Community Planning Assistance Program

What is Community Planning Assistance?
APA Mississippi is excited to announce a new chapter program aimed at helping Mississippi communities. The Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) is a new initiative to provide a multidisciplinary team of planning professionals from across the state of Mississippi to collaborate with elected officials, community leaders, stakeholders, and volunteers to address a local issue or concern. These challenges facing local elected officials may include economic development, housing, transportation, energy, recreation, environmental, etc. Team members are selected for specific expertise needed on a project to offer pro-bono assistance in developing a planning approach that fosters sustainable, economically vibrant, healthy, resilient and livable communities.

Who is APA Mississippi?
APA Mississippi is one of 47 chapters of the American Planning Association, the national association for planners and advocate for good planning practices. APA Mississippi consists of 160 members that represent planners in public, private, non-profit, academic, citizen planners, and planning students. The mission of APA Mississippi is to create better communities for the residents of Mississippi. One component of achieving that mission includes providing Mississippians with the planning knowledge, resources and tools needed to support and create communities for living, working and enjoying life.

Why is APA Mississippi Providing This Pro-Bono Program?
APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), provide a CPAT program nationally to assist communities. The basis for this assistance is rooted in the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. This code includes one principle that states that certified planners shall aspire to “seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration.” Certified planners also should aspire to another principle that states that planners should “contribute time and effort to groups lacking in adequate planning resources and to voluntary professional activities.” APA Mississippi identified the need for a chapter CPAT program in its 2012 - 2015 Development Plan as a goal for Outreach and Collaboration for these same reasons.

How Can My Community Apply?
Communities may apply throughout the year. Applications will include key points about the problem; what obstacles exist that prevents resolving the issue; a list of partnerships and major stakeholders; what local resources are available to the professional planners; and who is the local contact person. Applications are available online at www.planningms.org. Communities should be prepared to support the CPAT team through coordinative efforts, meals and other support services as determined in the application process.

How Can I Locate Additional Information?
Interested communities can come by the APA Mississippi booth in July at MML Annual Conference to talk with an APA Mississippi member about the program. Also, the program will be a part of the presentation on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at the 2:00 pm session, “Big Ideas for Small Towns - How Planning Makes a Difference”