impression in some residents' minds—as well as some Assembly members'—that they were working around the city instead of with them. Brawley says they made good faith efforts, but if there wasn't going to be support from staff, they would need to be proactive in gathering help and taking their message directly to the people.

Zaletel credits Brawley for the robust community engagement efforts.

ZALETEL: "The planner in her really came through."

The sponsors held about two dozen meetings with the public, including groups that hadn't been typically brought into land use conversations—like the Alaska Black Caucus, the Alaska Native Brotherhood, and the Alaska Native Sisterhood—and heard their stories on the difficulty of finding housing. They also wrote op-eds in the *Anchorage Daily News*.

ZALETEL: "Young professionals are unable to have the housing they want even though they are working hard. Alaska is a great place for young professionals, and there aren't enough people to do the work. You get great opportunities here that you wouldn't get to do for maybe a decade down in the Lower 48. But if you can't find housing that works for you, then that opportunity isn't there."

"Alaska is a great place for young professionals. **YOU GET GREAT OPPORTUNITIES** that you wouldn't get to do for maybe a decade down in the Lower 48. But if you **CAN'T FIND HOUSING** that works for you, then **THAT OPPORTUNITY ISN'T THERE.**"

These issues were exacerbated by COVID-19. Erin Baldwin Day—a member of the Anchorage Housing Club, a group of residents who meet to discuss critical Anchorage housing issues—has seen it firsthand while organizing mutual aid services.

ERIN BALDWIN DAY: "Post-pandemic, there was a really troubling uptick in the number of folks who were having to make these really untenable decisions, particularly around either paying for food and basic necessities or paying their rent.

"Anchorage has something like a 97 percent occupancy rate right now in rental properties, which is wild. And, with that, the housing stock in Alaska is also aging. We have not built enough housing to keep up with the decline in the stock that we already have, plus just general demand for housing."

Adding to the problem are the rental properties that aren't maintained, including those that are unsafe or unhealthy due to issues like mold. But a lack of other housing choices means tenants stay put. Meanwhile, rents have skyrocketed, with some complexes raising rents 20 and 30 percent

Assembly Member Anna Brawley, AICP, outside a newly developed duplex in West Anchorage.

year over year. Day knows teachers and other essential workers in the community who are struggling to find housing.

DAY: "You can't build a town, and you can't sustain a city without workers—and you can't have workers without housing."

On the other side of the spectrum, the sponsors saw editorials in the newspaper decrying their proposal and heard from residents who were not supportive of any change to the zoning code. While there were typical concerns, like impacts to neighborhoods, traffic, and noise levels, they also heard uglier complaints.

BRAWLEY: "I wasn't quite prepared for how much of a backlash there would be and how it was basically what I would call the elders of the city saying … 'This was already decided, and you don't have our permission to change it.'

"There was so much demonization of renters or this assumption that if a renter moves into your neighborhood—setting aside that they are probably already there—that it was going to ruin the neighborhood."

Public hearings on HOME were held before

the Planning & Zoning Commission in March and May 2024. Then, at the P&Z meeting in early June, the commission members voted to recommend approval of the ordinance by the Assembly. The stage was set for a final hearing on June 25, 2024.

GETTING ACROSS THE FINISH LINE

On the night the Assembly was to have its final discussion of HOME, Brawley and her cosponsors believed the item would fail by a split six-to-six vote and were strategizing their next move. This, even though they revised the proposal to take out the language consolidating the zoning districts and focused on making duplexes a permitted use by right in every residential zone and redefining two-family dwellings to include detached structures.

> "I think **WE'RE LIVING AT A POINT** in time where hope is in really short supply. **PEOPLE ENGAGING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE** on these kinds of issues and seeing that their voice and their presence makes a substantive difference **IS A GENERATOR OF HOPE.**"

Then the testimony started—and those in favor of the change outnumbered the detractors by a two-to-one margin. People like Brandy Bowmaster, who rents a duplex in the North Star community and spoke to the challenges of finding a place to rent that fits her needs and budget. People like Will Walker, a duplex renter in Spenard who dreams of being able to buy his first house in Anchorage. People like Catherine Rocchi, who rents a single-family home in Lower Hillside and lives there with a group of other young adults, illustrating how single-family zoning already serves more than just single families.

The show of support was meaningful to Assembly Member Karen Bronga, who taught in the area for two decades and raised her children in Anchorage. Her experiences gave her unique insight into the housing challenges of young adults, some of whom contacted her in the lead-up to the meeting begging her to get rid of single-family-only zoning.

She was not in favor of HOME, but she still met with a housing reform advocate to hear his thoughts. In that conversation, she homed in on an area of town that she felt didn't mesh with the proposal. It was on a hillside and had just one road in and out—a potentially dangerous situation, especially in Alaska. The housing reform advocate suggested Bronga propose an amendment, and when she did, the sponsors agreed to it.

KAREN BRONGA: "I just felt at that point that they have compromised so big from their start and have worked so hard. I have to honor that."

BRAWLEY: "I think that this is exactly how the legislative process works, ideally. There's value in compromising."

With Bronga's support, HOME had the votes. It passed 7-5.

In the days after the meeting, Bronga received an email from a former student of hers, who is now studying law in Seattle but trying—and struggling—to find a home back in Anchorage.

BRONGA: "He just thanked me profusely, saying that if he doesn't see that he has the ability to purchase a home or find one to rent here, then coming back is not attractive."

'A GENERATOR OF HOPE'

HOME's sponsors know it won't solve the housing crisis, but it may make incremental improvements over time.

ZALETEL: "In the short-term, the win is that there's the opportunity to do it [and add] more housing units. You can only solve a housing crisis with more housing units."

BRAWLEY: "Another success is really continued engagement from those folks who have felt disenfranchised or whose voices just aren't heard at the table in these conversations—because that was the missing piece that has made the difference. I think that is the only way to move forward and truly have policy that is representative of our community's priorities."

VOLLAND: "I think we're at this moment in Anchorage right now where a lot of young people are realizing that they have access to their Assembly members and they can drive a positive vision for their city."

Brawley also sees some lessons planners can take and apply to their own efforts, like

Karen Bronga, an Assembly member representing East Anchorage, cast the deciding vote for HOME. Initially opposed, Bronga switched sides because she felt compelled to "honor" community feedback and the sponsors' willingness to compromise.

partnering with the organizations already doing advocacy work.

BRAWLEY: "Community organizing is completely compatible with community planning. I think to the extent that they use public engagement techniques that planners use, we should also think about how to use community organizing techniques."

Meanwhile, Anchorage Housing Club member Day—who is running for an Anchorage Assembly seat in the April 2025 election—thinks HOME's success story is a community win.

DAY: "I think we're living at a point in time where hope is in really short supply. I think that people engaging in the public square on these kinds of issues and seeing that their voice and their presence makes a substantive difference is a generator of hope.

"It's a catalyst for people to feel that there is still room for your Average Joe citizen to make a meaningful impact in their community and to do something positive for their neighbors."

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

MOBILITY

THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC AND YOUTH FOCUSED

Sustainable transportation solutions for users of all ages.

By JOSEPH DEANGELIS, AICP

Beneetta Mary Jose isn't afraid to think big. The transportation planner at Fehr & Peers, who also serves on APA's Student Representatives Executive Council and is the liaison to the AICP Commission, is passionate about youth in planning. As part of the *Trend Talks* series, Jose describes building sustainable systems for all ages, the benefits and challenges of micromobility, and more.

She spoke on an APA Podcast episode with Joseph DeAngelis, AICP, research manager at APA. Their conversation was included in the *2025 Trend Report for Planners*, released in January. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

JOSEPH DEANGELIS: What do you see as major emerging trends in transportation?

BENEETA MARY JOSE: One of the most exciting trends right now is micromobility. E-scooters, bike sharing, cargo bikes—you name it, they are making waves, especially in urban areas. Cities are putting real effort into integrating these options into traditional transit networks, making it easier to switch from a train or a bus to a bike or scooter to get that first mile to last mile connectivity. It's a major step toward flexible, user-centered transportation that's efficient and sustainable.

Listen to the conversation with Beneetta Mary Jose, who was named Student Planner of the Year by APA Florida in 2023, at planning.org/podcast or by scanning the QR code below.

But there's a flip side to it, as well. The reality is, without safe and accessible infrastructure, these options are inequitable. Rising traffic deaths and a lack of protective infrastructure highlight how essential it is for planners to focus on designing safer streets and bridging that gap between underserved populations and infrastructure.

Another fascinating thing is electrification. Electric vehicles are taking center stage across all modes of transportation, from cars to buses to delivery trucks, and even planes. We're seeing policies shift to accommodate the infrastructure change and a potential rethinking of gas taxation as mileage taxation.

I believe this movement is bigger than just transportation. It's about public health, clean air, and creating cities where people can thrive. These trends reflect a future where transportation is not just about moving people—it's about fostering community, equity, and resilience in every journey we take.

FROM TOP: ANDRII BORODAI/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS; REBECCA CLARKE

DEANGELIS: From your perspective, what are emerging transportation planners' interests and priorities?
JOSE: As young professionals, we're focused on creating cities that are connected and accessible for everyone. For us, transportation is not just about getting from point A to point B—it's about building the communities and creating systems that serve people better and more equitably, with the smallest footprints on our planet.

