

PLANNING MINNESOTA



American Planning Association
Minnesota Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association

April-June 2020



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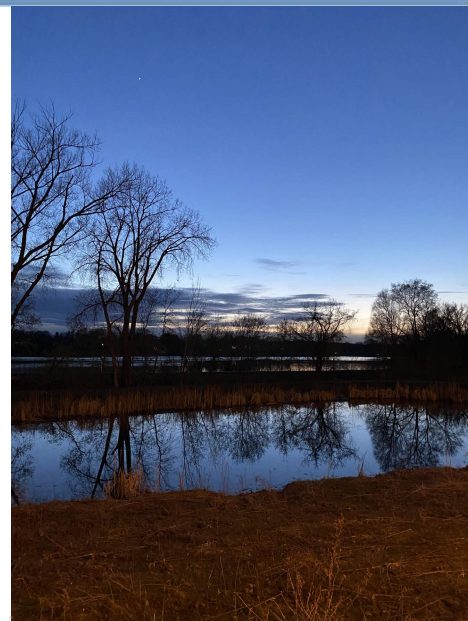
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CHAPTER UPDATES

President's Desk



From the President

Greetings APA Minnesota Members! I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Planners will play a key role in the Public Health Recovery as well as the Economic Recovery.

Despite the challenges of serving our members during social distancing and stay at home guidance, the APA Minnesota Board has risen to the occasion. Special thanks to our Professional Development Committee to expanding our webinar series and breaking attendance records for our Brown Bag Lunch Series. Kudos to our Legislative and Law Committee for revamping our policy advocacy and legislative updates. Our weekly Legislative Updates have been a hit!

As we look towards our future for the remainder of the year, the APA Minnesota Board has looked for creative and effective ways to continue to engage with our members. Social Distancing will be with us for some time. Our Member Communities and Organizations are having to make some tough financial decisions in order to continue their mission and operations.

With that in mind, the APA Minnesota Board has made the difficult decision to change our Minnesota Planning Conference this September from an In Person Event to a Virtual Event.

While we know this likely does not come as a surprise, it is likely sad news for many of you. I'm saddened that this decision had to be made in the final months of my term, as I look forward to this event each and every year to gather with our fellow Planners. We were all excited to spend several sunny autumn days in Duluth. To our Duluth Friends, we promise to come back soon! We are already exploring scheduling our 2021 Minnesota Planning Conference for Duluth.

But, with difficult circumstances often comes recovery and innovation. APA National recently completed a successful National Planning Conference at Home. Over 5,000 people attended this 3 Day Virtual Conference. Over 80% of the attendees were individuals that were not even signed up for the original NPC in Houston. Additionally, the APA Minnesota Board is in discussions with APA Iowa and APA Wisconsin to combine our efforts in a Joint Virtual Conference. More details to come on this if this becomes a reality.

This has been the most difficult President's Report I've had to write in my 4 years as President of APA Minnesota. There were several starts and stops, a couple of 'delete all' moments and even one computer crash before I remembered to hit save. But I'll leave you with this. It was not that long ago we weathered an economic recession that impacted the work we do. I was entering the Profession just as the 2008 Recession was starting. Despite all those bumps in the road, we weathered that storm and came out better than ever and experienced one of the greatest economic recoveries on record. I will share with you that despite some difficult days, it was my interactions with fellow Planners such as yourself and the network of Planners we've built across Minnesota that got me through it. APA Minnesota again is here to be your support network. We'll get through this and we will come out stronger in the end.

Stay Healthy APA Minnesota!

APA MN Student Update

Message To All APA MN Students

We are thinking of you and hope you are well. While the status of internships and jobs are uncertain at this time, we hope this update is a good reminder of a few things that are in your control as a soon-to-be professional planner. Be sure to take advantage of these professional opportunities. We are especially excited to share information about the new student pricing for this year's APA MN planning conference. Stay tuned to your inbox for details about a virtual spring event that will feature discussions about being a new planner during these uncertain times.

All the best,
Shannon & Jed

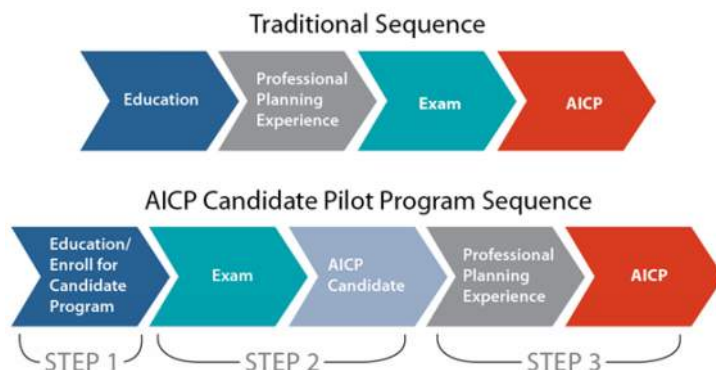
About Your Student Representatives

Shannon Evans Engstrom is a second-year Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. She is your student director and can be reached via email at engstrom@umn.edu.

Jed Hanson is a first-year Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at the Humphrey School. He is interested in transit and low-carbon transportation. He is your student representative and can be reached at 701-484-1656 or hans5129@umn.edu.

APA Minnesota Student Awards

Please be sure to consider applying for the student awards. Applications are due May 29, 2020. Please reach out to Stephanie Faulkers with any questions.



AICP Pilot Candidate Program

If you are a current student, consider enrolling in the [AICP Candidate Pilot Program](#). What does AICP mean? It is the professional certification for planners in America and it stands for the American Institute for Certified Planners. AICP Certification provides planners with professional development opportunities, ethics training, and it provides a leg up while job hunting. The Candidate Pilot Program is an expedited path to your AICP Certification.

