

STRATEGIES

Newsletter of the City Planning and Management Division of the American Planning Association

Fall 2007

News

PROTECTING CENTRAL OHIO'S MOST SENSITIVE WATERSHED

The Big Darby Accord

By **Adrienne Joly, AICP**
Senior Planner, Planning Division
City of Columbus, Ohio

Big Darby Creek, a state and national scenic river, is recognized as one of the most biologically diverse aquatic systems in the Midwest. The watershed is home to 38 state and federally listed endangered species and represents the largest undeveloped area in Franklin County, Ohio. Facing increased development pressure in recent years, the balance between growth and environmental stewardship is especially critical. With ten jurisdictions in the watershed, previous planning efforts were fragmented along jurisdictional boundaries and unable to address watershed-wide issues. A new approach was needed and the member jurisdictions launched a ground-breaking,

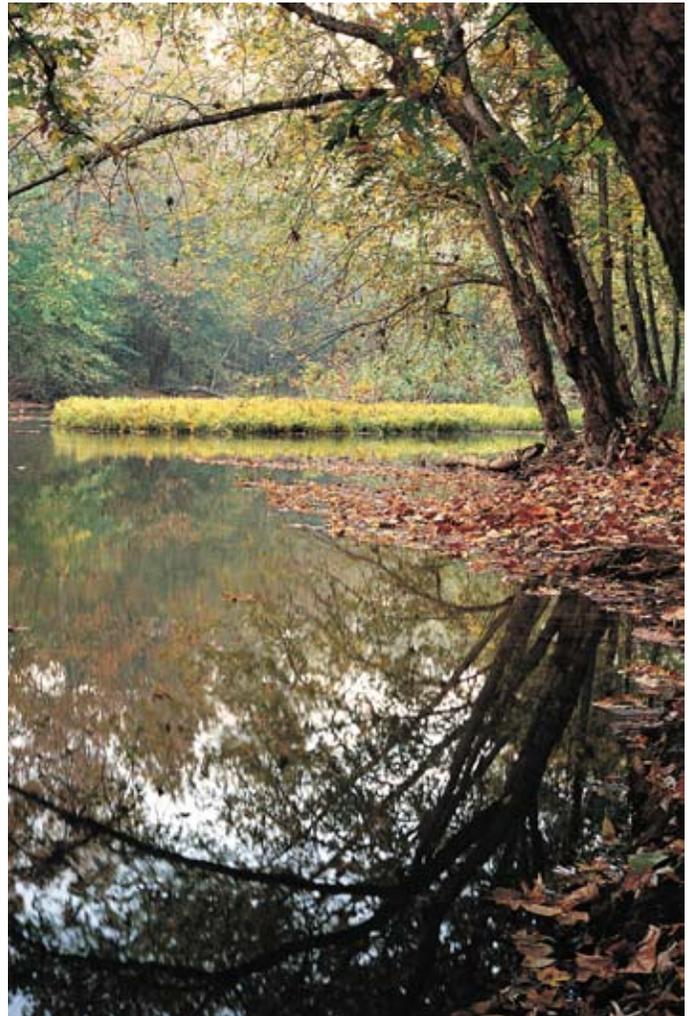
Columbus Metro Area
Population: 1,709,000
2005

cooperative vision for this scenic and environmentally sensitive area's future. As a multi-jurisdictional watershed master plan, the Big Darby Accord is

the first of its kind in central Ohio.

Background

The Big Darby Accord planning area encompasses the 56,000 acres of the Big Darby watershed within Franklin County. Including the county, ten jurisdictions are located within or adjacent to the planning area. The city of Columbus is the sole provider of centralized sewer service and has historically required annexation as a condition of providing



Courtesy of Metro Parks/Mac Albin

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service. A long history of public mistrust and competing interests in the watershed led the city of Columbus to enact a moratorium on the extension of sewer and water service to the area in 2002. The Accord planning process was initiated to cooperatively develop a plan that preserves the ecology of the Big Darby Watershed while providing direction for responsible, managed growth.

Collaboration Drives the Process

The Accord planning process began in April 2005 and was funded jointly by the ten member jurisdictions with a participation agreement that clearly outlined roles and responsibilities. For effective communication and decision making, the Accord created an internal structure of three key groups, a Group of Four (G4) subcommittee, a working group and a client group. The G4 included equal representation from each type of jurisdiction (county, city, township, suburban municipality) within the planning area. The working group included appointed representatives from each of the ten jurisdictions and other stakeholders. The client group of elected leaders of each of the jurisdictions met at critical points of the planning process for progress reports and feedback. These various platforms helped to guide the planning process, fostered input across all levels and provided a structure for efficient decision making.