What excites me most is how collaborative and innovative this field is right now. Young planners have a real commitment to listen, engage, and make things happen in partnership with the communities we serve. We are not afraid to think big and make bold decisions. Even if we get pushback about certain proposals or improvements, we're not afraid to take on that challenge. There's a lot of work ahead, but we can do it.

DEANGELIS: Today's young people will be living in a future world we're planning for them. How are transportation planners incorporating the viewpoints of children and youth?
JOSE: This is a topic I can talk about for hours and hours and never get bored. Traditionally, planning transportation systems are designed with adults in mind. But, as planners, we recognize the importance of having a safer, more accessible, and more inclusive environment for all age groups, from small kids to working professionals to older adults.

Recently, I held a community meeting where we had different alternatives for a particular road, and then we did public outreach. Kids from 8 to 12 years of age would come in and put so many sticky notes on certain alternatives they preferred. I asked them, "Why do you think this alternative is better than the other one?" And they said, "We need proper bike lanes. We need sidewalks."

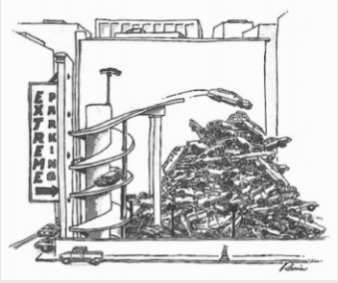
Youth today are also very digitally active. Planners are finding ways to integrate tech solutions within transportation, so children have the tools to get from one place to another, and their parents feel safe sending them out alone. Another hot topic right now is reducing vehicle size. We've seen so many cases where drivers are hitting small children because they simply can't see them, and we're starting to see policy changes to address this.

In short, transportation planning today is increasingly incorporating the voices and needs of young people. Planners are recognizing that the systems we build now will shape their futures. By prioritizing safety, accessibility, and inclusion, we are creating a future transportation network that meets the needs of all users.

DEANGELIS: As an emerging professional, what is your vision for transportation 20 years from now?
JOSE: I see a future transportation system that's much more seamlessly integrated, highly affordable, more sustainable, and highly reliable. I love streets that are taken over by people. Everything is accessible by foot or by biking or other transportation modes. Everything is within 15 minutes of your house. I see that our future is bright, and I'm eager to help shape it.

Joseph DeAngelis, AICP, is a planner and research manager at APA.

FROM THE ARCHIVE: TRANSPORTATION



JUNE 1997

Don't Even Think of Parking Here

"Parking is the unstudied link between transportation and land use," says Donald Shoup, AICP, director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He calls minimum parking requirements in zoning ordinances "a fertility drug for cars."

NOVEMBER 1995

Gridlock Games? Atlanta Hopes Not

Transportation planning for next summer's games is proving to be a task of Olympic proportions.

DECEMBER 1981

Interstates: Nearing the End of the Road

It is a familiar sight in many American cities. A strip of concrete hangs in mid air or dead ends at an embankment, signifying an uncompleted section of a 42,500-mile interstate highway system.

FEBRUARY 1940

Highways, Transportation, and City Rebuilding

It isn't possible to develop a highway or mass transportation plan and program in any large American city without considering the relationships between the two. In a number of cities, attempts have been made to treat these matters individually or piecemeal, and in practically every case failure has been the result.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

WHEN BOTS CALL THE SHOTS

In the private sector and in governments, the use of AI-powered decision-making is on the rise.

By IEVGENIIA DULKO

Victor Miller, a 2024 mayoral candidate in Cheyenne, Wyoming, promised to let "VIC" (Virtual Integrated Citizen), an AI chatbot modeled on OpenAI's GPT-4, make decisions for him if elected (he wasn't).

COURTESY VICTOR MILLER

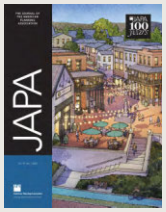
Artificial intelligence-powered technologies—particularly generative AI—appear to have reached "peak hype," sparking new questions and concerns as the initial excitement wanes.

Along with concerns about the reliability of models and AI's environmental impacts (read more about its double-edged sword in the *2025 Trend Report for Planners*), the central issue for the midterm future is whether we should allow AI-powered systems to have greater decision-making authority in the pursuit of optimal, efficient solutions for the public good or if humans should retain ultimate control. Decision-making power, of course, also requires access to a lot of our data.

As local and state governments explore AI's potential by deploying chatbots and digital twins, the rise of politicians and executives driven by large language models is no longer far-fetched. The practice of using AI for decision-making could significantly affect how society functions.

In 2024, Victor Miller made waves when he ran for mayor in Cheyenne, Wyoming, with an unconventional campaign promise: If elected, he would let an AI bot make decisions for him. A British businessman ran for Parliament with a similar pledge. They lost their races decisively, but nonetheless set precedents for the use of AI in political campaigns. For planners, this trend may present other challenges, particularly in navigating relationships with politicians who rely on AI models and AI-generated content, if not fully automated decision-making algorithms.

The private sector already is embracing AI for decision-making, using it to optimize operations and boost profits. Will we see a bot in the C-suite? A recent survey found that nearly half of CEOs believe AI could automate much of their roles, and according to Jack Ma, CEO of Alibaba, "a robot will likely be on the cover of *Time* magazine [in the future] as the best CEO." While AI excels in tasks such as competitive analysis and performance evaluation, it is still not advanced enough to fully develop strategies



Planning researchers also are studying AI ethics: "The Ethical Concerns of Artificial Intelligence in Urban Planning" was published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Authors Thomas W. Sanchez, Marc Brenman, and Xinyue Ye examine biases, transparency, accountability, and privacy issues. They say planners can leverage AI's potential but need a proactive approach to mitigate risks. For access, scan the QR code below.

on its own, nor does it have the soft skills required for effective leadership.

These developments suggest that AI's influence in leadership roles will only grow, with profound implications for how we approach elections and government.

POLICING THE POLICE

Despite a lack of comprehensive AI regulation, police departments in the U.S. and worldwide already are adopting AI-powered software for crime prediction and suspect identification. That raises concerns about bias in the AI training data, which could reinforce inequalities and lead to unfair outcomes.

The increasing use of drones for surveillance raises concerns about overpolicing of disadvantaged communities. A growing reliance on AI in law enforcement presents a new challenge: how to prepare communities for the reality of constant surveillance and data collection. Planners can serve as community representatives to advocate for equity and collaborate with law enforcement to develop better guidance and regulations.

As AI technologies advance, there's a growing risk of not being able to distinguish human text, images, and voice from machines. OpenAI founder Sam Altman's proposed solution is World ID, which scans individuals' irises for unique identification and verification. However, since its 2023 launch, it has faced bans in several countries and sparked significant controversy.

A new concern is arising over how to protect neural data, which originates from an individual's brain and nerves and can readily be collected through a growing number of consumer products. In 2024, Colorado and California became the first states to enact legislation regarding the protection of neural data.

No matter how powerful AI becomes, planners must maintain a critical stance toward these technologies, advocating for careful protection of personal data, supporting historically disenfranchised communities, and promoting more equitable development of AI.

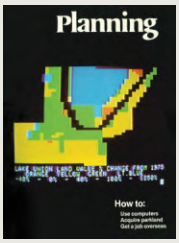
Ievgeniia Dulko is APA's foresight manager and project manager for the 2025 Trend Report for Planners, *from which this article is excerpted.*

FROM THE ARCHIVE: TECHNOLOGY

SPRING 2021

Mirror Mirror

Smart city digital twins allow planners to explore new solutions to urban problems, improve activities like community engagement and zoning, and address complex issues, all in a controlled environment that mimics the real city.



JULY 1980

Interface with Your Own Little Computer

I have become convinced that personal computers will make it possible for one- and two-person planning offices to develop solutions to even the most complex problems. By using modified standard computer programs, planners can take advantage of the world's best thinking and most advanced analytical tools.

JULY-AUGUST 1964

URBANDOC Report at AIP Conference

The first public report on URBANDOC, a pilot investigation in computer documentation and information retrieval for planning libraries and information centers, will comprise the opening session of the annual conference of the American Institute of Planners.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A CELEBRATED MAIN STREET IS REIMAGINED AND REINVIGORATED

A Mobile, Alabama, plan offers lessons for fostering growth in downtown areas that once served as the economic, social, and cultural hubs for African American communities.

