

2009 Annual Report



American Planning Association
New Jersey Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association

October 31, 2009

Edited by
Courtenay D. Mercer, PP, AICP

Message from the President

It has been another banner year for the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-NJ). In terms of educational programming, social networking opportunities and policy-making initiatives, we have done more than ever before. We also laid the foundation for a major structural reorganization of the Executive Committee that will be implemented with the start of the new Officer terms on November 1. You will read about all of these initiatives in greater detail throughout this report.

I wanted to take a moment to explain the NJ Chapter's place in the larger American Planning Association (APA) organization. The APA keeps the lion's share of all dues collected from members, and has the staff support and resources to show for it. In return, the members receive beautiful, professionally designed online and print publications, a premier multi-day conference in a desirable destination, career assistance, educational opportunities, advancement of policy initiatives and community assistance programs. While all that sounds (and is) wonderful, many members do not take advantage of even a fraction of what the APA has to offer. It is the Chapters that are often the face (and sometimes whipping boy) of the APA, and do so with volunteers utilizing a relative shoestring of a budget. We answer the day-to-day questions about the organization, accreditation/licensure and Certificate Maintenance (CM), we organize the vast majority of local CM eligible educational programming, generate our own publications and advocate for sound land use policy in the State.

Among all Chapters, the APA-NJ finds itself in a precarious place. The APA breaks the Chapters into thirds based on size, and the NJ Chapter teeters between the largest of the medium and smallest of the large Chapters. We are expected (and do) provide significantly more program-

ming than our smaller counterparts, but do not have the resources to be a powerful advocacy organization like the larger Chapters. I do not mention all this to complain or ask for a pat on the back, but more so the members have a better sense of why the Executive Committee does what it does. The recent Bylaw amendment and organizational restructuring is a reflection of our effort to be more efficient and effective in supplying quality programs and services to our members. We have also made some budgetary decisions over recent years, capitalizing on excess revenues from quieter years, which have allowed us to grow our services. Finally, we will create and adopt a new development plan this coming year that will continue to push the APA-NJ in the direction of more influential non-profit professional and educational organizations. We hope you will continue to actively support our efforts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers that help throughout the year. The Executive Committee, as you will see in this report, does much of the day-to-day work of keeping the organization running. Many other people give their time to assist as well. Thank you to the members that submit articles to the Chapter Newsletter—The Jersey Planner, those that serve as members of our many committees, the volunteer speakers at our educational events, the many random helping hands at Chapter activities, as well as all of you that provide feedback or ideas for the betterment of the organization. Your dedication to our efforts and mission are greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns or ideas at pres@njapap.org.

Here's to a great 2010!
Courtenay D. Mercer, PP, AICP
President

Professional Development

Because the continuing education duties of the Professional Development Officer (PDO) have expanded greatly due to Certification Maintenance (CM), it was decided that the duties should be split between continuing education and exam preparation. Accordingly, the APA-NJ began operating under a previous Bylaw amendment that created a second PDO position. This division of labor seems to be going well, as both PDOs were able to provide expanded services to our members over the past year.

Continuing Education

Despite some initial implementation and technical problems on the AICP's end, the APA-NJ Executive Committee enthusiastically supports continuing education and the Certificate Maintenance (CM) program, not only for the obvious self-growth aspect; but also because it gives our professional certification more credibility. To that end, the Chapter has gone to great lengths to provide far more than the required 32 credits hours worth of educational opportunities in various venues and at various price points to assist its members in attaining all of their required CM credits. You will see evidence throughout this report of the many opportunities the Chapter provided in the past year.

The Chapter also worked with numerous allied organizations to provide additional opportunities throughout the year. The APA-NJ co-sponsored an Infrastructure Seminar with Leadership NJ in June (5.75 CM credits), and co-sponsored Gritty Cities II with the League of Municipalities in April (6 CM credits). The TransAction Conference, Governor's Housing Conference and NJ Future's Redevelopment Conference again offered CM credits this year. In addition, the NJ Meadowlands Commission, the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority, ULI,

PlanSmart NJ, HMFA, the Rutgers Professional Development Institute and Bloustein continue to offer CM eligible programming throughout the year. The NJ Association of Floodplain Managers and the Society for Marketing Professional Services also joined the expanding list of organizations providing quality, CM approved educational programming this year.

