APA Annual Report

1. SUMMARY

Throughout 2016, the American Planning Association focused on serving our members by improving communications, offering new benefits, and opening more opportunities for member engagement. Here are a few highlights. Infographics are by Susan Lee Deegan.

COMMUNICATIONS

A communications audit completed in December 2015 found that APA succeeds in providing extensive planning information, promoting the expertise of the profession and its members, and offering tools and support to help members and other stakeholders. The independent auditor's suggestions for improvement included streamlining communications and developing a social media strategy focused on just a few platforms to tell our stories quickly, with maximum impact.
APA responded by working throughout the year to develop a communications calendar based on the Board-approved Development Plan that guides and coordinates internal and external messaging among all APA departments. Efforts are under way to bring in chapters’ and divisions’ efforts as well.

PLANNING.ORG

APA's all-new website, introduced in March, was a year in development. Members who shared their opinions and feedback during planning and production helped determine and sharpen the site’s organization and functions.

The site is designed with mobile in mind, so every page looks good on every device, and anything possible on a desktop works on a smartphone or tablet. Highlights include a highly customizable search, expanded capabilities in My APA, and a robust Career Center. At the heart of planning.org is the Knowledge Center, a storehouse of APA resources to help members work better every day: research, publications, e-learning, videos, podcasts, the Image Library, and our consolidated blog, which features frequent, thought-provoking posts on a variety of planning topics. All these tools are organized, tagged, and ready for duty.

MEMBERSHIP

On September 30, 2016 — the end of APA’s 2016 fiscal year — APA had 36,579 members, including 16,112 AICP members (44 percent).
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.

Total assets for APA as of September 30, 2016, were $18.1 million. Our most significant assets are cash, investments, property, and equipment. Total liabilities for APA were $11.4 million, including deferred dues revenue, deferred rent, pension obligations, and accrued liabilities.
Total revenue and expenses for FY 2016 were $22.5 million and $22.2 million, respectively, generating a positive net change in assets of approximately $300,000, compared with a budgeted change of $500,000.

APA programs included Planning magazine, policy and outreach, chapter and division services, the Early Career Membership Program, career services, advertising, member services, the National Planning Conference, research, APA Books, and subscription periodicals. AICP programs included education, certification exams, certification maintenance, and member services.

LEADERSHIP

APA's new election cycle took effect in 2016, and new leaders assumed office on January 1. Beginning four-year terms in leadership positions were Cynthia Bowen, AICP, President-Elect of APA; Glenn Larson, AICP, President-Elect of the AICP Commission; a number of APA Directors and AICP Commissioners, and officers of several APA chapters and divisions.
2. CAREER SERVICES

In the wake of a major initiative in 2016 to expand career services to assist members, APA resources are becoming indispensable career development tools for members at all career stages, and especially for new professionals.

One sign that the word is getting around: APA's LinkedIn following increased by 20 percent last year and we are now one of the site's most-followed planning-related organizations. We provide information about APA activities, products, services, and job opportunities; APA members contribute content to inform their peers and gain professional exposure. LinkedIn drives followers to our website and opens another engagement channel with current and potential members.

CAREER CENTER

We added and expanded programs and established a Career Center on our new website.

Planner Profiles

These monthly interviews with APA members who have followed a wide range of career paths are helpful guides for students, new planners, and individuals who are considering a planning career or career change. Each Planner Profile relates how the member's career was shaped by a unique set of experiences, opportunities, and decisions. Profiles illustrate members' knowledge and professionalism, promote planning successes, and help others identify and research occupations that employ planners.

Planning Career GPS

Through Planning Career GPS, experienced planners share tips and insights to help other members enhance their employability and move up the career ladder. Each bimonthly message offers strategic career management advice, trend alerts, and tips for acquiring in-demand professional skills.

Career Reality Webinars

The webinars in this new series—available to APA members only—offer practical advice on job searching and professional development for both new and seasoned planners. Members who miss the live events can listen later to online recordings.

During last year's most popular Career Reality webinar, "City Manager Versus City Planner Skillsets," AICP members Aimee Nassif and Drew Awsumb used live polling to tailor the content to the audience in real time. Their subsequent blog post — also one of the year's most popular — reflected what they learned and opened a survey to guide development of a session at NPC17.