By PHILIP WALKER, FAICP

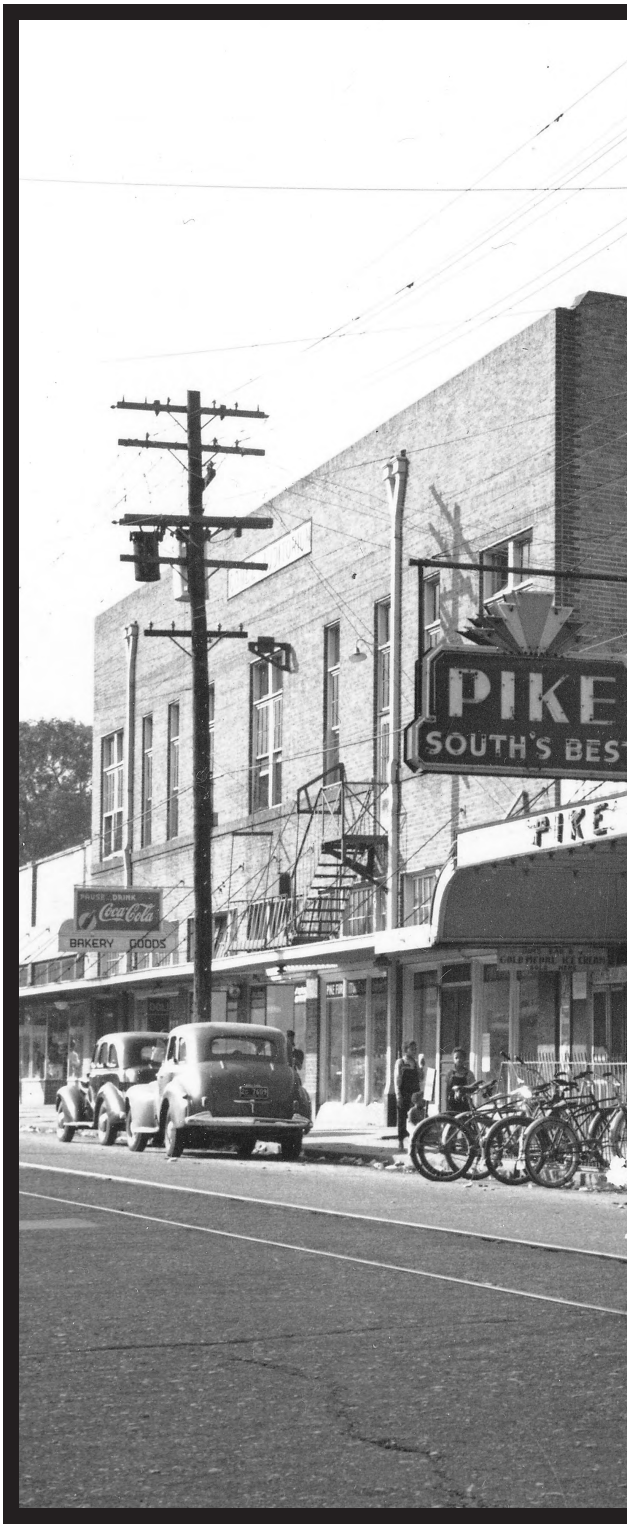
A Mobile, Alabama, native with deep family roots, Eric Finley loves his community, and he tells anyone who will listen. In fact, as tour director of the Dora Franklin Finley African-American Heritage Trail (Dora is Eric's late cousin), that is his job. He proudly tells visitors that the first Mardi Gras ever held in today's U.S. occurred in Mobile in 1703, 15 years before New Orleans was even founded.

However, Mobile is also known for some lasts. In 1860, it became the last city to receive a slave ship, the *Clotilda*, 52 years after the federal ban on such importations from Africa. The city also saw the last lynching of a Black man in 1981 when 19-year-old Michael Donald was killed by the KKK.

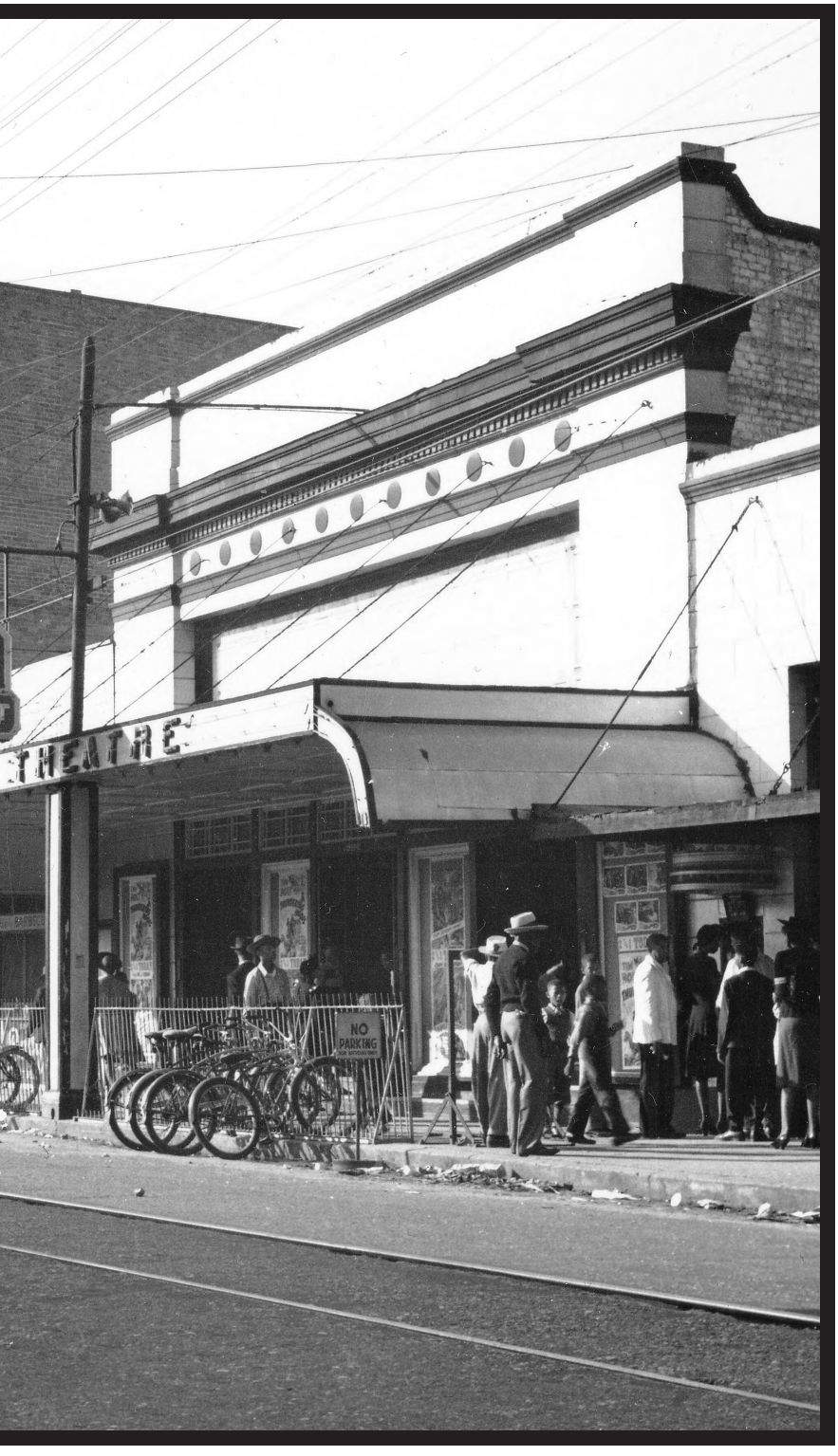
One thing particularly important to Finley is highlighting Mobile's "Black Main Street."

Originally called Stone Street and renamed Davis Avenue in 1861 after Confederate President Jefferson Davis, the street was given its current name—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue—in 1986. For the first half of the 20th century, "The Avenue" was the cultural and economic hub of Mobile's African American community.

"The Avenue had a day and a nightlife,"



Patrons line up outside the Pike Theatre on Davis Avenue in this vintage photo from Mobile, Alabama. The street once marked the epicenter of Black culture and business, and a new plan aims to honor its heritage and invest in its future.



JULIUS E. MARX COLLECTION, THE DOY LEALE MCCALL RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Finley explains. "There were churches, schools, entertainment venues, and businesses where you could buy essential items needed from birth to burial. People either knew you or treated you like they did. It was a beloved community." However, like so many similar places across the country, it rapidly declined during the 1960s, a pattern that has continued into the 21st century.

Black Main Streets, such as The Avenue or the Greenwood District, also known as "Black Wall Street," in Tulsa, Oklahoma, were eroded by federal policies of the mid-20th century. These included the housing acts of 1934 and 1949, which instituted redlining and spawned "urban renewal"; the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act, which allowed highways to be built through cities, permanently cutting off some neighborhoods; and the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

While the effects of the Civil Rights Act were largely positive, desegregation caused economic harm to Black businesses when they lost their captive market. As Freddie Stokes, a Mobile municipal court judge, put it: "Because of urban renewal, we've seen a huge decline. This community has been forgotten."

While Black Main Streets continue to suffer physically, economically, and socially, these places are culturally and historically significant—not just to their local African American communities, but to the nation.

"As I've gotten older and talk with young people, I've come to realize how little they know about the Civil Rights movement," Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood says. And Black Main Streets have untapped economic potential, too. If revitalized and promoted, Black Main Streets can become self-sustaining destinations.

INVESTING IN MAIN STREET WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

Mobile County came up with a creative solution to revitalize The Avenue. With funds from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the county earmarked $3.5 million for a new Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District master plan and its implementation.

Above, from left: Tour operator Eric Finley is a consultant to the Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District master plan. The new Africatown Heritage House museum is committed to presenting the truth about the city's past. A marker on the Dora Franklin Finley African-American Heritage Trail shows where the Mobile slave market operated until 1860. The law office of Vernon Z. Crawford, an important civil rights attorney, will be restored, but the Booker T. Theatre in Mobile no longer survives.

Ludgood saw the need in her own neighborhood. "Every census cycle, my district is losing population—because when people are able to do better, they want to move," she says. "They don't want to stay in a place that looks like it's in decline. This project is an opportunity to flip that and recast what it can look like."

Ludgood is the driving force behind the new master plan, and Stokes was brought on as the project manager representing the county. The Walker Collaborative, a Nashville-based planning firm (founded by this article's author), was selected to lead the project, along with a team of consultants that includes architects, urban designers, planners, traffic engineers, marketing and public relations professionals, an economist, and a historian. The team engaged in historical research, an evaluation of the study area, and a heritage tourism market analysis. The planning phase culminated in a five-day charette involving community members and stakeholders.