The APA and other providers continue to offer myriad online continuing educational opportunities, many of which are free, for those that cannot get away from the office to pursue credits.

If you have any questions about CM or ideas for future programming, please contact the Continuing Education PDO, Charles Latini, at charleslatini@yahoo.com.

Exam Preparation

The APA-NJ's Exam Preparation PDO, Amy Sarrinikolaou, was able to up-date the Chapter's somewhat outdated NJ Planning Law review materials in order to organize and run a successful exam review course in October. We would like to thank Karl Hartkopf (OSG), Keith Henderson (COAH), Bill Purdie and Rick Brown (Office of Planning and Sustainable Communities-NJDEP), Christine Danis (NJ Highlands Council), Cheryl Bergailo (Taylor Design Group) and Paul Gleitz (Heyer and Gruel) for giving up time on a Saturday to prepare 18 fledging planners for the NJ Planning Law Exam.

Learn more about Exam Preparation and coordination with the Board of Professional Planners by contacting the PDO, Amy Sarrinikolaou, at asarrini@hotmail.com.

Complete Guide

Jennifer Zorn has again taken on the task of Editor in Chief of the next edition of The Complete Guide to Planning in NJ. With the assistance of committee members Courtenay Mercer, Deborah Lawlor and Tom D'Allessio, the APA-NJ has been collecting draft Chapters from contributors throughout the year, which are currently being reviewed. The Complete Guide Committee hopes to have a final draft version ready for copy edit and final design early in 2010, for a late spring print. Look forward to a new edition in time for the fall college semester and PP exam session!

Area Representatives

Since the AICP certification maintenance program was launched in 2008, your APA-NJ Area Representatives have made it a priority to offer our members quality CM opportunities, at low or no cost, throughout the year and across the state. In 2009, APA-NJ purchased a series of APA-sponsored webinars on the following topics: Designing for Water Resources Conversation, Zoning for Transit Oriented Development and Planning Law. Because these webinars had a national focus, in some instances we were able to invite a New Jersey expert on the topics to follow up with a discussion more specific to the New Jersey experience.

On March 18, the Chapter hosted, "Designing for Water Resources Conversation", the first of the webinar series. Sessions were held in areas of the state most impacted by limited water capacity. Eric Snyder, Northwest Area Representative, held one session at the Sussex County Community College, where college staff was extremely helpful. The 19 planners who attended enjoyed the presentation and felt that the effort was well worthwhile. Lou Joyce, Southern Shore Area Representative, held his event at the business center at Cumberland County College in Vineland. The 22 planners welcomed the convenient location and the networking opportunity that the session presented. Both events provided 1.5 CM credits to the attendees.

On April 15th, the Chapter hosted the "Zoning for Transit Oriented Development" webinar. This time, the sessions were held in regions of the state well served by public transportation. Andrew

Levecchia, Southern Area Representative, organized one session at Camden County College. After the webinar, Martin Hull from the IBI group led the 17 planners who attended in a conversation about TOD using his international and American experiences with TOD patterns and zoning. Michele Alonso, Northeastern Area Representative, in partnership with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), hosted the webinar at the NJTPA offices in Newark. Richard Roberts, of New Jersey Transit, was on hand to bring a New Jersey focus to the post-webinar discussion for the 35 planners that attended. Both events offered attendees 2.5 CM credits.

On June 24, Maura McManimon Fennessy, Central Area Representative, organized the "2009 Planning Law Review" webinar at the Bloustein School in New Brunswick. The session covered recent major legal decisions across the country, on a range of topics, and interestingly enough included a few homegrown examples from New Jersey. Following the webinar, Lou Rago, a land use attorney with the law firm of O'Donnell, McCord and DeMarzo, went into more detail about the NJ cases mentioned in the webinar, as well as 10 or so other important decisions from the past year. Despite the broken air-conditioning, the 50+ planners in attendance appreciated the event and gave us positive feedback. The event provided 2.5 CM credits to attendees.