The Big Darby Watershed Master Plan utilized a systematic approach that can be applied to other watersheds. The approach combines a GIS resource-based analysis to identify environmentally sensitive lands, with water quality modeling of alternative land use scenarios, to develop a recommended land use plan and conservation strategy. With this methodology, existing landscape conditions and natural resources are the foundation of future land use alternatives. The modeling acts as a check, to ensure land use scenarios will sufficiently protect the habitat system and water quality of the watershed.

As a result of this planning process, many innovative concepts and ideas surfaced including:

- * An offer by the city of Columbus to extend water and sewer service without the condition of annexation to a mixed-use town center.
- * A water quality monitoring program at the watershed and site levels.
- * A tiered approach to conservation with a watershed-wide goal for the protection of 25,000 acres.
- * The recommendation of low impact design techniques for development projects.
- * A land use plan that recognizes by-right zoning.

The Plan in Action

Successful implementation of the Accord is dependent on the continued collaboration among the Big Darby partners. Since the plan was completed in 2006, six of the ten member jurisdictions have adopted the plan, representing 95 percent of the land within the planning area. Many of the short and mid-term actions identified in the plan have been completed or are underway, including:

The Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel

The Panel reviews development proposals within the watershed to verify compliance with the Accord's policies and standards, and renders a non-binding recommendation to the jurisdiction that has final approval authority. The multi-jurisdictional Panel consists of nine members appointed by jurisdictions that have adopted the Accord. The Panel provides an oversight function to ensure zoning and site development processes are fair and consistently applied in the planning area.

Consistent Regulation

Each jurisdiction is incorporating the Accord's recommendations into their codes by codifying recommendations into a zoning overlay or integrating them into zoning resolutions so the policies contained in the Accord are enforceable at the local level.

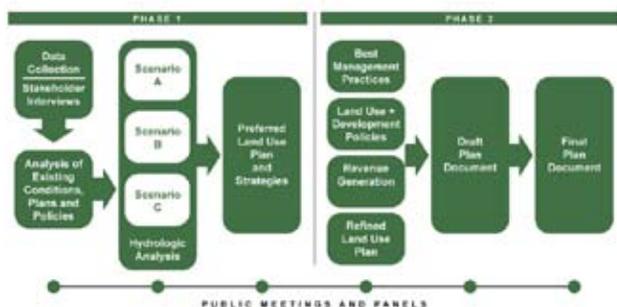
Town Center

The Accord's land use plan focuses development in a dense, mixed-use town center. The only portion of the planning area that will be serviced by central sewer, the town center, will be located away from the watershed's most environmentally sensitive lands. The Darby partners are pursuing a detailed master planning process for the town center. A consultant team is expected to begin work in early 2008.

Revenue Sharing

Many aspects of the Accord, such as land acquisition, cannot be achieved until a steady revenue stream is

Jurisdiction	Acres	% of Planning Area
Brown Township	13,840	25.67
Norwich Township	1,025	1.90
Prairie Township	10,530	19.53
Pleasant Township	24,018	44.54
Washington Township	8.7	0.02
City of Columbus	3,102	5.5
City of Hilliard	1,209	2.24
Village of Harrisburg	82	0.15
Acres Per Jurisdiction within Planning Area		
Note: other Accord partners included Franklin County which encompasses the entire planning area and Grove City which is adjacent to the planning area		