To anchor Mobile's reimagined Black Main Street, the plan proposes a new interpretive center focusing on the area's cultural importance and an adjacent park with a stage, concessions, and restrooms. The plan developed a new logo and color palette to unify the district.

It also includes a business development strategy, projecting visitor-generated demand for an additional 52,000 square feet of commercial space in the district. The plan identifies the optimal mix of dining, retail, and entertainment uses for this new space. Future visitor demand could leverage $7.9 million in spending to support local businesses.

ARPA funds are being used to acquire key properties tied to the plan, including the law offices of iconic civil rights attorney Vernon Z. Crawford, which will be restored as part of the interpretation of the district's civil rights story. Leaders also hope to acquire the abandoned Ace Theatre, the district's only surviving theater. Depending on the results of a feasibility study, it could be restored to a dining and entertainment venue echoing the district's heyday.

With all this investment, stakeholders were concerned about gentrification, more accurately called "displacement," which affects residents and businesses alike. But the Mobile plan suggests strategies to avoid displacement to proactively address these concerns, such as providing grants or zero-interest loans for the rehabilitation of existing housing.

The plan was presented to the County Commission and the public in September 2024. Final editing was completed in December, and the plan's adoption is imminent.

BRINGING 'ENERGY AND LIFE' BACK TO DAVIS AVENUE

Although the ink is still wet on Mobile's plan, the horizon looks brighter. "During the last

FROM LEFT: COURTESY DORA FRANKLIN FINLEY AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL; CARMEN K. SISSON/CLOUDYBRIGHT/ALAMY (2)

COURTESY PHILIP WALKER; WILBER F. PALMER COLLECTION, THE DOY LEALE MCCALL RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

> "This is a community that has been **HISTORICALLY OVERPROMISED AND UNDERDELIVERED**. It took a lot of years for the area to decline, so it's going to take **A LONG TIME TO REBUILD**."

community meeting, all of the smiles across the room made it evident that we had succeeded," Stokes says. "After the meeting ended, people didn't want to leave because they didn't want that positive feeling to end."

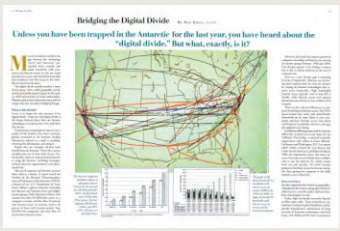
Still, Mobile County wants to temper expectations out of respect for the residents. "This is a community that has been historically overpromised and underdelivered," Stokes explains. Commissioner Ludgood emphasizes that "it took a lot of years for the area to decline, so it's going to take a long time to rebuild." She will provide a steady hand during the implementation phase.

Tour director Finley is optimistic about the plan. "It will bring energy and life back into that community," he says. "Once people start to see things happening, everyone wants to be part of it."

HOW PLANNERS CAN HELP BLACK DOWNTOWNS THRIVE

Many of planners' typical downtown planning strategies, like charettes, public presentations, and feedback sessions, are applicable to Black Main Streets. But planners working on such projects should proceed mindfully and use tailored approaches.

FROM THE ARCHIVE: EQUITY


Bridging the Digital Divide

Unless you have been trapped in the Antarctic for the last year, you have heard about the "digital divide." But what, exactly, is it?

JULY 2001

Bridging the Digital Divide

Most of us think the divide is the gap between the technology "haves" and "have-nots," presumably white, wealthy, and urban Americans on the one hand and minority, poor, and rural Americans who lack computers and web access on the other. But the digital divide actually involves a more diverse group, with a wider geographic spread, and has potentially greater impacts on the quality of life and economy of entire communities.

DECEMBER 1974

Redlining: How the Bankers Starve the Cities to Feed the Suburbs

The issue is disinvestment. The question is, whose? City residents claim that the banks are disinvesting before homeowners and prospective home buyers do. Mortgage officers claim the situation is just the reverse.

NOVEMBER 1954

Working Program for Urban Renewal

The Housing Act of 1954 provides that no contract shall be entered into for any loan or capital grant unless the locality presents a workable program, which shall include an official plan of action as it exists from time to time, for effectively dealing with slums and blight within the community and for the establishment and preservation of a well-planned community with well-organized residential neighborhoods of decent homes and suitable living environment for adequate family life.

HEART AND SOUL: CHERISHING CULTURALLY IMPORTANT PLACES

Some land uses are culturally more significant to Black Main Streets. By listening to the stories of Black residents to help preserve and nurture these uses, planners can reinforce the area's character and interpretive value.

CHURCHES AND FUNERAL HOMES. Houses of worship historically nourished the soul and provided stability for Black downtowns. They continue to play that role and can be a critical source of information and even serve as public meeting venues. For Birmingham's Civil Rights District, the 16th Street Baptist Church is an iconic and revered place that also draws visitors.

BARBER SHOPS AND HAIR SALONS. These cultural hubs can serve as a gender-based third place for socializing and discussions. In Tulsa's Greenwood Rising History Center (left), museum visitors can sit inside a recreated barbershop while hologram barbers trim their hair and chat with each other over gossip circa 1921.

SOUL FOOD AND BARBECUE RESTAURANTS. Foodways are an important aspect of any culture, and thematically relevant dining can be a big tourist draw. Greenwood's Sweet Lisa's and the MLK Triangle's Soul Fusion Natchez both preserve and continue the culture of residents in or near Black Main Streets.

THEATERS. During the Jim Crow era, African Americans were relegated to the balcony—the "peanut gallery"—of white theaters, so Black Main Street theaters became an important source of both entertainment and pride. The restored Booker T. Theatre in Rocky Mount's Douglas Block is now a critical anchor, hosting a wide range of films and live performances. Although Mobile's own Booker T. Theatre no longer survives, Mobile County purchased the Ace Theatre (above) with ARPA funds.

TEAM DIVERSITY IS KEY. The professionals doing the planning, whether consultants or public sector staff, should look like the area's stakeholders. Stokes attributes the success of the Mobile project to the diversity of the team guiding the process, "which helped to build community trust." African American representation on the planning team and steering committee helps achieve credibility and buy-in.

MEET STAKEHOLDERS WHERE THEY ARE. Meeting venues should be highly accessible and at locations where participants are most comfortable. Think community centers and churches rather than governmental facilities, where some stakeholders may have had negative experiences. Food, entertainment, and childcare services are always a plus.

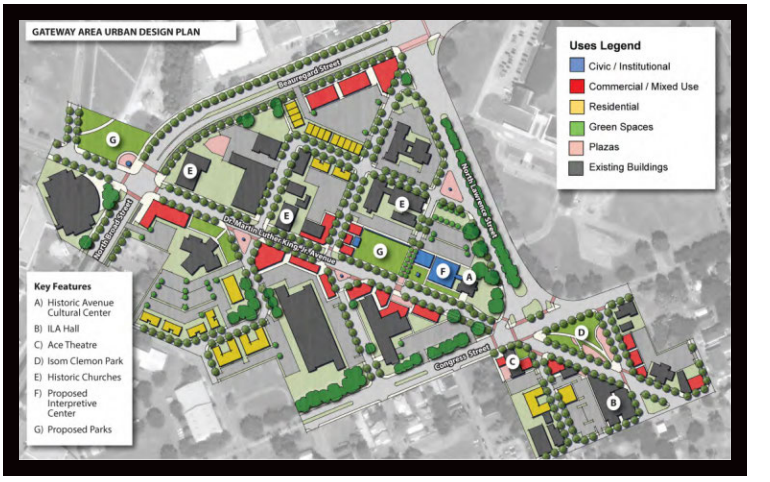
In Mobile, considerable time was spent gathering opinions from stakeholders. Anitra Belle Henderson, a Mobile-based public relations professional and member of the consultant team, said of the process, "It was clear that people were really being heard."

HISTORY, PRESERVATION, AND INTERPRETATION ARE CRITICAL. African American history has gone largely untold in the U.S., and "this type of planning project is really important for communities that have not been able to tell the story from their perspective," Henderson says.

One effective and tangible way to tell these stories is through historic buildings. In the core of Rocky Mount, North Carolina's Black Main Street, the Douglas Building and Booker T. Theatre had deteriorated and the theater was vacant when the city embarked on a revitalization plan in 2004. Rocky Mount acquired the buildings and rehabilitated them. The Douglas Building now houses commercial and residential tenants, and the theater draws regular audiences as a performance venue. Both projects benefited from New Market and Historic Rehabilitation tax credits.

Other methods are interpretive centers, public art, and GPS-based digital interpretation, but most important is presenting the truth. That is the mission for the exhibit about the *Clotilda*,

COURTESY PHILIP WALKER (2)



Above, from left: Stakeholders' input shared as part of a five-day charette informed the consultant team's initial plan concepts. One of three sections identified by the plan, the Gateway Area features several existing historic sites, proposed infill commercial and residential development, an interpretive center, and a park.

COURTESY PHILIP WALKER; MAP SOURCE: THE WALKER COLLABORATIVE & COMMON GROUND URBAN DESIGN + PLANNING

which opened in 2023 in Mobile's new Africatown Heritage House museum, a few miles north of downtown. A stakeholder in Mobile's recent planning project said, "We need to tell the story in an unvarnished way. People need to hear the truth, even when it's ugly."