Michele Alonso organized two additional educational events over the summer. On August 12, she hosted a viewing of an ethics training video created by the Arizona

Chapter of APA. The event was held at City Hall in Newark and was attended by approximately 15 planners. The event provided 2 CM credits to attendees.

On September 18, Michele Alonso, in partnership with the Women Transportation Seminar of New Jersey, organized a Transit Oriented Development Walking Tour in Rahway. 36 professionals attended the 3-hour walking tour. Mayor James Kennedy, Rahway Business Administrator Peter Pelissier, and Vivian Baker of NJ Transit led a panel discussion on the development that has taken place around the Rahway train station and then led the walking tour. Following the tour, planners gathered for a happy hour with the tour experts and continued the discussion of how to achieve successful transit oriented development. Those who attended were eligible for 2.5 CM credits.

The APA-NJ Area Representatives are committed to offering even more quality opportunities for planners to learn and socialize in 2010. Please contact your Area Representative with any questions or suggestions.

NE Area:

Michele Alonso at alonsom@ci.newark.nj.us

NW Area:

Eric Snyder at esnyder@sussex.nj.us

Central Area:

Maura McManimon Fennessy at maura.mcmanimon@hotmail.com

Southern Area:

Andrew Levecchia at andrewl@camdencounty.com

Southern Shore:

Louis C. Joyce at lcj50@yahoo.com

Legislative Affairs

The Chairs of the Redevelopment, Housing, Sustainability and Transportation Committees, as permanent members of the APA-NJ Legislative Committee, kept busy reviewing relevant legislative and policy initiatives demonstrated within their individual reports. The Legislative Committee has also joined a consortium of allied organization led by NJ Future that has been vocal in land use policy issues such as the State Plan, the Energy Master Plan, affordable housing and infrastructure funding. APA-NJ has also been working on ways in which the Chapter can become more involved in the legislative process. One such effort outgoing Legislative Chair, Jay Corbalis, was working on with Leadership NJ and PlanSmart NJ was a “smart growth” report card to be presented to the new Governor and the Legislature.

In addition to traditional legislative monitoring and policy advocacy, the Legislative Committee participated in the APA’s Rebuilding America Infrastructure Invest-

ment Task Force. The APA-NJ, in partnership with the NJ Sustainable State Institute (NJSSI), hosted an infrastructure policy forum for the NYC, NJ, and Eastern PA region. The goals of the forum were to determine what the region is doing right with regard to infrastructure, which was shared with others in the nation as best practices; assess/inventory needed infrastructure improvements; and discuss policy initiatives (local, state and federal) that should be furthered in support of infrastructure improvements.

The June 5th Infrastructure Investment Policy Forum at the Bloustein School in New Brunswick was organized and facilitated by Chapter President Courtenay Mercer, then Legislative Chair John Szabo, Sustainability Committee Chair Bill Purdie, Transportation Committee Chair Ray Tomczak, 2nd Vice President Eric Powers along with NJSSI Director Randy Solomon. The event included three facilitated round table discussions with invite-only experts in their respective fields: transpor-

tation, water and energy/green infrastructure. The round tables were followed by a plenary session open to planners and members of the NJ, NY Metro and Pennsylvania Chapters of the APA, where the ideas produced in the round tables were summarized and open to feedback from the larger group. The plenary session also included a keynote address by Tom Wright of the Regional Plan Association (RPA) on the infrastructure aspects of the stimulus bill. About 100 people participated at some point during the day’s activities, and a cocktail networking reception followed the plenary session. In addition to the great information sharing and networking opportunity, the event offered up to 5 CM credits to attendees.

Learn more about the Legislative Committee by contacting the incoming Vice President of Policy, Mirah Becker, at mirah.becker@co.middlesex.nj.us.

Sustainability Committee

The Sustainability Committee’s 2009 priorities for further action and research included creating a Green Toolbox to help local officials with green building efforts, looking at local regulations and their potential impacts on alternative energy facilities and equipment, and continuing to work on a Model Green Building and Sustainability Element. Committee members are refining a draft element that it expects to

distribute to the membership for comment.