Mentoring

The Career Center's expanded mentoring resources now include APA chapters' best practices. So far, the Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, and Texas chapters and the Sacramento Valley (California) section have contributed examples and tools. APA continues to provide mentoring information and resources to all chapters.
A Guide for the Idealist


Resources for Job Seekers

Other new resources for job seekers include tips on networking, resumes, and cover letters from hiring professionals and an easy resume-posting interface in My APA.

*Job postings* continued to be strong in 2016. Employers posted more than 1,500 listings (and many listings advertised more than one position) from April 1 (shortly after our new website launched) through December 31.

APA SALARY SURVEY

As it has since the first survey in 2004, the biennial *APA Salary Survey* achieved a very high response rate — 39 percent — among APA’s regular, life, faculty, and new professional members.

About 85 percent of respondents supplied salary data and indicated they are:

- employed or self-employed; and
- employed full-time and year-round; and
- employed as planners or in planning-related positions.

A few factoids:

- Nationally, there is almost no pay gap between less-experienced (i.e. < 20 years) male and female planners.
- Among planners who bill hourly for their services, the median rate billed is $124/hour.
- AICP-certified planners earn significantly more, on average, than non-certified planners.

Members are invited to read all about the survey and use the Planner’s Salary Calculator (along with tips for using it).
ANNUAL BASE SALARY BY SPECIALIZATION (as of 1/1/2016)

MEDIAN INCOME ALL RESPONDENTS $77,300

ANNUAL BASE SALARY BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE (as of 1/1/2016)

MEDIAN INCOME ALL RESPONDENTS $77,300
APA Career Services hosted 33 career-focused sessions at the National Planning Conference in Phoenix, offering guidance to planners from newly graduated to nearly retired. Also:

Employer Connection hosted 20 employers, including the U.S. Navy, San Francisco, and New York City. They conducted informational interviews with an estimated 250 attendees for as many as 50 open positions.

The Resume Clinic was booked solid throughout the conference. Volunteer members and hiring experts helped more than 150 attendees craft better resumes.

Mentor Match brought more than 100 proteges together with members who volunteered as mentors.

Look for these career services and more at NPC17.
3. OUTREACH

APA's 2016 outreach activities occurred in local elementary schools and on Capitol Hill. In communities across the United States and in Central and South America. In Great Places and in places that are striving to be great with the help of APA planners and good planning practices.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY PLANNING MONTH

October's observance of National Community Planning Month centered on community engagement. Across the country, planners articulated for community members — and most importantly, for decision makers — how planning brings together diverse groups of people to build stronger, healthier, more just communities.

APA Ambassador Jeremy Snow and an elementary-school class in Springfield, Missouri.
For the first time, APA divisions and young planners groups joined chapters in hosting activities that ranged from networking events and live video posts on Facebook to campus wheelchair walks. Our efforts to build champions for planning among elected and volunteer leaders showed results as mayors, governors, and members of Congress showed their support for good planning on social media, via proclamations, and at public events. Federal officials and their staff were on hand for six local Great Places celebrations.

APA leveraged the energy generated by announcements of 15 Great Places in America to spread the core message of National Community Planning Month: planners and planning are essential to creating great communities that are stronger and more resilient. By integrating calls to action in all our messages, APA generated significantly greater participation from members.

APA members shared news of their chapters' Great Places designations at Planners' Day on Capitol Hill, the final day of APA's fall Policy and Advocacy Conference in Washington. APA Alaska Chapter President Lauren Driscoll met with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who congratulated her for her chapter's commitment to planning.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND**

APA members joined our policy and advocacy team in asking Congress to reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and to prioritize LWCF programs that direct funding to urban and economically disadvantaged communities. APA was proud to work with partners including City Parks Alliance, National Recreation and Park Association, and The Trust for Public Land. APA members took this message directly to lawmakers during Planners' Day on Capitol Hill.

Policy and advocacy staff challenged APA members to make the most of the summer congressional recess, when elected officials returned to their districts, and they responded in a big way. Advocates flocked to Twitter to share photos of their favorite urban and community park spaces.

Strategic messaging on Twitter and other social media platforms is a key element of APA's effort to inform members and engage them in planning advocacy.
PLANNERS' ADVOCACY NETWORK

Last year, more than 800 APA members joined the Planners' Advocacy Network — a free benefit for members eager to lend their voices in support of planning at the federal level. Member advocates spoke out on such issues as appropriations, funding for urban parks, reauthorizing the LWCF, and supporting place-based initiatives like the TIGER grant program.