DEVELOP ANCHOR USES, SUCH AS INTERPRETIVE CENTERS, ENTERTAINMENT VENUES, AND PUBLIC SPACES. Mobile County's new district plan proposes two anchors: the interpretive center and adjacent park.

In Tulsa, the Greenwood District is anchored by the Greenwood Rising History Center, and in Birmingham, Alabama's Civil Rights District is anchored by the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, which features a major interpretive center. The adjacent Kelly Ingram Park, historically known as West Park and now part of the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, contains emotionally powerful sculptures depicting the civil rights struggle.

The planned Hiram Revels Plaza in Natchez, Mississippi's MLK Triangle District will transform an underutilized parking area into a new public space for commemoration and interpretation. But anchors don't need to be tied to the place's history. For example, the Greenwood District's minor league baseball stadium and the Rocky Mount Events Center near the Douglas Building are thematically unrelated to their districts but are an additional draw for visitors.

CONSIDER BRANDING, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AND PROMOTION. If a positive and established district name does not already exist, consulting professionals can assist with consideration of a new one that is consistent with the history.

For a cohesive district, retail, services, dining, and entertainment businesses should be recruited based at least in part on their connection to the district's themes. When funding is available, the proposed business mix should be based on a market analysis that quantifies future demand for specific uses in terms of building square footage.

ANTICIPATE GENTRIFICATION CONCERNS. In Mobile, the city's complete streets design for The Avenue, which happened separately but concurrently to the master plan, sparked some consternation. One stakeholder said, "Whatever we do, I don't want to see any bike lanes. Bike lanes lead to gentrification." Although there is no clear evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship, some stakeholders perceive this type of investment in public infrastructure as the first sign of displacement.

Instead, develop a set of displacement avoidance strategies, as was done in Mobile.

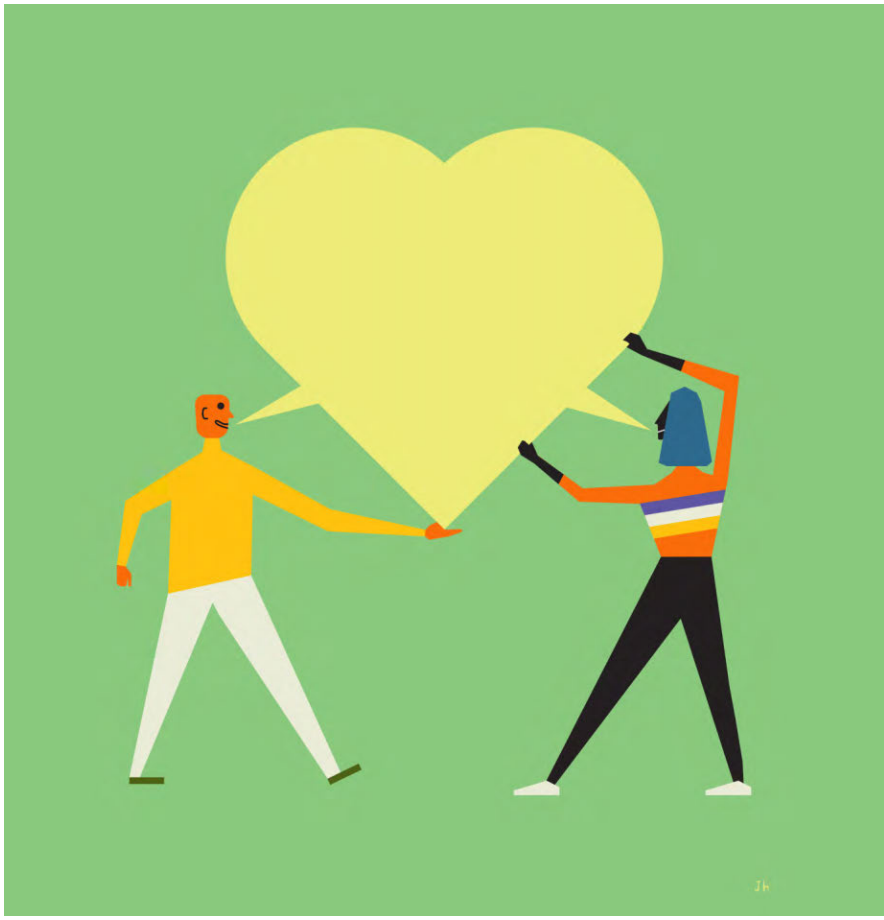
Philip Walker, FAICP, is a Nashville-based planning consultant and principal at The Walker Collaborative. He led the consultant teams for the Mobile, Natchez, and Rocky Mount projects.

ENGAGEMENT

WHY WORD CHOICE BUILDS STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Creating an inclusive environment takes practice. These 4 tips can help.

By JON DEPAOLIS



HOW WE SPEAK WITH OUR community members, decision-makers, fellow planners, and even our neighbors matters. To be more inclusive and treat people respectfully, planners can be thoughtful about the language they use.

"If we are really trying to walk this walk and talk this talk of being more inclusive and being more representative of the populations that we're working with, then we need to do a better job of making people feel like we're not criticizing them and we're not judging them or their community," says Samantha Castro, AICP, LEED-ND, who chairs the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee for the Kentucky Chapter of APA. "So much of that has to do with language and how we talk about people and the places and communities they hold dear. That's why word choice is so important."

People don't necessarily use outdated or hurtful terms on purpose—it's just what they are used to, says Castro, senior associate and Lexington office lead at TSW|Tunnell, Spangler, Walsh & Associates. She even feels nervous at times when speaking to students at the University of Kentucky, where she teaches. To stay updated on the latest terminology, particularly around gender, sexual identity, and race, Castro uses resources like the American Psychological Association's guide on bias-free language and BuzzFeed's style guide.

Castro says she has encountered changing definitions or stigmas attached to certain words. Take affordable housing. For a long time, it was used as a well-intentioned way to steer clear of racially charged terminology, but today it has a certain stigma attached, she says. "It's this ever-evolving thing." To her, "attainable housing" makes more sense.

Affordable housing does have a technical definition. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines it as housing that costs no more than 30 percent of the occupant's gross income. So, while attainable housing is not always a perfect word swap in regulatory settings, using a phrase other than affordable housing may be a way to navigate through NIMBY barriers.

Passport subscribers can scan the QR code below to access an APA webinar about inclusive and thoughtful communication.

At community meetings, when there may be a divide about affordable housing, Castro begins with a question. "I like to start off by doing a quick show of hands with the audience of how many of them have ever had to rent at any point of their lives, be it college or whenever," she says. "At a certain point in most people's lives, this housing could have served them," she says, noting how planners can help people see themselves in the bigger picture.

Bringing people into the conversation sometimes requires the right combination of the right words. Caleb Knutson, a planner and cochair of the DEI Committee for the Iowa Chapter of APA, believes that it starts by factoring in the entire community.

"Any time you talk to somebody, a group, or especially when you're writing, you've got to take your whole audience to heart," he says. "How you do that is important. Use words that are inclusive because as planners and economic developers, so often historically, we have hurt marginalized communities."

Knutson believes planners have an ethical responsibility to create cities and communities where everyone can thrive. "But if someone reads a pamphlet or comes to a public meeting and hears language that is outdated or doesn't make them feel welcomed, they are going to look somewhere else," he says. "They're going to think this community doesn't want them here."

There is no magic elixir to accomplish these goals, but both Knutson and Castro have ideas on how planners can be more inclusive.

CROWDSOURCE AND LISTEN. Find out if your state APA chapter or community organizations have resources available. When in public settings, Castro recommends starting with questions, like asking people how they want to be referred to. "One of the first things I do is to really take cues from the community," she says.

But for as many questions as you ask, also be ready to listen. "When you go into these spaces, make sure that you're not taking up air," Knutson stresses. "Make sure you are going there to learn."

CREATE A STYLE GUIDE FOR YOUR TEAM. Know what terms you are going to use, as well as which ones you will absolutely avoid. Castro says the American Psychological Association's guide is a solid starting point.

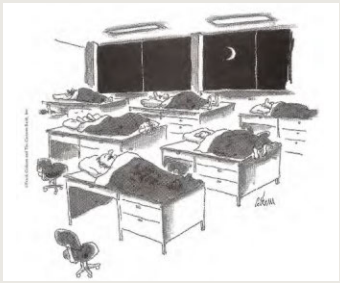
START USING PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE DAILY. Get rid of outdated terms and start living what you're learning. Ditch "homeless" and "poor" in favor of "people experiencing homelessness" and "people experiencing poverty."

KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE MISTAKES—AND THAT'S OK. "There's no way to get it completely right and say all the right things all the time, so you just have to give yourself grace and know that you are trying," Castro says. "I think the biggest part is you are attempting to talk to people in a way that is more compassionate."

And never stop wanting to learn. "I think it's just a mindset," Knutson says.

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

FROM THE ARCHIVE: THE PROFESSION



NOVEMBER 1992

Reinventing the Working Day

We are committed to telecommuting because we are committed to flexibility. If you can get your job done between midnight and 8 a.m., go for it. In my opinion, we should be looking at an employee's productivity and quality of work rather than the number of hours they put in.

JANUARY 1980

Neighborhood Planning: Arnstein's Ladder Applied

The city has a responsibility to develop a process that will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to communicate with city government.

FEBRUARY 1954

The Middle Future

I am concerned about a period that I call the Middle Future. We planners are neglecting this Middle Future, and we cannot afford to neglect it. The Distant Future is risky to describe, but it certainly includes voyages beyond the earth's gravitational field.