Sustainability Committee members have also been actively involved in the Sustainable Jersey project. Sustainable Jersey is a certification program for municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green. The program encompasses issues such as global warming, pollution, biodiversity, land use, air and water quality, equity, buying local, local living

economies, and sustainable agriculture. Committee members have been serving on various Task Forces created to provide guidance and further develop the program.

Learn more about the Sustainability Committee by contacting the Chair, Bill Purdie, at wsp902@aol.com.

Housing Committee

Based upon the recommendation of the Housing Committee, the Chapter's Executive Committee supported the "Smart Housing Incentive Act" (S-3101/A-3632), which would incentivize municipalities to adopt higher density zoning to encourage the development of well-located, compact and energy-efficient housing that would include opportunities for households at all income levels. Another bill that merited the attention of the Housing Committee was the "County Homeless Trust Fund Act", which was adopted by both Houses. The act permits counties that have adopted homeless housing plans to impose a \$3 documentation fee to fund local

housing efforts to address homelessness. In addition, the "New Jersey Foreclosure Fairness Act" (S-2777/A-4863), which would protect the rights of tenants caught-up in foreclosure situations from harassment and illegal evictions, as well as impose additional requirements upon foreclosing parties to ensure the proper maintenance of these often-vacant dwellings, was unanimously passed the Senate and is currently pending in the Assembly.

A particular concern of the Housing Committee is the Legislature's delay in confirming the 15 members nominated to serve on the State Housing Commission. The "Strategic Housing Plan Act,"

adopted as part of A-500 in 2008, directed the State Housing Commission to develop a strategic housing plan for New Jersey and to prepare an annual housing performance report to the Governor and the Legislature's Joint Committee on Housing Affordability. Partisan "senatorial courtesy" tactics appear to be delaying the confirmations and the initiation of the important work of the State Housing Commission.

Learn more about the Housing Committee by contacting the Chair, Vito Gallo, at vitoagallo@comcast.net.

Transportation Planning Committee

Over the last year, the Transportation Planning Committee was successful in engaging the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority to host a Transportation Funding Symposium. In addition, the Committee helped in organizing and facilitating the Transportation Roundtable at the Chapter's June Infrastructure Investment Policy Forum. The Committee has provided a forum for members to become

engaged in the most critical transportation issues affecting us all. The Committee currently has a roster of over 20 members, representing various government agencies and private consulting firms.

Learn more about the Transportation Planning Committee by contacting the Chair, Raymond Tomczak, at rtomczak@hntb.com.

Redevelopment Committee

In addition to keeping the Chapter abreast of recent case law, and following the many pieces of legislation related to redevelopment, the Redevelopment Committee sponsored a continuing education event. In August, about 40 planners from across the state came to Jersey City for a three-hour walking tour of "three centuries of progress." Jersey City Planning Di-

rector and APA-NJ Redevelopment Committee Chair, Bob Cotter, AICP, PP, led the tour along with six planners from the city's staff. The tour meandered through historic and newly redeveloped downtown neighborhoods and hit on many topics, including design, historically sensitive redevelopment, utilization of historic tax credits, the inclusion and/or adap-

tive reuse of educational, civic and institutional buildings in redevelopment, capitalizing on waterfront and dealing with issues of access, and planning to attract artists.

Learn more about the Redevelopment Committee by contacting the Chair, Bob Cotter, at bobbyc@jcnj.org.

APA-NJ Bylaw Amendment

This summer, the Executive Committee of the NJ Chapter of the American Planning Association put forward a by-law amendment for its members' consideration. Due to the substantive nature of the amendments, the Executive Committee opted to propose a new edition of the bylaws.

The first objective of the amendment was to improve the readability of the bylaws. The bylaws now include a table of contents and have a more logical flow.

