APA Annual Report

Highlights of 2015

Progress

Lead. Communicate. Partner. These strategies drawn from APA's Development Plan and 2015 action agenda framed our outlook and propelled our actions.

APA LEADS THE PROFESSION ON MANY FRONTS

APA research produces knowledge and resources that planners use to make safer, greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities. Advocacy and communications training and participation in the Planners' Advocacy Network equip members to speak up effectively for planning. Planners from all over the world gather at our National Planning Conference for high-quality professional education and nonstop networking. We reach out, inform, engage, and deliver education and benefits to APA members with new technologies and on multiple platforms.

WHO WE ARE

On September 30, 2015 — the end of APA's 2015 fiscal year — APA had 37,604 members, including 16,170 AICP members. An elite group of 167 AICP members have earned Advanced Specialty Certification in environmental planning, transportation planning, or urban design. APA member retention remained strong at 82 percent and AICP retention was an outstanding 95 percent. Of the 556 APA members who sat for the AICP Comprehensive Planning Exam in May, 380 members passed and joined AICP. In November, 444 candidates passed out of 651. This was the largest cadre of exam candidates since 2010.

Of course, we're eager to welcome new members and last year we reached them in print, online, and in social media with a couple of lively new videos.
"Why Join APA?" lays out how career and delivers a convincing recruitment message in just 73 seconds. "The Future Belongs to Those Who Prepare for It" captures the thrill and value of planning so well that many APA chapters show it at meetings and conferences to inspire and validate members.

**DOING MORE WITH PARTNERS**

Partnerships maximize our opportunities and extend our reach. We benefit from growing networks of research and advocacy partners and from close relations with AIA, ASLA, and other associations that serve design professionals. APA, the Planning Accreditation Board, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and the heads of accredited planning programs are working together to learn more about accredited programs' respective strengths and weaknesses.

Cooperative relationships also leverage our influence internationally. APA is contributing ideas and best practices to the upcoming Habitat III conference in Ecuador and promoting 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted last fall by the United Nations General Assembly.

The presidents of APA and AICP and planning leaders from five other nations gathered at a meeting of the Global Planners Network during the National Planning Conference in Seattle. The APA International Division co-produced the 2015 World Town Planning Day Online Conference and division chair Tim Van Epp, AICP, keynoted a regional forum in China after participating in the International Association for Chinese Planning's annual conference. Our popular mayors' training program hosted two delegations of local Chinese officials in 2015 and will add a pilot program for Indian officials in 2016.

A promising new aspect of the APA-China partnership is the AICP Commission's work with Chinese government and academic partners to build awareness of the AICP credential and prepare to administer the AICP Comprehensive Planning Exam there.
NEW MEMBER SERVICES

Members love the new APA Image Library. With well over 1,000 entries to choose from and multiple search categories, they can quickly find high-quality, no-cost images to illustrate their websites, plans, and reports. What subjects do members look for most? "Bicycles" and "bikes," "complete streets," "arts residences," and "pedestrian" made the top five last year.

In March, APA released apps for reading Planning on Apple, Android, and Amazon smart phones and tablets. Along with better online access, members gained the option to receive only the digital version of Planning by changing their contact preferences in My APA.

New career services included Employer Connection at the National Planning Conference and a bimonthly series of free, members-only Career Reality Webinars. More Young Planners Groups and Emerging Planners Groups formed and we made the Early Career Membership Program an even better opportunity for emerging planners.

All of APA applauds AICP members' commitment to skill-building and continuing professional education. An all-new Certification Maintenance website, launched in October, facilitates customized searches for CM activities and simplifies record-keeping. At the same time, we upgraded services to continuing education providers to ensure AICP members' access to a wide variety of first-rate educational opportunities.

"Overall, I really like the new system. Kudos for the overhaul!" — Chris Brown, AICP
Advocacy

Advocating for planning and good government is in APA's DNA. In 2015, our advocacy paid off on Capitol Hill when Congress passed important planning-friendly legislation. APA also made substantial progress toward our goal of encouraging and training members to become strong, effective planning advocates in Washington and their home communities.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY CONFERENCE


In-depth policy sessions offered insider perspectives from congressional aides and experts on key issues and programs and a new skill-building track focused on advocacy, communication, and partnerships. Journalists from print, broadcast, and online media shared advice on scoring coverage of local planning stories.