Enrolling in the pilot program costs \$20. This allows you to start counting Certification Maintenance (CM) credits from professional development events while you are still in school.



APA MN Student Update *(continued)*

Message To All APA MN Students

Register for APA Membership

If you are not already a member of APA, we encourage you to sign-up for your [free student membership](#)! Membership carries a bunch of benefits, including:

- Discounted registration at the National Planning Conference and APA Minnesota conferences
- Training, career connections, and other professional development opportunities
- Access to the Journal of the American Planning Association and Zoning Practice
- Eligibility to participate in the above-mentioned [AICP Candidate Pilot Program](#)

Conference Registration Fee Reduced

UPDATE: *With the change in the conference to an online event, all fees will be reevaluated.*

Your student representatives have worked with the board to reduce the fee for the annual APA Minnesota fall conference to \$25. We hope this new, reduced fee makes the conference more accessible for students. We encourage all future planners to attend this valuable professional development and networking opportunity.

Other scholarship or volunteering options may be available for those who need it—please contact Jed this summer for information.

Individual School Updates

Humphrey School

The Urban and Regional Planning program at the Humphrey School will welcome a new faculty member in Fall, 2020. Hui Kong will start as a contract faculty member in November. With a master's degree and a PhD in geography from The Ohio State University, Kong is a transportation scholar whose research and teaching focuses on big data analytics, shared mobility and transit. Kong is currently working in a post-doc position in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Urban planning master's students at the Humphrey School are required to work in a community based, supervised internship as a part of their degree requirements. Students have expertise in a variety of areas of planning, including land use, environmental planning, transportation, and housing. If you have internship positions available and would like to attract a high quality pool of applicants, please contact Jennifer Guyer-Wood (jguyerwo@umn.edu) or Steph Eiden (eiden026@umn.edu) for information about how to advertise your position.

The Planning Student Organization (PSO) at the Humphrey School is coordinating a food assistance program for members in need during the pandemic. This program will impact the Humphrey PSO's budget and its ability to hold programs once normal University operations have resumed. If you are able, please consider contributing to the Humphrey PSO's efforts. Jed Hanson (hans5129@umn.edu), Matthew Gabb (gabb0029@umn.edu), or Anna Crouch (crouc081@umn.edu) are able to answer questions about this program.



Chapter Update

Upcoming Brown Bag Lunch Seminars

June Online Event: Engaging Youth in Planning



CM | 1

CM Grace Period and CM Opportunities

- Attend virtually APA Minnesota's Brown Bag events, including the upcoming one in June
- Search [APA Learn](#) for nearly 400 courses including Law and Ethics. These courses are available at a low cost per credit.
- Many other CM providers offer live and on-demand education—including many free options. Just use the [CM search](#) to find what you are looking for.

You may contact any of the Professional Development Officers if you have questions about the CM grace period or other CM opportunities.

Fall Conference Sessions

With the change to an online format for the fall APA MN conference, session proposals will need to be reevaluated. More information will be provided when available.

AICP Test Timeline Changes

APA has published the timeline for the November 2020 AICP exam. These are slightly revised dates, so please be aware of the changes:

- June 1 at 9 a.m.: Application and registration opens
- June 8 at 3 p.m.: Early bird application deadline
- June 26 at 3 p.m.: Final application deadline
- October 30 at 3 p.m.: Exam registration deadline
- November 9–23: Exam window

A new, more flexible process will go in effect in December (more to come!), but in the meantime, here are some improvements that will go into effect immediately:

- Diplomas do not have to be notarized.
- While an employment verification letter for each job will need to still be uploaded, applicants are not required to submit the letter on company letterhead or have it signed by a former employer.
- There are more options to test! Approved applicants can test online remotely, or in-person at their local test center.
- There is improved guidance on the criteria for essays and the checklist. Please see the new guides here:

AICP Guide Part 1: Certification Application

AICP Guide Part 2: Taking the Exam

If you have questions about the AICP exam, please contact one of APA Minnesota's PDOs

APA MN 2020 Planning Awards

Call for Proposals

April is here and so is our warmer weather in Minnesota. This means it is time to start thinking about APA-Minnesota Chapter Planning Awards!

Each year, the Chapter's planning awards recognize the outstanding people, places, projects, and efforts of the planning professions over the last year. There is great work going on across the State and we're excited to showcase it. Every year, the APA-Minnesota Awards provide a platform to share the existing work you, your co-workers and partners have contributed to with our planning peers. It's time to celebrate the magnificent work we do here in Minnesota!

The call for award nominations will be open through Friday, May 29th, 2020 at 5:00pm. See <https://minnesota.planning.org/conferences-and-meetings/minnesota-planning-conference-2020/> for more information.

There are ten award categories for the 2020 Awards:

Excellence in Community Engagement – Award to a project that uses successful and inclusive community engagement to drive project development, results and implementation.

Innovation in Planning – An innovative plan/project presents a visionary approach to addressing the needs of those it serves and applies to a variety of areas.

Partnerships in Planning – Recognizes planning efforts that involved a partnership(s) between different organizations to facilitate an outcome that could not be accomplished by an individual organization.

Planning in Context – Recognizes efforts that go above and beyond in the level of sensitivity of their surroundings, as well as the ability to embrace and take advantage of past, present, and predicted aspects.

Success Stories in Implementation – Honors a project that successfully implemented the recommendations of good planning in an inclusive and impactful manner.

NE District Director Award – Honors a planner, community, organization, effort or planning project of excellence within the MN APA's NE District. **This award is selected by the NE District Director, and nomination are not required for the award.** Contact Stephanie Falkers for more information.