Second, the amendments represented a major restructuring of the Executive Committee. The old bylaws included a significant number of non-elected voting members on the Executive Committee, including committee chairs, the newsletter editor, professional development officers and student representatives. The restructured Executive Committee redistrib-

utes some of these duties to elected offices, leaving the Professional Development Officers and the Student Representative as the only voting Executive Committee members not elected by the full membership. The elected Officers of the Executive Committee now consist of the President, the President-Elect or Past-President, the Vice-President of Membership Services, the Vice-President of Conference Services, the Vice-President of Policy, the Vice-President of Public Relations, the Secretary, the Treasurer and five (5) Area Representatives. The amendments also better define the duties of the Executive Committee officers, and represent a more efficient distribution of workload.

Finally, the amendment included new guidelines regarding financial management, something lacking in the current bylaws.

The amendments were ultimately adopted by an overwhelming majority of voters.

Elections

Congratulations to the newly elected Executive Committee members that take office on November 1:

President-Elect:
Charles Latini, AICP, PP

VP of Policy:

Mirah Becker, AICP, PP

VP of Conference Services:

Lorissa Whitaker

VP of Membership Services:

Brandy Forbes, AICP, PP

VP of Public Relations:

Rebecca Hersh, AICP, PP

Treasurer:

Karl Hartkopf, AICP, PP

Secretary:

Bonnie Flynn, AICP, PP

APA-NJ Students

The planning students travelled far and wide this year. Eight Bloustein Masters students went to the Annual APA Conference in Minneapolis this past April. While there, they sat in on sessions about comprehensive rezoning policies, the potential impact of ARRA (the federal recovery/stimulus bill), and went on tours of the new light rail and ethnic marketplaces in the city. The students also found time to explore the Twin Cities on their own, despite the occasionally rainy weather. Over the summer, several students joined other young professionals in New Brunswick for the Young Planners Group Kick-off Event. This fall, five planning stu-

dents went on APA-NJ and WTS-GNY's Walking Tour of TOD in Rahway and several students benefited from a joint sponsored Rutgers Association of Planning and Policy Students (RAPPS)/APA-NJ "Finding Your First Planning Job" talk led by Professor Stuart Meck.

New Jersey's students also had two opportunities to share their work outside the state. At the APA national conference, Kimberley El-Sadek presented a poster with another student from Portland State University on their experiences in the CapAsia semester abroad program in Kirinda, Sri Lanka. Their poster examined how international development

efforts and foreign aid delivery need to be integrated with local participatory community planning to have the best outcome. In May, Katie White (outgoing APA-NJ student representative) and Jim Van Schoick represented Rutgers at the NY Metro Chapter's Annual Studio Presentations at Pratt Institute. They presented their findings from a spring 2008 studio project on the feasibility of rail access to Liberty State Park and were well received.

For more information about the APA-NJ Student Representatives' efforts, contact Katherine Otto at

katharinesotto@gmail.com.

New Committees

The APA-NJ Executive Committee approved the creation of two new committees that are intended to enhance and expand our membership by providing services to these segments of our professional organization, as well as bring the unique needs of these populations into the forefront of planning practice. Contact the incoming Vice President of Membership Services, Brandy Forbes at brandyforbes@hotmail.com to become more involved with membership enhancement activities.

Young Planners Group

The APA-NJ Young Planners Group (YPG) has been busy since its launch in January 2009. The YPG committee encompasses talented planners in their 20s and early 30s whose mission is to identify ways to advance young planners professionally, and to get them more involved in leadership roles within the Chapter and APA. The YPG also provides networking and professional development opportunities for young planners to discuss issues of importance to them. The YPG is part of a larger national network of young planners groups within APA.

In 2009, the NJ Young Planners Group:

- Held monthly meetings to discuss programming events and issues that affect young planners and students throughout the state.
- Created a six-month action plan to undertake summer and fall activities and programming.
- Published an article entitled “The Young Planners Group Update” in the January / February 2009 in the APA-NJ Newsletter - The Jersey Planner.
- Connected with the New York Metro Chapter Young Planners Group to discuss programming connections within the region.
- Held a Kick-Off Networking Event on July 9th for planners and students who shared their knowledge, experiences and networks with one another.
- The YPG Chair served as a speaker on the “Professional Planning Insights” panel session at the North Carolina Chapter’s 2009 Planning Conference.
- Published an article on the “Economic Uncertainty and the Young Planner” in the Fall 2009 APA-NJ Newsletter – The Jersey Planner.
- The YPG sponsored a panel session on “Professional Planning Insights & Navigating New Careers” and a Young Planners Group Fall Mixer at the 2008 NJ Annual Planning Conference.