Planners' Day on Capitol Hill

APA leaders met with Congressional leaders and staff in 50 Senate and 75 House offices, requesting three key congressional actions: passing a multi-year, sustainably funded transportation bill; reauthorizing and funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund; and supporting CDBG, HOME, TIGER, and other programs that benefit community and economic development. Participants added their ideas for strengthening transportation planning, advancing bike and pedestrian projects, expanding support for urban parks, and addressing economic inequality and social equity. Members across the country joined in on social media and through emails to Congress.
Planners' Day also was an occasion to celebrate APA's 2015 Great Places in America. Chapter presidents and members presented honorary certificates to members of Congress, demonstrating the relationship between good planning and great communities. Leaders of three Plan4Health coalitions also were there representing links between planning and public health.

**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

APA's 2015 legislative priorities focused the year's advocacy efforts on transportation reauthorization, infrastructure investment, water planning, federal data, community development, social equity, and respect for local planning. We saw notable advances on several fronts:

- Passing the five-year, $305 billion Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act provides certainty and resources for transportation projects and planning. Several APA policy priorities made it into the final bill.
- Funding CDBG and increased support for HOME and Choice Neighborhoods.
- Approving $500 million for another round of TIGER grants.
- Extending the New Markets Tax Credit for five years, making permanent the minimum rate for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and restoring tax benefit parity for transit commuters.
- Reauthorizing LWCF with the highest level of funding since 2002.

**AMICUS CURIAE BRIEFS**

APA filed amicus briefs in two significant U.S. Supreme Court cases: Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona and Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.

Still pending at the end of 2015 were APA's amicus briefs in the California Supreme Court in Lynch v. California Coastal Commission; Lamar Central Outdoor, LLC v. City of Los Angeles in the state's appellate court; and Scenic America v. U.S. Department of Transportation in U.S. District Court.
POLICY AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The Planners' Advocacy Network empowers members to speak up for planning with their members of Congress. Participants receive frequent briefings and training in advocacy skills and legislative issues. At year end the network had 373 members who hail from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

APA's celebration of National Community Planning Month in October included a campaign of radio public service announcements that aired more than 3,500 times nationwide.

Great Places in America 2008-2015

In its eighth year, APA's Great Places in America program designated 15 places and, for the first time, hosted celebrations in every location that were attended by chapter presidents and members of APA's Board.

In Washington, local planners and policy makers also got together at Tuesdays at APA, policy breakfasts, and other events.

"The best thing about APA policy breakfasts is hearing about new bills and understanding the speakers' takes on how they specifically apply to the planning community."
TWEETING (AND FACEBOOKING AND INSTAGRAMMING AND …) THE PLANNING STORY

APA's growing presence on Twitter and other social media platforms extended our policy outreach. A new Twitter handle, @APAadvocates, attracted more than 900 followers — including nine members of Congress — in only 10 months.

Every year, more and more members and nonmembers connect with APA on a growing number of platforms. In 2015, we had the most followers on LinkedIn and Twitter and enjoyed the most extensive and enthusiastic engagement with our followers on Instagram.

APA's 2015 social media campaigns included:

- **#PlanningMonth** during National Community Planning Month was our biggest hit.
- **#RenewLWCF** drew attention to the need to fully fund and reauthorize funding for local and regional parks.
- **#LoveYourWalk**, coinciding with the fall release of the Surgeon General's Call to Action on Walking and Walkable Communities, encouraged planners to tweet about aspects of the built environment that facilitate their neighborhood walks.
Research

Climate change. Natural disasters. Obesity and chronic diseases. Clean energy. Green infrastructure. These critical national issues have daily impacts in our streets and neighborhoods. APA Research and its partner organizations are expanding knowledge and developing tools to help planners meet these and other challenges as they work to create vital communities.