APA members received a special congressional invitation from Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) to become advocates for livable communities just in time for the 2016 presidential primaries.

Just before Election Day, APA advocacy staff unveiled the Advocate's Toolbox — a member-only resource hub filled with tips, training, and tools to help planners enhance their advocacy efforts. Later we added a recording of APA's all-time best-attended webinar (> 1,200 participants) that covered the incoming Trump administration, the 115th Congress, and what both could mean for planners and their communities. All APA members can stream it now from our website.

APA AMBASSADORS

More than 6,000 children, youth, and adults participated in over 100 activities conducted by APA Ambassadors. Three-quarters of Ambassador activities took place in elementary, middle, and high schools. Infographic by Miguel Angel Vazquez and Susan Lee Deegan.

In 2016, the APA Ambassador program's inaugural year, member volunteers were active all around the United States. Altogether, more than 100 Ambassador programs reached over 6,000 students and other nonplanners, introducing them to the planning profession, emphasizing the positive impacts of planning in their neighborhoods, and inspiring them to take part.

Ambassadors' customized events resonate with their unique audiences and activities are as diverse as the youth and adults they engage. Ambassadors built child-sized bridges and Box Cities with elementary school students and worked with teen clubs to envision local skate parks.
"Now I know that a profession exists that encompasses so many things that I am passionate about — the environment and the growth of cities. I applied to graduate school for urban planning after this event."
 — Teen participant in a Chicago APA Ambassadors event

Kudos to all APA Ambassadors for their creativity, dedication, and service! A special shout out to the planning firm Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., which sponsored employee Ambassador teams in their Hartford and New York City offices.

"It's thrilling and beyond rewarding to think that it's possible that some of the kids in the sessions might go on to become the next generation of planners. To say this program left us all feeling inspired is an understatement."
 — Mary Miltimore, AICP, Fitzgerald & Halliday, and New York City Ambassadors team leader

Throughout the year, Ambassadors shared their experiences in the APA blog and on social media.

HABITAT III

Months of preparation with the Global Planners Network and other partners preceded APA’s participation at the United Nations Habitat III global summit in Quito, Ecuador, in October. APA took part in pre-summit meetings and drafting the summit’s key document, the New Urban Agenda. APA members weighed in on the penultimate draft during the summer public comment period.

Past President Carol Rhea, FAICP, led APA’s delegation to Habitat III, accompanied by Chief Executive Officer James Drinan; International Division Chair Tim Van Epp, AICP; Director of International Programs Jeff Soule, FAICP; and several other APA members. Rhea and Van Epp were panelists in a discussion sponsored by the GPN, and APA worked with local stakeholders to produce the Viva Alameda Urban Village. In the exhibit hall, APA shared display space with the GPN and other allied organizations.

APA worked with Quito residents on the Vive Alameda Urban Village Project.
Habitat III strove to further global understanding of the ramifications of unprecedented urbanization. The [New Urban Agenda](#), a 20-year strategy to promote sustainable development of cities, towns, and rural areas, emphasizes citizen participation, transparent decision making, and data-based plans and actions. The 193 nations represented at Habitat III approved the agenda by acclimation.

APA and the [APA International Division](#) are working on guidelines and resources to help members implement the outcomes of Habitat III — strategies outlined in the New Urban Agenda — in their local communities.

See other ways APA and its members are raising awareness about and advocating for planning:

- [Community Planning Assistance Teams](#)
- [2016 National Planning Awards](#)
- [Prosperity Playbook](#)

### 3. AICP

In 2016, AICP took several significant and long-anticipated steps in service to all APA members. By year end, AICP leaders and members working together had defined an alternative path to certification, updated the certification exam, simplified the ethics code, and improved the Certification Maintenance program for AICP members and education providers.

#### AICP CANDIDATE PILOT PROGRAM

The AICP Commission approved the [AICP Candidate Pilot Program](#) after considering input from APA leaders and more than 1,000 members. By resequencing eligibility requirements, the program realigns the path to certification without affecting the integrity of the AICP credential. The program aims to encourage more young planners to pursue certification very early in their careers.

The AICP Candidate Pilot Program will launch in November 2017. The Commission will evaluate the program as it progresses to ensure that it meets the needs of APA members and employers.
AICP CERTIFICATION EXAM

Early Bird Applications

Applicants submitted within the first seven days of an application period get first review and early response. If the application is denied, the applicant may revise and resubmit the application for the same exam window.