Outstanding Student Project – Highlights superior work that was produced by students that display originality, transferability, quality, collaboration and effectiveness. **This award is open to students in any planning program throughout the State!**

Gunnar C. Isberg Scholarship – Awarded to an undergraduate or graduate student pursuing an education in the planning or planning related field in Minnesota who displays an excellent reputation and academic achievement, involvement in the planning field, and dedication to the profession. **This award is open to students in any planning program throughout the State!**

Peg and Otto Schmid Award – Honors a mid-career individual or group of individuals who contribute to the planning profession within and beyond Minnesota.

Lifetime Achievement Award – Celebrates the career of a chapter member who has exhibited a dedication and commitment to the field over at least a 10-year period.

Awards will be presented during the 2020 APA Conference in Duluth. Representatives of the selected projects are invited to join us for a celebration of their work. Additionally, project award recipients will have the opportunity to present during a session during the conference with other recipients. The date, time, and logistics of both the awards ceremony and awards session are still in discussion and updates will be provided as recipients are notified.

Additionally, if any APA MN members are interested in participating on the Awards Committee, we are always looking for additional help! The committee members help to review certain award categories, participate in the review of other state chapter awards, and assist with the planning for and presentation at the awards ceremony. Please contact Stephanie Falkers with additional questions or interest in participating.

For more information about the 2020 MN APA Awards, please contact the Awards Chair Stephanie Falkers at sfalkers@srfconsulting.com. **The Awards Committee looks forward to receiving many great nominations!**

FAICP 2020 Induction

Peter Hendee Brown, FAICP

APA MN is pleased to congratulate Peter Brown on his induction into the AICP College of Fellows. This is the highest honor the American Institute of Certified Planners bestows upon a member. Fellows of AICP are nominated and selected by their peers to



recognize and honor their outstanding contributions as a professional planner. The outcomes of their individual efforts left demonstrably significant and transformational improvements to the field of planning and the communities they served. All Fellows are long-time members of AICP and have achieved excellence in professional practice, teaching and mentoring, research, and community service and leadership.

Below is an excerpt from the nominating letter that was sent to APA on behalf of his candidacy.

Peter's contributions to planning extend broadly across practice, research, teaching, and mentoring. His work has transformed the communities he has worked in, as well as the lives of his students. Peter holds a PhD and MA in City and Regional Planning, as well as a Master of Governmental Administration, from the University of Pennsylvania. He also holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell University.

One of Peter's defining characteristics is his extraordinary ability to engage seamlessly across multiple disciplines and sectors. His work has spanned boundaries, as he has integrated his expertise in planning, design, real estate development, and management. Starting his career as an architect, Peter then moved to the Capital Program Office with the City of Philadelphia for 4 years, where he gained deep experience in the finance, design, and construction of public projects, and worked across the political, departmental, and disciplinary divides that are ever-present in large public sector projects.

After over 15 years in practice, he enrolled full-time at the University of Pennsylvania, bringing with him a wealth of experience, connections, and clear intent to do research to document and inform planning practice. After receiving his PhD in

2004, Peter moved to Minneapolis and started Conurbation, LLC. Working with the City of Minneapolis, Peter has played central roles in major public realm projects that have transformed the physical character of downtown, catalyzing redevelopment, providing essential public infrastructure, and creating iconic public buildings. design committee and the many competing interests and personalities representing design, business, and politics.

Throughout all of his work, Peter has applied an analytical perspective to the world around him and in doing so has been able to draw out crucial insights that help to advance planning practice and research. Peter drew on his dissertation research to create an academically rigorous and practice-relevant book – *American's Waterfront Revival: Port Authorities and Urban Redevelopment* – that offered in-depth case studies to capture the essential contextual factors that shape the trends and successes of urban waterfront redevelopment. Peter's second book, *How Real Estate Developers Think: Design, Profits, and the Community*, applies his analytical approach to understanding real estate – honing in on understanding developers via more than 100 interviews, yielding personal and professional insights that can offer planners and other practitioners essential insights to foster collaboration to advance the public interest. Further indicative of the respect and visibility that he has achieved among planning academics and researchers,

In addition to a successful and impactful consulting practice and a continuously productive research and writing practice, Peter is an exceptional teacher and committed mentor to planning students. Building on early experience as a site planning and architecture instructor at Drexel and Penn, Peter has been an instructor in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Program at the University of Minnesota since 2008. In addition to students, Peter frequently presents on his research and practice to planners, architects, developers, and elected officials. Peter is an active member of APA Minnesota.

He is a leader and innovator in our field, and deeply committed to advancing practice, knowledge, and the education of future planners.

Without a doubt, he represents a model planner.

2020 Decennial Census

Minnesota Update

United States Census 2020

The 2020 Census has come to Minnesota and the Twin Cities. Starting March 12, the Census Bureau began mailing letters to all known residential addresses.

Almost every residential address in the Twin Cities metro area received a letter that invites self-response through a secure website, my2020census.gov, or by phone interview (1-844-330-2020).

Participation and an accurate count are important. The Met Council will use Census counts during the next nine years to estimate annual population for communities in the metro area. The estimates are the official counts for state government purposes, including the distribution of local government aid (LGA), local street aid, and fiscal disparities tax-base sharing.

Exceptional Cases Are Being Treated in Tailored Ways

- People living in institutions and service-based housing are part of special “[group quarters](#)” counts. Institutions and service-based housing include nursing homes and senior care facilities, college dorms, correctional facilities, shelters and transitional housing.
- Minneapolis and Richfield only: [Three neighborhoods in Minneapolis and Richfield](#) received a first letter in both Spanish and English. The Census Bureau identified these three neighborhoods as having the greatest concentration of Spanish-speaking households.