HAZARDS PLANNING

As the cost of natural disasters escalates, planners are paying more attention to potential hazards and public safety. Establishment in early 2015 of the APA Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Planning Division gave clear evidence that members' interest in this subject is growing.

The Hazards Planning Center focuses on three areas where planners have the most to contribute to public policy and action: mitigating hazards, recovering from disasters, and adapting to climate change.

As one of eight partners in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Digital Coast Partnership, APA supports coastal planning and resource management with data, tools, and training. We work with the Association of State Floodplain Managers on a pair of FEMA-funded projects: Subdivision Design in Flood Hazard Areas and a series of Planning Information Exchange webinars that provide training on best practices in hazard mitigation planning.

Other partners include the Nature Conservancy, the University of California–San Diego, the National Charrette Institute, and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center.

PLAN4HEALTH

APA's partnership with the American Public Health Association started small, engaging built-environment professionals in public health causes. When a significant funding opportunity from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention arose, APA and APHA were ready; a solid relationship and shared vision were already in place.

The APA/APHA Plan4Health project, managed by the Planning and Community Health Center, is now a thriving collaboration encompassing 35 coalitions in 27 states. By reaching more than 80,000 planning and public health professionals across the country, the power of partnering extends both organizations' outreach.
PLAN4HEALTH COALITIONS

GREEN COMMUNITIES

The Green Communities Center collaborated with the Conservation Fund to develop a green infrastructure vision and implementation toolkit for the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition. Nationally, APA teamed with Georgia Tech's Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development on "Multimodal Planning at the Megaregional Scale" to develop guidelines for integrating multiregional awareness into comprehensive and long-range transportation plans.

Both projects will result in new tools and resources for planners in 2016. And a new two-year project stemming from our Great Urban Parks collaboration with the National Recreation and Park Association will bring green infrastructure to parks in underserved communities.

APA's latest contribution to the SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership is Solar Powering Sunnyside, a hands-on planning exercise that uses game play to help community members understand solar development options. Test the game yourself at the National Planning Conference in Phoenix!
APA’s multi-year initiative to define the role of the comprehensive plan in addressing the sustainability of human settlements produced Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans. This 2015 PAS report establishes a framework and standards for communities to integrate sustainability principles and best practices into their comprehensive plans.

After a survey of APA members indicated strong support for the idea, APA began developing a voluntary program to recognize exemplary plans that meet the standards.
Education

APA leads the profession in using new technologies to deliver high-quality, affordable education to members' desktops, smart phones, and tablets.

EDUCATION ON-SITE

In April, we streamed training webcasts from the National Planning Conference, some in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Lincoln was the lead sponsor for the Planning and Climate Change track, and President and CEO George McCarthy led a session on “Addressing Climate Impacts in Vulnerable Communities.”

In another live-streamed workshop, NYU adjunct professor and negotiator Allen Zerkin taught “Negotiation Skills for Planners” and conducted exercises for both on-site and remote participants.

"I was a little skeptical about a six-hour live broadcast. But the 2015 APA National Conference workshop was anything but dull or impersonal. ... To anyone who missed this, I would highly recommend seeing the recorded version.” — Remote participant John (Tad) Read, Acting Director of Planning for the Boston Redevelopment Authority

In June, more than 900 people attended our annual “Planning Law Review” audio/web conference that featured analyses and insights on U.S. Supreme Court cases on sign regulation and fair housing.

In the wake of the SCOTUS ruling in Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc., and HUD’s release of new regulations, the department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy George Williams spoke from personal experience about “New Directions for Fair and Affordable Housing” at an APA Policy & Advocacy Conference session in September.

APA’s popular audio/web conferences evolved into a 2015-16 Signature Webinar Series that includes four free “Do-It-Yourself” events on trending topics proposed by planners. In October, the series' “Big Chance Lecture” featured designer Scott Burnham on “The Reprogrammed City.” Burnham took his Chicago audience and remote participants on a lively global tour of inventive repurposing projects.