APA originally offered this option to encourage early applications and alleviate processing bottlenecks in the last days of the application period. We quickly found that denied applicants really appreciate the ability to immediately revise and reapply — a process that otherwise delays reapplication by six months. Since early application was introduced, it has become a very popular choice. In fact, early birds have increased by almost 300 percent and now make up almost half of all new exam applicants.

Nearly 570 members sat for the May 2016 AICP Exam, with a pass rate of 69 percent. In November, 618 members sat for the exam and 65 percent passed.

Beginning in May 2017, testers will take an updated AICP Certification Exam — the first comprehensive update since 2007. A task force of planning experts that included AICP exam committee members reviewed all 800-plus questions in the question pool to ensure their relevance to current practice.

AICP’s 2016 job analysis survey evaluated the tasks and knowledge related to work performed by planners and gathered data about emerging planning trends. The survey results shaped the updated exam, which emphasizes the comprehensive nature of planners’ work and tests candidates’ knowledge of contemporary planning practice, including innovative techniques, trends, and emerging issues. The exam also queries their understanding of the essential role the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in certified planning practice.

AICP CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

AICP’s Ethics Committee reviewed the Code in 2016 and recommended changes that the Commission approved. The approved Code revisions:

- Simplify and shorten complaint procedures;
- Make procedures less adversarial and complaints more likely to be settled;
• Expand the role of the Ethics Committee and Ethics Officer;
• Specify potential disciplinary actions; and
• Improve communications among the AICP Ethics Committee, Commission, and members.

CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

For CM Providers: Simple New Choices

AICP made it easier and simpler for educational providers to offer high-quality professional development to AICP members. Put simply, AICP now reviews and pre-qualifies providers for a specified period and no longer assesses individual events. We also vastly simplified the provider fee structure.

AICP is committed to providing high-quality education to its members. Thanks to continuous outreach and AICP member referrals, by the end of 2016 more than 300 CM providers were registered to offer AICP members professional training opportunities that fulfill their CM requirements.

For AICP Members: A New Way to Earn CM Credits

AICP members may now earn CM credits for volunteering their planning expertise and other pro bono planning services. The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct acknowledges such service among the "Principles to Which We Aspire" and links volunteer efforts to AICP members' ethical obligations to serve vulnerable communities and advance social justice. Members may use the self-report option to log CM credits for pro bono planning service.

AICP members at the 2016 Community Assistance Workshop in Phoenix. Photo by Ryan Scherzinger.
ADVANCED SPECIALTY CERTIFICATION

Twenty-seven AICP members earned Advanced Specialty Certification in 2016: seven as Certified Environmental Planners, eight as Certified Transportation Planners, and 12 as Certified Urban Designers.

AICP COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

The AICP College of Fellows inducted a new class of 61 outstanding AICP planners during the 2016 National Planning Conference in Phoenix. Newly inducted Fellow Rhonda Phillips gave an eloquent speech on behalf of her class during the induction ceremony. AICP is accepting nominations for the 2018 Class of Fellows through October 13, 2017.

APA recognizes all Fellows' contributions and achievements in Fellows of AICP News.

5. WATER

An adequate supply of clean water, reliable water infrastructure, and resources to mitigate and manage the results of storms, floods, droughts, and other events are essential for building and maintaining resilient, sustainable communities.
APA has affirmed water as an organizational priority. APA's [Water Task Force](#) recognized society's need for a more comprehensive approach in which planners are increasingly responsible for addressing water quality and other issues — traditionally left to water utilities — as a part of a community's vision for the future.

**WATER WORKING GROUP**

APA's [Water Working Group](#) continues the work of advancing planning practice as it relates to water issues. In 2016, the working group conducted a [survey](#) focused on planners' engagement in water issues.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Top water-related concerns**  
(percent of respondents rating this a top concern)

- **82%** said water is a top concern: Stormwater management  
- **70%** said water is a top concern: Flooding  
- **68%** said water is a top concern: Adequate water supply  
- **64%** said water is a top concern: Failing or inadequate water infrastructure  
- **63%** said water is a top concern: Environmental/water resource degradation  
- **60%** said water is a top concern: Pollutants in water supply

**MEMBERS’ RESPONSES TO THE 2016 WATER WORKING GROUP SURVEY**

Survey respondents also indicated a need for increased collaboration between planning and water agencies and more widespread knowledge about water and planning practice.