- St. Paul, Roseville, Shakopee, Prior Lake, Mendota, Newport, and Marine only: A very small number of neighborhoods, with a few hundred addresses total, received questionnaires hand-delivered by Census canvassers, rather than by mail. An example is William O’Brien State Park, which has a few residents living in cabins or RVs without street addresses.

Be Proactive

You can complete the internet self-response or the phone interview with or without the letter from the Census Bureau. This is the solution for any household that is somehow missed and does not receive a Census letter. To link your response to where you live — and be marked as “responded” — you must provide one of the following:

- Your street address, OR
- A description of your location if you have no street address, OR
- The 12-digit ID number found in the Census Bureau’s letter

If recipients of the first letter did not complete the Census by internet or by phone in March, then there were subsequent mailings in early April, **including a traditional mail-back questionnaire.**

All people living in Minnesota must complete the 2020 Census. Addresses that still have not responded by late April will be visited by Census workers conducting in-person interviews.

More Information

- [2020 Census mailings: What households will receive in the mail](#)
- [How to respond to the Census online, by phone, or by mail](#)
- [How to respond to the Census without a Census ID \(PDF\)](#)

New Ruralism Initiative

Case Studies in New Ruralism – Sharing Lessons for Success in Rural Communities Nationwide



By Jennifer Whittaker

The [New Ruralism Project](#), an initiative of [APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division \(STaR\)](#), [APA Northern New England Chapter](#), and the [APA Divisions Council](#), has been busy teaming up with communities nationwide to develop an online collection of case studies in New Ruralism. The project, which started by featuring efforts in Northern New England, has now expanded to feature grassroots initiatives to strengthen rural communities from Alaska to New York to Alabama.



Our featured communities from the Black Belt to the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Alaska are demonstrating that investing in the arts, childcare, local foods, cooperative housing, and unified planning has a positive impact for rural communities.

We are excited to announce five new case studies featuring communities from across the United States who are reinventing local markets and developing grassroots driven programs to meet the needs of their rural residents. Two of our feature communities, Kodiak, Alaska and Port Townsend, Washington are embracing cooperative models of providing food and

housing. [Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op](#), located on Kodiak Island, is skipping the high shipping costs of bringing groceries to the island by providing a market for produce and seafood grown and caught locally. Senior residents of Port Townsend, in the Puget Sound, are passing up oversized maintenance-heavy old homes in favor of the self-governing and personally designed cooperative housing community, [Quimper Village](#). Two more communities are demonstrating how meeting a specific local need can blossom into broader community revitalization. Parents in Frewsburg, New York wanted more affordable local activities for their children, so they transformed a downtown empty church into the [Relief Zone Community Youth Center](#), now a thriving anchor for community activities for families. Residents of Camden, Alabama also revamped a downtown vacant building, turning an old car dealership into [Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center](#), now a flourishing regional center for the arts and crafts sales, cultural preservation, and arts education. Meanwhile, residents of Allen County, Indiana are planning to be a vital part of regional economic growth. The [NewAllen Alliance](#) is bringing together residents and officials from seven rural communities to create a unified voice for small towns in larger economic development planning in the nearby city of Fort Wayne.

The Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center in Camden, AL is enhancing the regional economy through arts-related jobs and tourism while also preserving, reviving, and sharing the arts and craft movements, like basket weaving, of the region.



Leaders in all five of these projects offer up lessons for success to share with other rural communities interested in developing grassroots-driven solutions to local challenges. New Rural-

New Ruralism Initiative

Case Studies in New Ruralism (continued)

ism communities note that they have found success by emphasizing collaboration over competition to build cross-sector support for projects. They credit the power of listening to and sharing with the community, observing that projects are most successful when they listen and adapt to the needs of residents while communicating well and often about progress. All five of the communities convey the importance of celebrating successes early, often, and publicly, noting that recognizing incremental movement keeps projects focused and moving forward. We hope lessons from these case studies serve as a resource for communities who may be interested in replicating similar projects without reinventing the wheel.

For more lessons for success, stay tuned to APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division's [social media feeds](#) in April. Each week, we will be featuring one of these innovative rural com-

munities and sharing more details about what makes their projects exemplars of innovation. Not on social media? Check out each of these in-depth case studies on the New Ruralism [website](#). Most importantly, *tell us* if you think your community should be included as a case study in New Ruralism. Is your community tackling environmental, social, or economic challenges in a unique way? Nominate your people and projects by clicking [here](#) and telling us a few details about the efforts happening in your community. We want to hear your stories!

We are excited about the future of small towns and rural communities across America, and our excitement is rooted in the belief that people are our best assets. Each of these case studies emphasizes residents uniting to invest in their place and drive change. Help us cross-pollinate the ingredients of successful rural innovation across diverse rural communities by sharing the power of your rural story.



Quimper Village, a senior co-housing community in Port Townsend, WA is demonstrating that walkable, inclusive, high-quality housing can be designed within a larger community to allow residents to age in place surrounded by peers.

City Planning:

A Guide to Equitable Planning in Your Community

By [Beth Elliott](#)

Planning the future of a city, downtown, corridor, or site is not just about collecting data and setting a vision. It's about an outcome that benefits everyone. As our communities become more diverse, we as planners have an even greater imperative to run processes that are inclusive and not just about decision-making based on the loudest opinions. We need to collect, analyze, and display data that tells the tale of past, current, and future residents—all residents. We are also in a position as both public and private sector planners to cut through the politics, to be transparent about how decisions are made, and to show others how to get themselves to the table (or how we can go to their table).