MARCH 1941

Communities Must Be Prepared

There has never been a greater opportunity for planning agencies to justify their existence. The time has come for every municipality to recognize that only through sound planning can we hope to achieve the kind of communities that the people of this country are entitled to and want; that only through sound planning can we achieve good government.

SUSTAINABILITY

GROWING A RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM

Planners' skills are key to making the food network work. BY JON DEPAOLIS

ACCESS TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE food is a foundational element of a thriving community. But while most people may think that where their food comes from is pretty straightforward, Julia Freedgood looks at it from a much bigger perspective.

"In my experience, we have numerous intersecting food systems that are kind of nested together like Matryoshka dolls, and they run the gamut from emergency food systems to huge global supply chains with community, local, urban, rural, regional, domestic, and all these other food systems nested in between. Each is important and has a role to play," says Freedgood, a senior fellow and senior program advisor at the American Farmland Trust. She joined APA Editor in Chief Meghan Stromberg on the *People Behind the Plans* podcast. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

MEGHAN STROMBERG: How can planners help create sustainable and resilient systems?

JULIA FREEDGOOD: I'm probably biased because I'm a planner and planners are supposed to look at systems. We're supposed to think about how different elements intersect with each other. The relationship between transportation, housing, environment, and hazard mitigation—all these things are embedded in our food systems. Planners have a particular ability to look at the system in a holistic way and then to think about how you engage in communities to figure out how to strengthen what they're producing, consuming, and distributing. They also need to work with the communities or states to make sure the plans lead to action.

Julia Freedgood is author of *Planning Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems*, published by Routledge. To listen to the full interview scan the QR code below or go to planning.org/podcast.

STROMBERG: Interest in urban agriculture is on the rise. Is that approach better than food from faraway farms?

FREEDGOOD: I think it's important not to pit one system against another. If we're going to create sustainable, resilient, equitable food systems, we need to address food insecurity and mitigate and adapt to climate events. We have to work together. Part of that is bridging the urban and rural divide. So, while a lot of the food we eat is produced in metro counties or urban-influence counties, a lot more is produced in rural areas, especially staple commodities like wheat, rice, oats, and meat.

STROMBERG: Does rural planning differ from planning in urban places?

FREEDGOOD: Rural areas, in my experience, tend to be a little skeptical about planning and government intervention. People work together. They help their neighbors. But they don't

FROM TOP: BRONWYN8/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS; COURTESY JULIA FREEDGOOD

really look to the government for answers. And while most cities have planning departments, most rural counties often have volunteer boards and planning commissions, with land use decisions made at the municipal or township level.

It's really important to find people who are embedded in the community to help lead the engagement process and listen to the wisdom of the room. Engage with the farming community, with processors, and with people who don't have access to high-quality fresh produce.

You also need to understand the community assets. What do you have to work with? Why are you exporting everything and not keeping anything in your community? Why are you importing your food when you can grow so much here? Having those conversations and taking an asset-based approach is really important.

STROMBERG: A surprising land use is negatively affecting food systems: Why is large-scale solar production a threat?

FREEDGOOD: We know that low-density, sprawling residential development is an insidious threat to farmland. But, there's also increasing competition from things like warehouses, renewable energy, and especially utility-scale solar installations. The Department of Energy predicts that the rate of solar deployment could grow by four times by 2050, and 90 percent of that is going to occur on rural lands. They could work harmoniously, but we should look at where there's potentially disturbed lands instead of putting solar on our best-quality farmland. If we don't have good planning and local policy interventions, most solar is going to be developed on farmland because it's cheaper, flat, has good solar exposure, and is easy to develop.

A good example is San Joaquin Valley in California, one of the world's most productive agricultural regions that's vital to our food supply. They have high solar isolation, a temperate climate, and the state has very aggressive renewable energy goals. With input from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, they put together a team of planners and conservationists who did a stakeholder-led process to identify least-conflict lands for solar development. They used sophisticated mapping but did a lot of engagement, too. They were able to identify 470,000 acres that were appropriate for solar but [was] only about 5 percent of the land base in the region. They could have renewable energy and continue to have sustainable food production.

STROMBERG: What do you think that example says about how planners can engage stakeholders?

FREEDGOOD: You bring people together, use good tools, get people talking, and come to decisions that everybody can live with. As scary as some of the things that are happening in the world can be, I really am optimistic that if we bring people together in these kinds of ways, we can solve our problems at the community and state levels. That's my hope for the future.

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor. APA members receive a 30 percent discount on titles ordered from Routledge.com. Visit planning.org/books/member for more information.

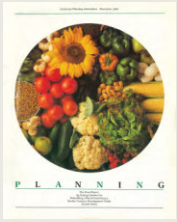
PLANNING

FROM THE ARCHIVE: FOOD SYSTEMS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2009

Saving Farms and Farmland

The challenge is to adapt to a changing landscape and a changing world for agriculture. Above all, you need to understand that farming is a dynamic business, not only a way of life.



DECEMBER 1984

The Food Factor

Cutbacks in federal programs have forced cities to deal with the growing problem of hunger. Now several cities are looking at food as an urban support system, much like energy and transportation.

OCTOBER 1963

Recreation Areas Grow on Farm Land

The Department of Agriculture, following a policy of relieving surpluses and improving farm income, is encouraging shifting land from crop production to recreation. The change includes land that will be used for vacation farms, picnic and sport centers, and fishing, camping, and hunting areas. A total of 39,685 farmers have indicated interest.

COURTESY FAIR BLUFF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/FACEBOOK

MANAGED RETREAT

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Recurring climate-caused flooding in North Carolina and Washington is putting these communities on the move.

By JOE TEDINO

When Kaitlin Ashley Cox stepped into her hair salon on Fair Bluff's Main Street after Hurricane Matthew blew through North Carolina, what she found startled her. Her furniture, equipment, and supplies were floating in water just below hip level.

"It was very unreal to be walking around the salon in waders," says Cox of the 2016 storm that swamped Fair Bluff. Severe flooding and the pandemic brought economic hardship to a town that today has just 900 residents. "At that point, I was just trying to get as much as I could get out of there that was still usable." In the aftermath of Matthew, a few Main Street businesses reopened, but two years later Hurricane Florence brought more flooding as the Lumber River again rose out of its banks.

Fair Bluff is low and flat, part of the state's coastal plain near the South Carolina border. And while Fair Bluff didn't sustain damage from Hurricane Helene in September 2024, some nearby communities were affected.

When the river swells up, the water spreads out in every direction. A 1977 effort to survey and map the floodplain showed the high and low points, which were clearly visible after the 2016 hurricane. The commercial strip along Main Street and nearby homes built before the remapping had water flowing through them; homes built afterward were dry. Driving around town after the storm, longtime town planner Al Leonard saw water that was shoulder-high in some places. "The homes built prior to 1977 had water flowing through the windows," he says. "But because of the survey work, the water was underneath those newer homes. They were not destroyed."

LINDSAY WASSON/AP PHOTO

Fair Bluff, North Carolina (above left), faced flooding and road closures in August 2024 when Hurricane Debby bore down on the Southeast. In Taholah, Washington, Sonny Curley (above) looks out to the seawall separating the Pacific Ocean from the home he shares with his children and parents on the Quinault reservation.

In all, the hurricanes destroyed 90 homes and many downtown businesses, most of which never reopened, says Leonard, who is now the redevelopment director at the town chamber of commerce.

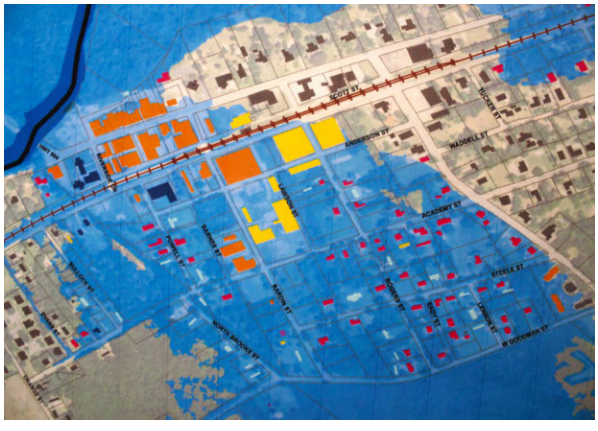
As the risks of severe climate events escalate, low-lying towns like Fair Bluff are opting for managed retreat, a challenging and costly process of relocating to safer areas to avoid the dangers of rising waters and other impacts caused by extreme weather. This approach is becoming more common as economic and social threats from severe weather intensify.

MOVING UPTOWN AND UPSTREAM

Today, Cox's River's Edge Hair Co. is one of nine businesses leasing space in "Uptown" Fair Bluff, the town's new commercial district built with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster relief funding. In July 2024, businesses moved into the 25,000-square-foot commercial building, which is just a couple of blocks from the old downtown. It sits 69 feet above sea level, more than three feet higher than the new flood lines drawn in 2019, according to Bob Mitchell, the civil engineer on the project.

Nationally, municipalities like Fair Bluff have struggled for years with frequent floods from heavy rain or sea level rise. These cities face a hard choice: whether to rebuild and remain potentially in harm's way or relocate to higher ground. Economic stability, local traditions, and shared history are the connections that tie people to communities, making it difficult for people to leave, even as climate-related disasters threaten their homes and businesses.