In 2010, the YPG looks forward to expanding its networking activities, strengthening young planning

circles in the state, and offering professional development and leadership opportunities.

You are encouraged to stay connected and learn more about the YPG by contacting the Committee Chair, Zunilda Rodriquez, at zuniz89@hotmail.com.

Ethnic & Cultural Diversity

The Executive Committee approved the formation of the Planning for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee (ECDC), which upon demonstrated success, will be renewed on an annual basis. The ECDC committee was created to provide ongoing education forums and opportunities for planners, students and university faculty of different backgrounds to network, share ideas and bring recognition to unique values and perspectives. ECDC's mission is to actively promote and increase diversity within the planning profession and provide effective leadership in advocacy of inclusiveness in planning policies and regulations reflective of a diverse geographic and population within New Jersey.

The ECDC has held monthly meetings since its formation in May 2009, and was formally announced to the membership in September 2009. The Committee had a successful Kick-Off Networking Social in October 2009 and will be sponsoring a panel discussion at the NJ Annual Planning Conference. Going forward, the Committee plans to have quarterly Continuing Education (CM credits) events, establish an Advisory Panel, contribute to the APA-NJ newsletter, research opportunities to provide a unique planning perspective, widen the ECDC network and increase participation of under-represented groups with APA-NJ.

Learn more about the ECDC by contacting the Chair, Jeffrey Wilkerson, at jeffrey.wilkerson@gmail.com.



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2008 Annual NJ Planning Conference

The APA-NJ and the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy of Rutgers, The State University of NJ again co-hosted the Annual NJ Planning Conference in downtown New Brunswick. The 2008 conference was expanded to a two-day format that included traditional workshops, walking tours, a premier keynote and plenty of networking opportunities. The conference garnered a record 500 attendee turnout over the two days, and was an enriching event for participants.

The APA-NJ would like to thank the generous sponsors whose contributions went to the Budd Chavooshian Scholarship Fund.

Clarke Caton Hintz

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Stearns Associates

Maser Consulting

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The Brick Industry Association

Treasurer's Report

While Fiscal Year 2009 was not a boom for the Chapter, years of fiscal diligence have helped us to weather the global fiscal downturn. Membership numbers have gone down some since the 2007 peak. At the same time, we are providing increased educational opportunities at low or no cost to members in an effort to ensure all of our AICP members can meet their Certificate Maintenance requirement. In addition, the cost of conducting a two-day conference was slightly higher than our projections, causing our organization to split a loss with our conference co-sponsor, The Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. We made some programming adjustments and initiated a fundraising initiative to ensure the

conference is again in the black this year. Moreover, our membership numbers have stabilized, and advertisements in the newsletter and sales of the Redevelopment Handbook and The Complete Guide to Planning continue to provide a steady source of income. We have also made several changes to reduce operational costs, such as online elections and conference registration, saving on printing costs and staff time. Accordingly, the Chapter was able to pass a budget for Fiscal Year 2010 that included a negligible loss for which the Chapter has sufficient reserves to cover.

Shortly after the APA-NJ passed its budget, however, we received word that National APA passed a budget that included a

\$10 per member fee that would come directly out of Chapter dues. This represents a 40 percent reduction in dues collected by the NJ Chapter. Our President, along with those of Chapters across the country, relayed their great dismay with this pass through of APA's fiscal problems. In response, the APA amended its budget to temporarily remove the fee, but is still considering some lesser fee to cover services they provide to the Chapters. Despite the rising cost of doing business, the Chapter has not raised the dues rate in 8 years. We hope that APA's next proposal has less impact on our revenues, and that other adjustments the Chapter has made will allow us to keep dues steady into the future.