In my more than a dozen years as a planner for downtown Minneapolis and its core neighborhoods, as well as my current role leading Stantec's planning efforts in the Midwest, I have developed my own set of processes, procedures, and potential outcomes that make any planning process more inclusive and representative. For any planner, we are learning from best practices and the desires of the public as we develop our own professional philosophies. Here is a set of principles I try to apply to every planning process I conduct.

Design an engagement process that is meaningful and inclusive

Planning is subjective—informed people can come to completely different conclusions. Since planning is ultimately about preparing for future conditions, our role as planners should be to design engagement and input processes that are as inclusive as possible. The first step is to remove barriers to participation. Go to where your audiences naturally gather or spend time, such as schools, the local coffee shop, or community centers. If you can't always go to them, design community meetings that are fun, interactive, and family-friendly, rather than the boring open house we've all attended. I once had a colleague say that our goal was for new participants to walk away from a meeting and say: "That wasn't so bad, I think I'll stay involved."

Here are additional ideas for designing a community engagement process:

Make it personal. This is their community, so every interaction should be about a person's daily life and aspirations for living, working, playing, and getting around. If I'm talking to kids, I ask them how old they'll be in 20 years and whether they would be living in the same neighborhood.



Since planning is ultimately about preparing for future conditions, it's important to design engagement and input processes that are as inclusive as possible.

City Planning:

A Guide to Equitable Planning in Your Community (continued)

Involve artists and arts organizations. Social practice artists can be great partners by helping to develop engagement questions without the jargon, design activities that are fun, and brainstorm ways to get diverse ages, cultures, and communities involved.

Pay cultural organizations to help. Community and cultural organizations already convene members for events and activities. Pay them a stipend to act as a convening partner. In my experience, the stipend helps pay for their time and offers them a chance to feed their members during your meeting. They can also act as trusted interpreters during the conversation.

Format for family-friendliness. Many people can't participate in a planning process due to family obligations. As someone with a young son, I would never be able to keep him still and quiet during a long presentation. Design your meeting so parents can easily tow their kids with them, and consider setting up Legos or a drawing station in the corner. Bags of fruit snacks and crackers don't hurt, either!

Accommodate language differences. Your first task should be to ask public agencies about best practices for interpreting and translating material. Next, find

local cultural leaders to get their input on what methods would work best for non-English speakers in town.

People aren't widgets to count. As much as possible, push back against any perspective that the most represented group should get their way. Many stakeholders (renters, seniors, non-English speakers, students) are just as invested but might have barriers to participation. When I was doing a plan for a neighborhood just outside of downtown Minneapolis, one of our priority audiences was a large population of Somali immigrants. I quickly learned that cultural customs dictate a leader will attend events on behalf of his community—we couldn't gauge the success of our process by the number of Somali participants but rather by the interactions with leadership.

Use data to tell a story, not just the facts

While data seems objective, we as planners have a responsibility to understand how the information was compiled. Did they use demographics from the census that show consistent trend lines over decades? Was qualitative information such as people's likes and dislikes shown as objective fact? Any data

Go to where your audiences naturally gather or spend time – schools, the local coffee or ice cream shop, community centers, etc. If you can't always go to them, design community meetings that are fun, interactive, and family-friendly.



City Planning:

A Guide to Equitable Planning in Your Community (continued)

we collect, analyze, and display should clearly show our sources so the public and decision-makers can fact check our work. Additionally, we shouldn't simply provide the information and leave it at that. Layer the data on top of each other to identify disparities and better understand how social policies and regulations drove upward mobility or community decline.

Currently, there is work being done to show how properties originally limited home ownership by people of color—it's called [Mapping Prejudice](#). During a recent project, my colleagues and I designed a data analysis exercise that layered this information with historic mortgage redlining, freeway locations, and current public health trends. The data highlighted amenity-rich areas that have historically been reserved for white single-family homeowners. While I came at this data analysis with my own professional point of view, I used legitimate sources to tell this story. I then asked the public if the data adequately told their story, and if it didn't, I requested additional data sources from the public themselves.

Documentation leads to transparent decision-making

An easy first step in any planning process is to simply record participants' feedback. Before you do that, you need to think about how your engagement activities can lead to successful documentation. Early on in a plan, I like to use an activity called the Six-Word Story. It's based on an Ernest Hemingway writing contest and encourages participants to distill salient points into short, creative vignettes. I record these in a table or spreadsheet and then, through photos, analyze the stories for common themes. Next, I develop a draft vision based on the content. It's a fun exercise that only takes a couple minutes to do, it's easy to record, and it offers some profound ideas for the future of a community.

Ultimately, planners will write the plan and then a group of elected officials will likely be the final decision-makers. Throughout the planning process, it's important for my team to be clear on how decisions are made, how the public can influence those decisions, and how we will create a documented record of community input that leads to final recommendations. I have seen many planning processes implode from lack of transparency. Setting realistic expectations for decision-making at the onset increases the likelihood of community buy-in and success.

A planner's responsibility

As with any planning process, strong voices can be heard the best. I see it as my responsibility to find opportunities to elevate other voices and empower non-typical stakeholders to better represent their perspectives in future bureaucratic processes. The tricky thing about planning is that there is no formula or calculation to a successful, livable, desirable community. Since there is not one right answer, a planner's responsibility is to learn from every process and every unique community. While I never think I'm successful if I simply check all the boxes I've described above, I always ask myself if I'm doing everything I can to make planning representative of all the people we serve. If I engage in meaningful conversations with diverse stakeholders and then represent their past, present, and future stories as they were told to me, I feel like I've achieved my goal for running a meaningful and inclusive planning process.