... AND ON-DEMAND

Whether you prefer late-night or noon-hour study, all alone or in a group, APA’s streaming education is your on-demand tool. You can access more than 300 programs — recordings of APA’s best webinars and top conference sessions. Topics cover the spectrum of planning; popular examples include “The Planning Office of the Future” and “Building New Economies in Legacy Cities.” AICP members can earn from one to six CM credits, including multiple opportunities to earn law and ethics.
National Planning Conference

The buzz at APA's National Planning Conference in Seattle wasn't just the coffee. It was the energy generated by more than 6,400 people — close to record attendance — sharing their enthusiasm and ideas at planning's biggest annual event.

LOOKING AHEAD

APA's conference is dedicated to inspiring planners and preparing them to meet the future with confidence, knowledge, and skill. Ron Sims — former deputy secretary of HUD — set the tone resoundingly in Seattle, bringing the crowd to its feet with his opening keynote. His talk was so tweet-worthy it made #APA15 the city's top Twitter hashtag.
AARP launched its new Livability Index at a live session and free webcast with Deb Whitman, AARP’s chief public policy officer. It was a first look at a dynamic new tool from the sponsor of the conference's Millennials, Gen X, and Active Boomers Symposium. APA is proud of its key role in introducing a new way to plan for an aging population.

Keynoter Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalog, closed the conference with another look ahead — way ahead — at planning over the next 10,000 years.

GETTING TECHY

In the Tech Zone, sponsored by Parsons Brinckerhoff and Autodesk, NPC attendees got hands-on demos of a driving simulator, an augmented reality viewer, a virtual reality headset, and other cool tools. Hackathon coders worked on software solutions to planning problems and APA's Technology Division sponsored the first-ever Planning App Challenge. Ohio State's team won $1,000 for an app that links planners and community members to project funds and volunteers.
NEW FAVORITES

A new Masters Series of sessions offered deep content to experienced planners. The series was such a hit it's back for 2016. Also new and popular: Employer Connection, which will return in 2016's expanded Career Zone.

A PANOPLY OF PLANNERS

Kudos to the 2015 award recipients! HUD Secretary Julián Castro packed the house and then some for his address at the annual Awards Luncheon.

"Communities need to collaborate to compete. We need to help people not only make a living but a life... Done right, planning benefits people, pocketbooks, and the planet."
Conference bike-boosters helped set another record in Seattle: the highest ridership ever for the city's Pronto! Cycle Share. Around the convention center, bikeshare stations stood empty as planners took to the streets.

**NEXT UP: PHOENIX**

Get ready for another epic event! Register now to join APA and thousands of your colleagues at the 2016 National Planning Conference in Phoenix, April 2–5.

"I always enjoy the opportunity NPC provides to be inspired by others' work. I am reminded that what we do is important and makes a difference for our communities."

"It was very useful seeing what innovative ideas other communities are pursuing. I learned a lot about the possibilities back at home through the experiences of others."

"I left the conference feeling refreshed and enthusiastic. Thank you!"
Volunteers

Year after year, APA is well served by member volunteers who dedicate time and talents to lead the association and its component groups and to serve on committees, working groups, and task forces. More volunteer members, working in Community Planning Assistance Teams, reaching out as APA Ambassadors, and acting in many other capacities, are serving individuals and communities across the country.

NEW OVERSIGHT

The new Community Assistance Planning Services (CAPS) Committee is charged with raising the profile of the Community Assistance Program, both within APA and among the American public. Key goals are promoting the work of Community Planning Assistance Teams in a variety of media, increasing student volunteerism, and enhancing volunteer recognition.

VOLUNTEER LEADERS

National, chapter, and division volunteer leaders keep APA's programs and priorities responsive to members. They carry the flag for the planning profession and speak on APA's behalf to partner organizations and at local celebrations and media events.