Federal and state funds from multiple programs are essential because most municipal budgets cannot absorb the steep cost of dealing with



recurring flooding from high tides or extreme weather events along rivers and shorelines.

Fair Bluff has collected more than $50 million in government funding since Hurricane Matthew, Leonard says, with another $20 million in outstanding grant applications. They used grant money to pay for everything from construction and equipment to staff salaries as the town recovered from the damage to its downtown and surrounding neighborhoods following Matthew and Florence.

Preserving a community while safeguarding it from potential climate-related disasters takes ingenuity. Fair Bluff officials intentionally used the term "uptown" to designate the new commercial district to convey a sense of safety. "The downtown that Fair Bluff has had for 100-plus years along the river is completely destroyed," Leonard says. "We wanted to indicate to folks that live here that there is no downtown anymore, but there is this new place called 'Uptown.' We are trying to signify that this is built on an area that did not flood during Matthew, did not flood during Florence, is not in the FEMA flood zone, and is up from the river."

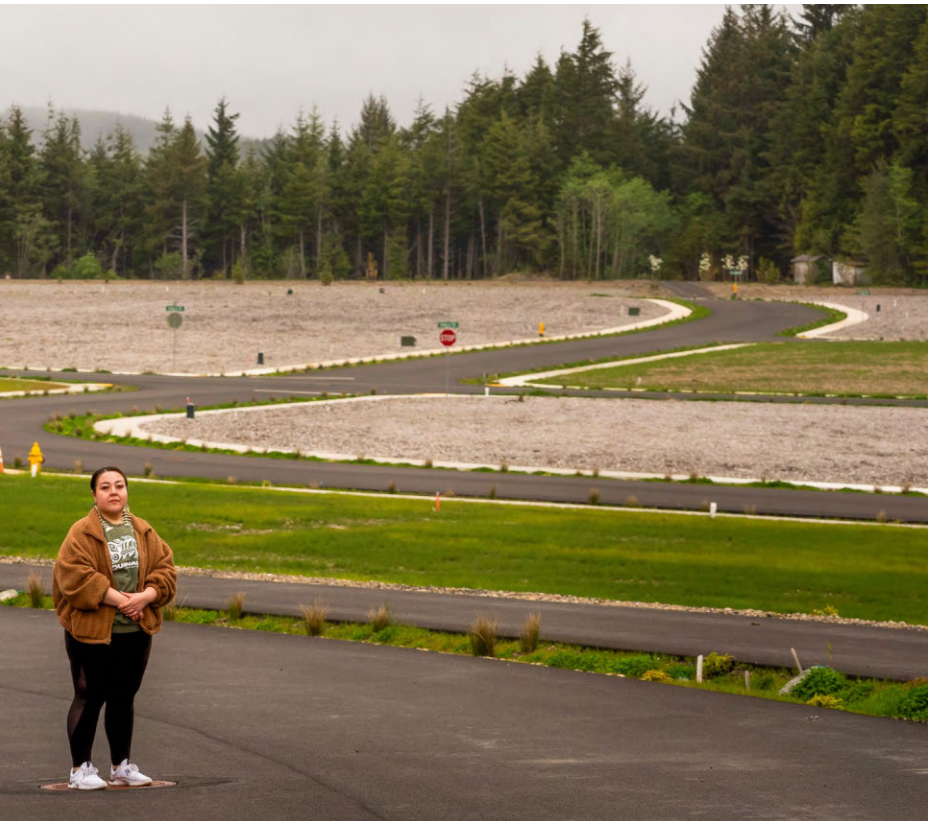
This page, clockwise: Mike Mike's computer repair shop is one of many Main Street businesses in Fair Bluff that never reopened. Kaitlin Cox in her new shop; the new Uptown commercial district; a map showing flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew. Above right: Alyssa Johnston is the project developer for the Taholah relocation in Washington. She stands about a half mile from the original Quinault Indian Nation village, on the future site of 59 new homes.

Meanwhile, some 3,000 miles away on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) is moving Taholah Village uphill, a process that officially began in 2017 when a master plan was adopted. The village has been inundated with constant flooding from winter storms, high water on the Quinault River, and tsunamis from earthquakes along the Pacific rim.

"We had multiple flooding issues, which were a rude wake-up call, and building a higher wall just wasn't the answer," says Michael Cardwell, FAICP, the QIN planner who retired last fall. "We are essentially following the salmon upstream."

The village has been working for years on plans to move its 800 residents away from the coast. Based on the shovel-readiness of its

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: BRETT WALTON/CIRCLE OF BLUE (2); COURTESY KAITLIN COX; COURTESY FAIR BLUFF/FACEBOOK



LINDSAY WASSON/AP PHOTO

relocation plans, their "dreams are coming through," he says, with an infusion of $25 million from the federal government that came in November 2022 to break ground for the move.

The money—a down payment on the millions still needed—has enabled the village to "accelerate the difficult and expensive work to get our communities out of harm's way," QIN Tribal Council President Guy Capoeman told *Nugguam*, the QIN's monthly publication, in December. "Our very existence depends on it."

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF MULTILEVEL COLLABORATION

Nearly 1,100 critical buildings and services along U.S. coastlines are at risk of flooding an average of 12 times a year by 2050, according to data released in June by the nonprofit Union of Concerned Scientists. Flooding of subsidized housing, wastewater treatment facilities, power plants, and hospitals can paralyze daily life, says Kristina Dahl, PhD, a climate scientist and the lead report author. "Communities don't have long to prepare before their vital coastal assets are routinely under threat."

While some potential flooding is being prevented by coastal defenses like raised buildings and seawalls, this patchwork is unlikely to completely stave off trouble, the group contends. A case in point is the Shaktoolik village on Alaska's Norton Sound that has its sights set on relocation. Shaktoolik is home to 250 Natives who live the subsistence lifestyle of their ancestors, living off a diet

FROM THE ARCHIVE: CLIMATE RESILIENCE


Mississippi
Tackles a Tough One

DECEMBER 2005

Mississippi Tackles a Tough One

In Pascagoula, the housing problem was immediately apparent after Katrina. Of the city's 8,500 structures, 85 to 90 percent were either flooded or sustained some type of structural damage. We have a tremendous opportunity to improve communities while rebuilding them. We can create places that are more visually pleasing, more environmentally friendly, more diverse, and more secure from hurricanes.

JULY 1981

Who's Priming the Pump?

Rain wouldn't solve the water-related problems elsewhere in the nation, either. Those problems are too big, too complex, and too manmade for that. Kansas woke up late to the severity of its water problems. "We were warned in the mid-1950s that the Ogallala aquifer was being depleted. But no one was going to tell Kansas irrigators what to do with their water."

JUNE 1960

Federal Program for Urban Flood Maps

The U.S. Geological Survey has initiated a program to prepare flood maps of urban areas. These maps will be of special value to planners in view of the growing interest in flood plain zoning.

of fish, whale, hunted game, berries, and roots. But now the villagers' homes are under constant threat. The village was hit hard by the remnants of Typhoon Merbok in September 2022, when its 28-foot-tall shoreline berm was completely destroyed by the waves that pounded the coast. FEMA later awarded the village $5.9 million to rebuild the wall, but the village is using another $2 million in U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) funding to design a new evacuation route and to begin planning the eventual relocation of the community.

The Shaktoolik are among seven tribal nations that have received grants from a USDOT program called Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation. The intent of the program, which has provided almost $830 million in grants to communities in 37 states over the past two years, is to make transportation infrastructure more resilient.

COMMUNITIES faced with a similar opportunity to use FEMA funding to rebuild on higher ground **WOULD BENEFIT FROM EARLY CONSULTATION** with all parties, from planning and design to construction.

While finding resilience-related funding sources can be difficult and time-consuming, there's help from the Georgetown Climate Center when trying to navigate the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Researchers put together a tool to help planners, community members, and decision-makers find available grants. The Resilience in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act toolkit is based on a review of the law and details the funding that it can provide for new and existing programs with resilience features.

A toolkit goal is to make it more likely that the law is implemented in ways that maximize the potential for emissions reductions, resilience, and equity. The resource is organized into categories such as transportation, energy, and natural resources and includes a section on managed retreat.

STAYING LOCAL

In Fair Bluff, Leonard suggests that planners and elected officials dealing with disaster recovery urge residents to carefully consider their options in the wake of tragedy. "Sixty days after your natural disaster, FEMA will come into your community meeting and talk about the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program," he says. "They are talking to people who have just lost everything they have worked for their whole life. Many people are quick to take the check and move on."

But Leonard believes that more people might not take the buyout if they saw images of the homes that they could instead build locally with FEMA funding—modern two- and three-bedroom homes that are three to five feet off the ground to keep the waters at bay. "The houses look fantastic, and we have about 30 of them now," he says. "I believe that more people would have taken that option if they knew what was possible."

The town also used FEMA funds to hire local real estate agent Eric Hill to manage and lease the new Uptown retail space. He says four of the 16 stores remain unfinished as they await the availability of funding, and the new commercial district still needs stores that would benefit the community.

Communities faced with a similar opportunity to use FEMA funding to rebuild on higher ground would benefit from early consultation with all parties, from planning and design to construction. "Have an idea of the businesses that you want to attract," Hill says. "To the extent that you know that you want a sit-down restaurant as part of the plan, make sure that a commercial kitchen is in one of the spaces, so that the basics are covered."

Hill says some business owners washed out of downtown have been serving clients in their homes and are glad to reopen in Uptown Fair Bluff rather than move miles away.