About Beth Elliott, AICP

Beth Elliott is a senior urban planner at Stantec with two guiding principles: planning needs to be accessible, and the outcomes should elevate everyone. She works on interdisciplinary and complex projects in all realms of planning including, land use, urban design, downtown revitalization, transportation, historic preservation, regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, economic development, environmental review, housing, and community engagement with diverse stakeholders. Previously, Elliott was the downtown planner for the City of Minneapolis for nearly 15 years and has worked on several regionally significant projects.

DISTRICT NEWS

Building Greater Minnesota's System of Regional Parks and Trails

By Joe Czapiewski, AICP
System Plan Coordinator
Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

What would you do if you had to create a new state agency from scratch?

That's essentially what the 13 governor-appointed members of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) set out to do in October 2013. Armed with enabling legislation, the possibility of distributing a portion of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding, and a brand-new strategic plan, the volunteer Commission got to work improving outdoor recreation across Greater Minnesota.

Notice I said the "possibility" of distributing Legacy Amendment funding. While the sales tax funding was available quickly, the brand-new Commission wasn't ready to manage

it. The Commission is one leg of a three-legged stool also consisting of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks and Natural Resources Department.

Each agency is responsible for managing a portion of the Legacy Amendment's sales tax revenue dedicated to parks and trails. As a new entity, the Commission had to prove not only the viability of its concept, but the capacity of the organization as well. Until then, distribution and management of its portion of funding was in the hands of the DNR. Let's take a look at how the Commission tackled this challenge.

Who, How and Why

The Commission's role is to "undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the parks and trails fund to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of re-



GMPTC Commissioners and planning consultants celebrate their first round of funding awards in November 2015.

Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (continued)

gional significance (Mn Statute 85.536).” There’s a lot packed in there, so let’s break down three critical parts.

The first part is “who”. The GMRPTC is targeted toward Greater Minnesota’s public (city and county) parks and trails of *regional significance*. What does that mean? Well, the Commission’s Strategic Plan contains criteria for facilities that rise to the level of designation as a part of the regional system. If you meet the criteria, you’re in!

How do you know if you meet the criteria? The Strategic Plan is a policy plan guiding the development of the overall regional system. It lays out the application process, the criteria, and the requirements for submitting a qualified Unit Master Plan. The Commission has never been shy about holding a high standard for the facilities that want to be a part of the system. Achieving designation is the most significant part of the overall process, receiving the most scrutiny.

Once you are designated a part of the system, applying for funding is fairly straightforward. It doesn’t mean that there aren’t standards, criteria, and competition, but the applicant pool is fairly small and your chances of success at this point are much better than many other statewide programs. Funding applications are also relatively simple, compared to Master Plan creation and evaluation. In the end, receiving funding is the carrot to encourage good planning!

Planning is Key

System planning from scratch was the challenge, and the opportunity, for the Commission. To build a system worthy of funding, we needed to recruit cities and counties with park and trail concepts that were worthy of the title “regionally significant” and receiving state funds. There were also no funds to directly support Unit Master Plan development by cities and counties, which fostered creativity in how the Commission supported applicants.

It would have been easy to designate a bunch of low hanging fruit, in the form of several well-known and developed parks and trails, and call it good. Instead, the Commission knew it could leverage its process and funds to *raise the bar* for park and trail planning across Greater Minnesota. The key to doing

that was to link system designation to creation of a “qualified” Master Plan. Planning requirements encourage professional standards, linkage between facility concepts and public demand, and a certain level of planning for construction costs, maintenance, and operations. It also allowed the Commission to evaluate unbuilt concepts, not just existing facilities that had already been successful acquiring resources.

Outside of a few major cities and counties in Greater Minnesota, most local jurisdictions had never done this kind of park planning work. Few of them had dedicated recreation staff, funding for planning, or experience. How could we ensure equity and cost effectiveness across the state while quickly building a quality system?

The answer was to use technology and a local presence (built relatively cheaply) to educate and support all potential applicants. Here are a few of the tools we used:

Working with People

The Commission created six districts, initially convening a District Planning Committee (DPC) made up of interested locals in each. This helped the Commission to understand the unique landscape and needs of each region of the state. The DPC’s also helped to spread the word about what the Commission was trying to accomplish. As the system matures, the Commission continues to look for ways to improve public engagement at the state, regional and local levels.

A multi-step designation process helps guide locals to better decision making. By requiring only a simplified application as a first step, a city or county would better understand its strengths and weaknesses prior to completing a full Master Plan. If they are not a match for the program, they can adjust their vision and try again or pursue other funding opportunities. It also saves them the significant expense of creating a Unit Master Plan if regional designation was not a fit.

Consistent and professional evaluation for all applications is provided by a single statewide Evaluation Team (ETeam),

District News:

Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (continued)

mostly made up of experienced outdoor recreation professionals. This ensures that the same high standards are applied equally statewide while allowing for regional differences and flexibility in the criteria so a variety of facility designs and options can meet the needs identified by local public engagement.

Continuing education is provided by annual District-level workshops, or at least was until pandemic protocols were put in place. The Commission also maintains a robust and growing toolbox for applicants, including video and written tutorials, content guides, and other tools. These steps, combined with personal coaching by Commission staff (Executive Director and System Plan Coordinator), are critical for helping applicants put their best foot forward and maximize their chances of success.

Leveraging Technology

The Commission's website hosts a robust Data Management System (DMS). It's where applicants start their online Designation Application, the first step in the process. If the application ranks highly, they qualify to move on to the Master Plan step without having to re-enter any of that information into the Master Plan – the system takes care of that action.