Elected leaders and other volunteers serving on national committees, task forces, and working groups led a number of projects, ranging from the Daniel Burnham Forum on Big Ideas to Development Plan initiatives. Members can see results of their efforts in the final reports presented to the APA Board of Directors by the Economic Development, Planning Agency of the Future, Smart Cities and Sustainability, and Water task forces.
Student leaders implemented and expanded a wide range of activities at Planning Student Organizations on campuses across the country. The Student Representatives Council, led in 2015 by Lisandro Orozco, produced the first SRC strategic plan to engage student leaders and guide their work in APA and the planning profession.

**ELECTIONS**

During August and September, APA realized a long-desired goal: a consolidated election. For the first time, members could vote for officers of all components of the association — APA Directors; AICP Commissioners; and chapter, division, and student leaders — on a single ballot. The new officers began their service on January 1, 2016.
Work continues on efforts to expand members' leadership and service opportunities and to improve and facilitate leadership transitions and orientation throughout APA.

Get involved! To learn more about APA leadership and other opportunities to serve, email getinvolved@planning.org.

AICP COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHOP

AICP's annual workshop during the National Planning Conference joined planners from around the country with residents and stakeholders in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, focusing their energy and expertise on parks and open space, affordable housing, and transportation and mobility issues.

COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSISTANCE TEAMS

CPATs completed four projects in 2015:

- A team helped Lewis and Clark County and the City of Helena, Montana, develop joint smart-growth policies to limit the negative effects of sprawling development.

- A CPAT engaged the community of Deerfield Beach, Florida, and assisted city staff with designs, policies, and other recommendations to revive the original town center.

- Five team members worked with a spirited Spanish Fork, Utah, community, contributing their skills and expertise to revitalizing a historic Main Street corridor.

- A CPAT created a downtown plan for North Beach, Maryland, a small, vibrant, seasonal town on Chesapeake Bay.

Next up for CPAT: projects in Philadelphia's historic Germantown neighborhood and West Melbourne, Florida.

Would you like to join a Community Planning Assistance Team? Learn more and volunteer!
The new APA Ambassadors pilot program reflects a commitment to diversify our association and profession by engaging and inspiring future planners of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Individual Ambassadors act independently while APA offers support with guides, webinars, toolkits, and other resources.

More than 100 APA members serve as Ambassadors in 32 states, Canada, and Guatemala, while five APA chapters are developing state-level programs.
"As a professional planner, this is the type of activity that makes my career so rewarding. I didn’t learn about planning until college so I think this is a wonderful way to expose the profession to younger minds." – Amanda Douglas, AICP, Renaissance Planning Group, Orlando, Florida

MENTOR MATCH

Once again, Mentor Match at the National Planning Conference brought young and experienced planners together. Mentors and mentees alike appreciated and benefitted from the matchups:

"The best aspect was hearing about the dreams, goals, and plans of young people entering the planning profession. The two mentees I met with are so energetic and skilled." — Lisa Verner, FAICP

"Thank you for such a great opportunity to get to know the best and the top of APA! Keep doing it for other students in urban planning!" — Galyna Korniyenko, University of Kansas
Finances

APA’s budget for each fiscal year (October 1–September 30) supports the goals and related action items in the Development Plan approved by the Board of Directors.

FY 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

Total assets for APA as of September 30, 2015, were $18.1 million. Our most significant assets are cash and investments and property and equipment. Total liabilities for APA were $11.1 million, including deferred dues revenue, deferred rent, pension obligations, and accrued liabilities.

Total revenue and expenses for FY 2015 were both approximately $19.8 million, generating a positive net change in assets of approximately $40,000 compared with a budgeted change of $300,000.

Member programs include Planning magazine, policy and outreach, chapter and division services, the Early Career Membership Program, career services, advertising, and member services. Both APA member program revenues and expenses were up slightly from FY 2014.
User programs include the National Planning Conference, research, APA Books, and subscription periodicals. Both APA user program revenues and expenses for FY 2015 were up significantly from FY2014 due to a very successful conference in Seattle and grant revenues and related expenses for the Plan4Health project.

AICP programs include education, certification exams, certification maintenance, and member services. AICP programs FY 2015 revenues were flat and expenses were lower compared to FY 2014.

Annual Report infographics by Susan Lee Deegan