**WATER POLICY GUIDE**

The Water Working Group led last year's update of APA's Policy Guide on Water. The policy guide cites water as a "central and essential organizing element" within built environments and recognizes planners' role in water-related decisions. It offers policy guidance on water quantity and quality, water
management in the western United States, stormwater and flooding, and water resources vis-à-vis the environment. The guide endorses a One Water approach to water management — where integrated, regional water planning and partnerships are the norm — and for new, interdisciplinary partnerships to make it happen.

**ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIP**

On behalf of planners, APA successfully advocated for good water policies by supporting the [Water Resources Development Act](https://waterinfrastructureimprovements.org/) (now the [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act as it made its way through Congress](https://waterinfrastructureimprovements.org/)). This bill was the last major piece of legislation voted on by the 114th Congress. Former President Obama signed it into law on December 16.

![Netherlands Embassy](https://waterinfrastructureimprovements.org/)

.@jasonljordan: "The Dutch have really helped US cities rethink their approach to watermanagement." #WaterWeek16

Participants in the Water Week event for planners at the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

APA maintained its partnerships with planners, engineers, and officials in The Netherlands.

In a [special Water Week event](https://waterinfrastructureimprovements.org/) last spring, APA and the Royal Netherlands Embassy hosted an educational session for planners in the DC Metro area that explored how the Dutch are helping U.S. communities of all sizes rethink their water management strategies. For their part, APA presenters emphasized the dire need for investment in water infrastructure and the importance of water planning.
GREATER BALTIMORE WILDERNESS PROJECT

An APA research team completed work on Greater Baltimore Wilderness: Green Infrastructure for Regional Resilience, a project initiated in response to coastal storms and climate change. APA inventoried green infrastructure planning practices used by jurisdictions in the Baltimore-Annapolis region, researched best practices, and developed a free, five-part toolkit to help local governments resist or mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

APA staff also worked with two volunteer Community Planning Assistance Teams to develop action plans for Harford County and South Baltimore’s Brooklyn/Baybrook neighborhood. In Harford County, team members and local planners and residents worked on framing a location-specific green infrastructure network. The Brooklyn/Baybrook plan to increase green infrastructure and community resilience in an area that connects development in South Baltimore to downtown was a topic in October 2016 at "Green Spaces, Cleaner Water, and Stronger Neighborhoods," a White House roundtable in Baltimore organized by former President Obama’s Task Force on Baltimore City.

"Green infrastructure will create a more sustainable, resilient Brooklyn/Baybrook area and offer triple-bottom-line benefits — environmental, economic, and social. The plan will serve as a model for other Baltimore neighborhoods to build a healthier, greener, and more sustainable city."
— David Rouse, FAICP, APA Director of Research

GREAT URBAN PARKS CAMPAIGN

Recognizing the essential role that parks can play in solving urban stormwater management challenges within cities, APA’s Green Communities Center began work with the National Recreation and Park Association and the Low Impact Development Center to improve environmental and social outcomes in underserved communities through green infrastructure in local parks. The project kicked off in Spring 2016 when nearly 40 thought leaders convened in Atlanta to discuss how to maximize the benefits of green infrastructure, resulting in a summary of existing research and case studies as well as a report on the group’s findings.

Green infrastructure is quickly becoming the go-to economical and environmentally friendly solution to ensure resilience in extreme weather situations, moving beyond the aging, "gray" stormwater management systems. Local parks and open areas are ideally suited for green infrastructure approaches, which often improve and enhance public spaces to benefit communities in multiple ways.
"Parks play an important role in creating communities of lasting value. Incorporating green infrastructure into new or existing parks will enhance each community, making them more sustainable, equitable, and resilient for current and future generations."
— Carol Rhea, FAICP, APA Past-President

Thanks to the Great Urban Parks Campaign grant awards, 2017 will see the completion of four large-scale green infrastructure projects in parks in Atlanta, Baltimore, Denver, and Pittsburgh, as well as the creation of evidence-based educational resources for park and recreation leaders and planners nationwide.

Learn more about our efforts to help communities use, conserve, and manage water:

- PAS Report: Subdivision Design and Flood Hazard Areas
- PAS Report: Coastal Zone Management
- Hazards Planning Center
- "Before It's Too Late" article from August/September 2016 Planning
- 2016 National Planning Award for Implementation: Downtown Columbus Riverfront