Master Plans are also created entirely in the DMS. This was done for a couple of reasons. A key one is to help guide emerging applicants to complete all of the required components of the plan at a fairly professional standard. For instance, applicants complete a regional context analysis using narrative and attaching appropriate maps and other supportive documents in a designated section of the plan. If it isn't completed to specification, it can be sent back to the applicant for improvements for easy updates.

Using an online Master Plan portal, which we believe is the first of its kind, also allows for strong team collaboration. The planning lead organizer can sit down with a mixed committee of volunteers, staff and consultants and assign various components to those who can do them best (and most cost-effectively). For instance, a volunteer group can lead public

engagement and then enter their results in that section, while a consultant Landscape Architect puts together the final design and components in another section. The County Engineer can then enter cost estimates and phasing for the entire concept. Finally, there is an export tool that prints out the entire plan in a publishable format, negating the need and cost of a graphic designer.

We also like to point out that the Master Plan portal in the DMS is free and open for everyone at www.gmrptcommission.org/applications.html. Even if you don't plan to apply for designation, feel free to ask your planner to complete the Master Plan in the portal. It can help ensure a higher standard of development and reduce production expenses.

The Funding Application is also completed online once a facility is regionally designated. It has all of the traditional questions, requirements, and design attachments you'd expect. This app also lets the applicant tie specific parts of the application to the relevant component of the online Master Plan, allowing for an enriched story about how this particular project supports the overall concept. It also flows seamlessly with the DNR funding application process – the DNR manages the actual funding contracts on behalf of the Commission, so this was an important step.

Evaluations are also completed right in the DMS. Having it available online allows the ETeam, the District Planning Committees or other local reviewers, and the Commission to conduct their relevant part of the process, whether scoring, commenting, or designating, on their own time. Their comments can then be compiled and provided to the applicant for feedback.

District News:

Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (continued)

Success to Date

While this system isn't perfect, the Commission has found success in achieving its goals for park and trail planning. There are currently 62 facilities in the regional system, built from hundreds of applicants in all corners of the state. The Strategic Plan continues to evolve – a new version will be released this summer that streamlines criteria, evolves the Commission's public engagement process and further raises the bar for Unit Master Plans. We have learned that more work is needed in the areas of park programming, marketing, and long-term maintenance and operations planning, so updated standards and education will reflect that.

The Commission also achieved its goal of managing its own funding selection process as of 2015. That's only two years from building a system from scratch to overseeing the investment of approximately \$9,000,000 per year. We have been

fortunate to have great partners at the DNR and Metropolitan Council Parks Department who support the Commission's work and take our place at the table with them seriously. Together, we are building a fantastic system of parks and trails for all Minnesotans and visitors to enjoy!

To learn more about our application, system, and organization, visit the Commission's website at www.gmrptcommission.org.

You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@gmrptc) and Instagram (@greaterminnesota) for news updates and explorations of the great parks and trails across Greater Minnesota!

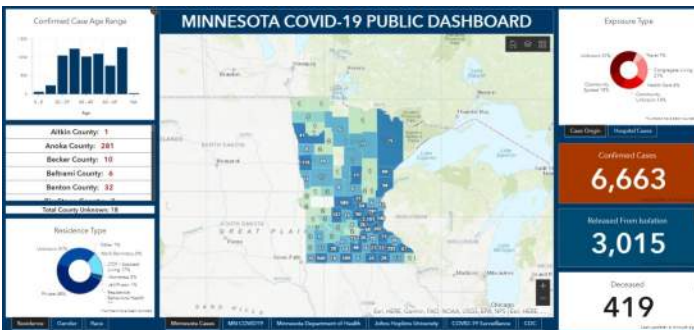


GMRPTC System Plan Coordinator Joe Czapiewski conducts a District Training Workshop in Owatonna.

RESOURCES AND REPORTS

COVID-19 Resources

With the immediate and widespread impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, planning resources are starting to emerge to assist planners and policy makers with assisting their communities through this challenging time. A selection is provided here.



State of Minnesota

The State of Minnesota's central page for COVID 19 information and resources is <https://mn.gov/covid19/>. This page includes links to information and resources for the general public, businesses, and organizations. It also includes regularly updated data, including the COVID 19 Public Dashboard.

For assistance specific to business and workforce issues, MN DEED has a page with information and resources on a range of relevant topics, including how to apply for funding: <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/>. MN Department of Health contains public health educational resources in multiple languages: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html>

Minnesota City and County Resources

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) maintains a running list of resources, updates, and frequently asked questions particularly pertaining to the impact of COVID 19 on Minnesota cities. <https://www.lmc.org/resources/covid-19-resources/> The Association of Minnesota Counties maintains a [similar resource](#).

Transportation Planner Resources

The National Association of Transportation Officials is maintaining its [Covid-19 Transportation Response Center](#), a continuously updated repository of transportation-related emergency response measures being taken by cities nationwide.

Economic Development Resources

[RestoreYourEconomy](#) is your resource for up-to-date information related to COVID-19 and its economic impacts. It is managed by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and IEDC's Economic Development Research Partners program.

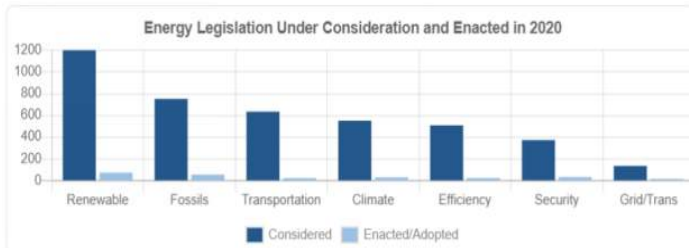
Learning from the Past

The Great Recession had stimulus funds too. Smart Growth America has compiled a [guide](#) to help learn from that experience and see what lessons can be applied this time around.