For Cox, a mother of two who was born and raised in and around Fair Bluff, moving away wasn't an option. She and her husband grow corn and soybeans and operate a poultry business there, and they have extended family all around them. When the opportunity arose to take one of the available spaces in the new commercial building, she grabbed it.

When bulldozers began demolishing the old buildings in November to make way for parks and green space along the river, Cox was already up and running in her new salon. "The day is finally here," Cox says. "We're in a brand-new building, the rents are reasonable, and we're ready to go."

Joe Tedino is a Chicago-based writer and activist focusing on climate and sustainability.

GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY

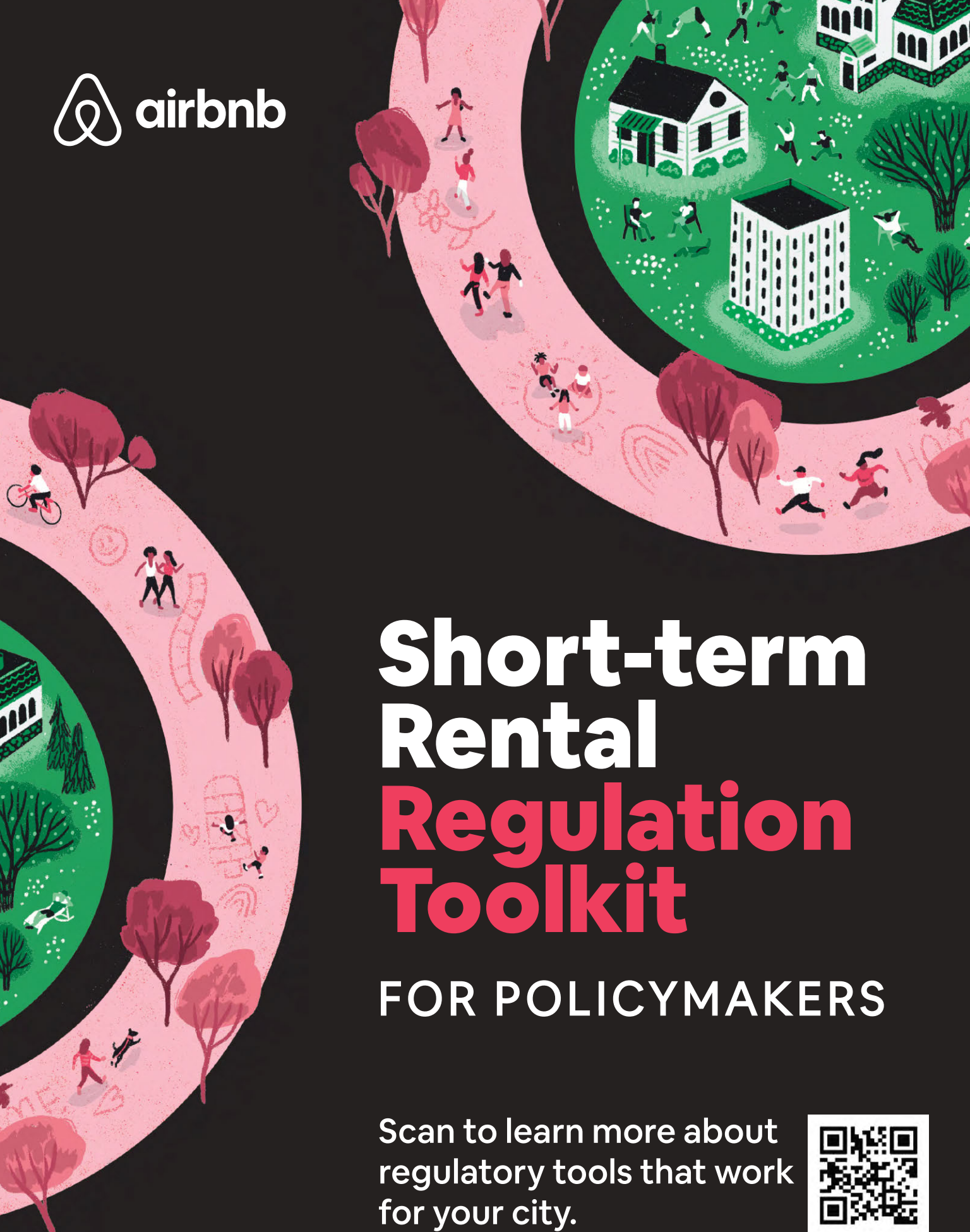
Brooklyn, New York

A SITE OVERGROWN WITH WILDFLOWERS—not to mention history—is eschewing the thirsty, pesticide-filled lawns of most graveyards for something more climate resilient. Years ago, cutting back on mowing the 478-acre cemetery's sleep slopes was a nonstarter, but since the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors have embraced its rewilding. Today, native plants like goldenrod, milkweed, horsemint, and white beardtongue intermingle with the magnificent 19th- and 20th-century statues and mausoleums of Leonard Bernstein, Boss Tweed, and 570,000 other souls. With 843 unique tree species and 185 species of migratory birds, this de facto wild urban park captures 264,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, removes 12,000 pounds of air pollution, and mitigates 2.6 million gallons of stormwater annually.

The Chapel Meadow, designed by renowned landscape architect Larry Weaner, features drought-resistant native perennials and shrubs. (Got a climate win-win that makes your Community Green? Tell us about it: email mstromberg@planning.org.)

VALERY RIZZO

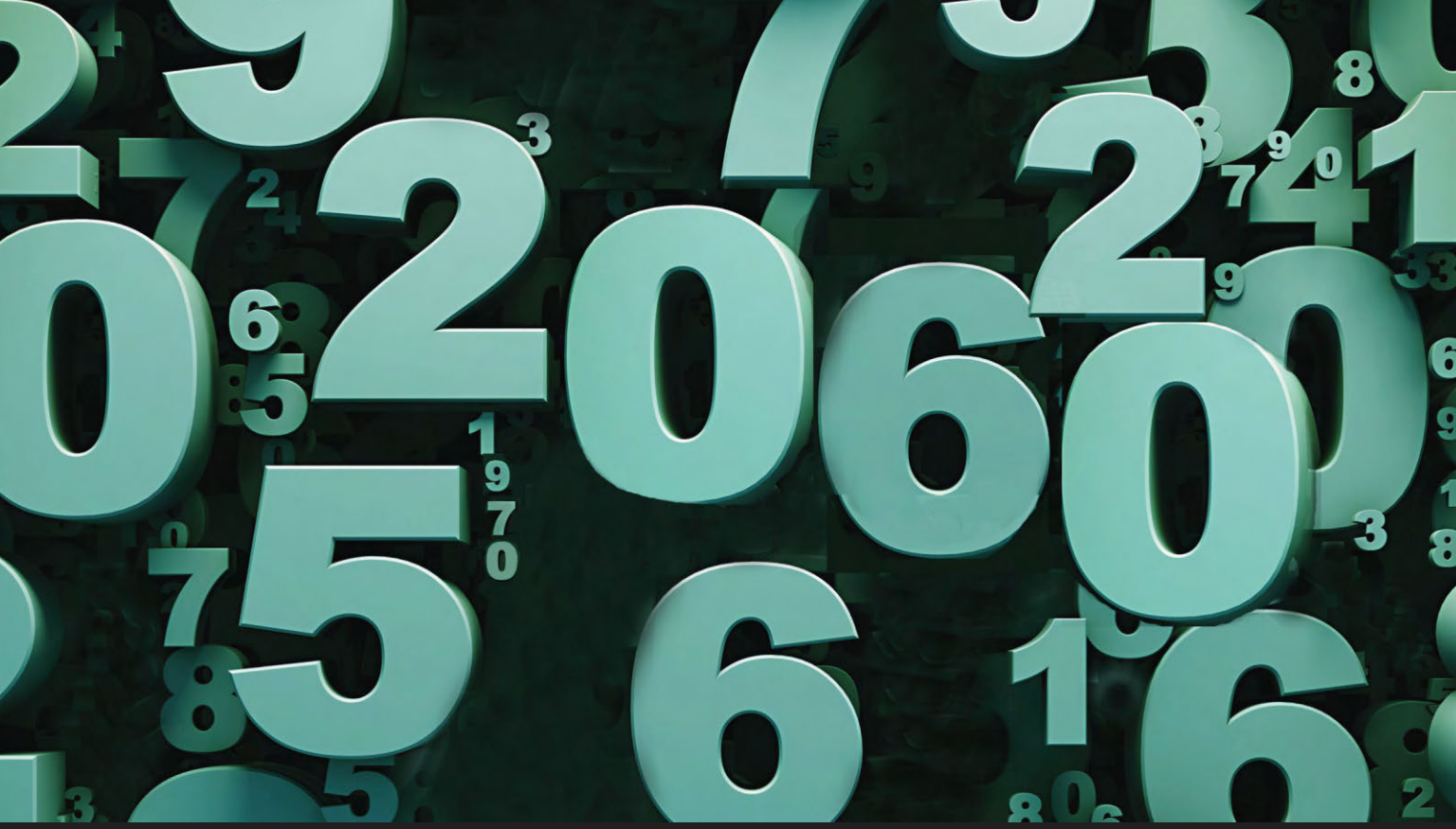
airbnb



Short-term Rental Regulation Toolkit

FOR POLICYMAKERS

Scan to learn more about regulatory tools that work for your city.



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