Resources and Reports (continued)

Climate Change Resources



State Energy Bill Tracking

Interested in what each state is doing to advance sustainable energy practices? The National Conference of State Legislatures has a [tracking tool](#) for energy legislation.



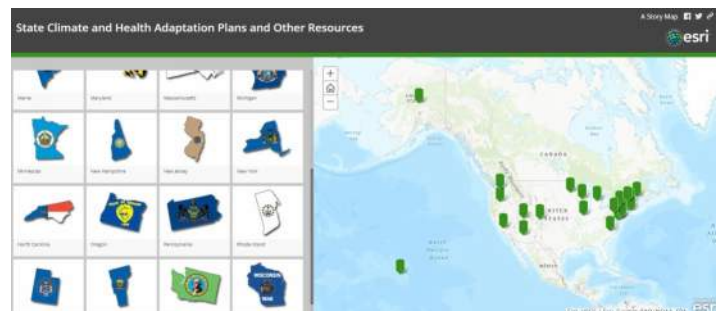
Spring Flooding Public Education

To raise awareness about the risks of snowmelt and spring flooding and encourage residents to purchase flood insurance, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program launched [flood insurance marketing campaigns](#) this Spring.



Extreme Heat Public Education

The USAID-funded [Adaptation Thought Leadership and Assessments \(ATLAS\)](#) project produced a series of infographics highlighting key messages about heatwaves in cities, including the impacts of heatwaves and vulnerability to heat, as well as steps cities can take to understand and mitigate heat risks.



Climate Planning Map

Check out [this story map](#) of state climate and health adaptation plans and other resources



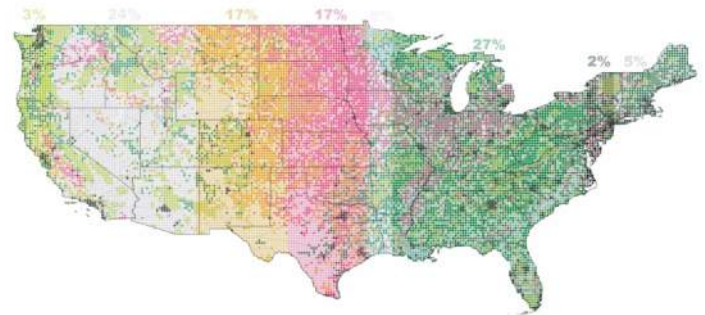
Resources and Reports (continued)

Other Planning Resources



Planning History Timeline

APA's [interactive timeline](#) provides an overview of American planning history since 1900. Great for studying!



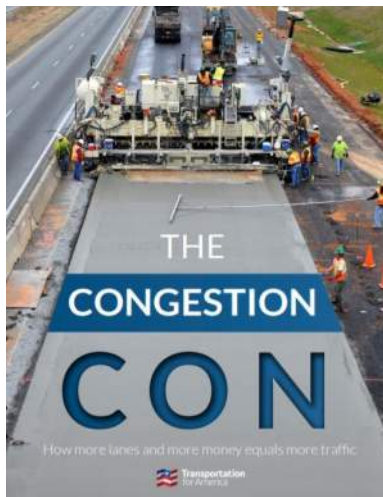
Land Use Across America

[Visual Capitalist](#) reports on a series of maps from the [McHarg Center](#) that show land use composition across the entire nation, including urban areas and natural resources.

The Congestion Con

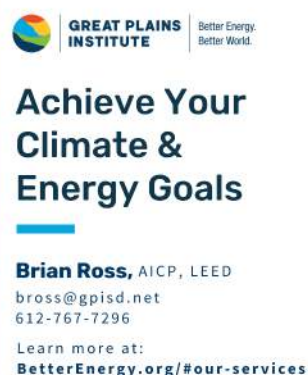
Transportation for America has released a [report](#) on how the construction of new roadway capacity can exacerbate, rather than mitigate, traffic congestion.

The report includes a series of policy recommendations to provide an alternative direction for transportation in America.



Public Health and Climate Action

Climate for Health has released a new report [Moving Forward: A Guide for Health Professionals to Build Momentum on Climate Action](#), providing guidance and tools to reduce energy use, to build resilient healthcare facilities, and advocate for climate solutions that prioritize health and equity.



JOB OPENINGS AND RFPS

Job openings and requests for proposals are available on the APA MN website:

https://www.planningmn.org/view_job_postings

https://www.planningmn.org/view_rfp_postings

Request for Proposals: 2020–2021 Resilient Communities Project Partnerships

The University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (RCP) is now accepting proposals for partnerships for the academic year beginning fall 2021. RCP currently has two open requests for proposals:

- **Standard RCP Partnership**—Intended for Minnesota cities, counties, tribal public entities, special districts, and regional government agencies interested in collaborating with the U of MN on one to twenty (1–20) projects. Projects should demonstrably advance community resilience to economic, social, environmental, or technological changes, and may include projects related to the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Partnership—A special call for proposals, issued in partnership with the Metropolitan Council, intended for Twin Cities metro area communities within the Council's jurisdiction that are seeking to collaborate with the U of MN on one to two (1–2) projects that build community resilience and implement elements of a locally adopted 2040 comprehensive plan.

Partners benefit from applied research and technical assistance on locally identified, provided by graduate and professional students and faculty at the University of Minnesota from a variety of departments and disciplines. The selection process is competitive, and successful applicants must support the effort through **dedicated staff time** and a **local financial contribution**. Visit rcp.umn.edu/home/communities/apply-to-rcp for more information. The application deadline has been extended to **June 15, 2020**.

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