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Global Gateway Regions

By Mark Pisano

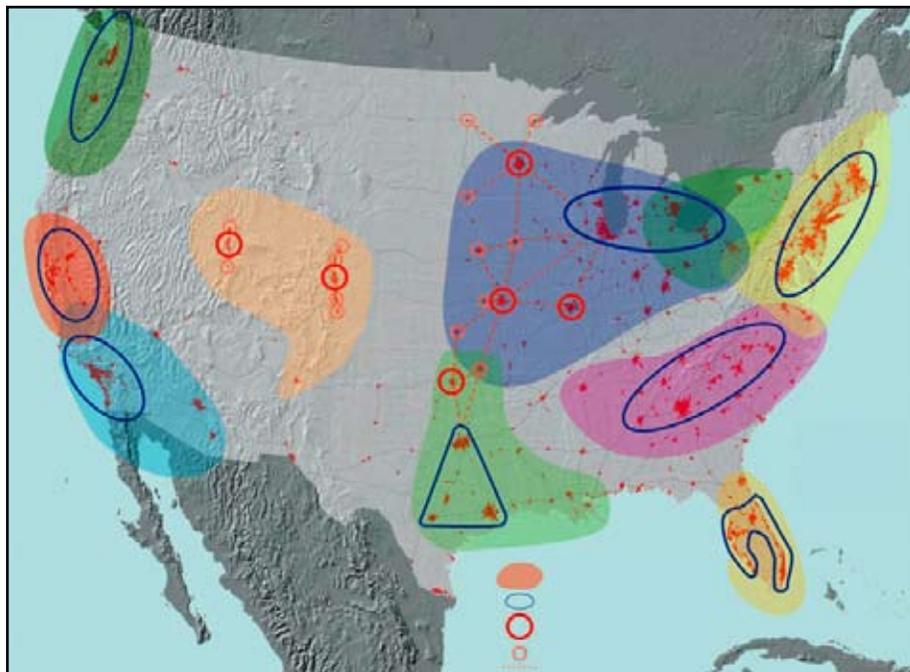
Executive Director

So. California Assn. of Governments

To be globally competitive, the U.S. must initiate a new, large-scale strategy for growth. This process, with an eye to future prosperity, equity, sustainability and financing, spans city, regional and state borders in the form of multiple emerging “Global Gateway Megaregions,” spread across the nation. It demands bold ideas and investments designed to integrate the economies of, and reduce the disparities between, states and regions, increasing the competitiveness of regions and the whole nation in a global economy.

A Third Century Strategy

By 2050, the U.S. population is expected to grow by 40 percent to 430 million people. Seventy percent of this population and 80 percent of all economic growth is projected to reside within the nation’s 9 emerging Global Gateway Regions. As large networks of metropolitan areas, each spreading over thousands of square miles, these megaregions serve as America’s economic engines: centers of technological and cultural innovation. In 1807 and 1907, Presidents Jefferson and Roos-



Courtesy of Southern California Association of Governments

velt respectively instituted national plans to stimulate major infrastructure, conservation and regional economic strategies that powered America’s economic growth and success in its first two centuries. A bold new strategy is needed as the nation enters its third century. 2007 is an ideal time to enact a new vision, based not only on precedent, but on current trends.

A Look Into the Future

The future of the nation and its global competitiveness depend on the livability and sustainability of these megaregions, and on their connection to vast under-performing rural areas. Large scale efforts based on coordinated land use and transportation strate-

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available. The Accord recommends multiple funding sources including tax increment financing, a new community authority and developer contributions. The member jurisdictions are fine tuning revenue projections and creating the legal framework to implement the recommendations.

A New Spin on Regionalism

Often local governments want to tackle regional issues, but don’t have the tools or are reluctant to surrender control to regional entities. The Big Darby Accord offers a model that accomplishes regional goals, such as improved water quality, but operates within

the existing confines of local government. Extensive collaboration among jurisdictions is the driving force behind this approach. Participation agreements are executed for each implementation activity and different entities assume a leadership role for different tasks. This approach allowed the Big Darby members to develop a watershed master plan that meets the needs of ten distinct jurisdictions. Tools such as the multi-jurisdictional review panel and revenue sharing can be transferred to other watersheds. Challenges still exist but the opportunity to protect the Big Darby Creek has never been greater or more attainable, because of a commitment to work together to solve difficult, regional issues.

Additional information about the Big Darby Accord can be found at www.bigdarbyaccord.org

WIDEN FOCUS TO INCLUDE THE POSITIVE

Peer Consultants Advise Jackson, Miss.

By Rick Bernhardt, FAICP

Executive Director, Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson
County Planning Department

Get organized, change your attitude, catch up on technology, and learn how to work together – that’s essentially what our team of peer consultants told planners and city leaders in Jackson, Miss. We found the Department of Planning and Economic Development essentially paralyzed by a toxic combination of managerial and organizational problems, beginning with a total lack of leadership and direction.

Planners Marlene Gafrick of the City of Houston, Texas, Tim Polk of the city of Bradenton, Florida, and I spent three days in Jackson examining the department’s organization, staffing, mission, and management. Our team was small and our visit brief, but it didn’t take long to see the department had, and continues to have, some serious issues.

Our essential finding was the department had no clearly defined purpose or mission, was poorly organized, and there was little coordination between planning activities and the city’s efforts to manage growth and attract new development. Staff morale was low, some staff members were unqualified, little or no attention was paid to customer service and the application process was crippled by outdated technology and bureaucratic delays.

In short, the department was unable to provide necessary services in a timely and effective manner, and in situations when it did generate appropriate guidance, not everyone involved was willing to listen.

In Jackson’s defense, though, many of its leaders in government, business, and politics understand and are addressing those problems.

The department had been unable to attract and retain enough qualified employees, it was not effectively communicating with the public, stakeholders or its own staff, commitment and productivity needed improvement and economic development opportunities were going unfulfilled.

Meetings with the mayor and a wide range of government, business, and political figures, as well as with staff and customers, provided particularly useful insight. It was immediately obvious, though, that direct and definite action would be necessary if the department were to function properly.

We recommended that the city hire a planning director ca-

pable of providing some badly needed leadership, and that was done shortly after our visit. The new director, Ester Ainsworth, will have to establish trust with the mayor, the community, stakeholders, and her own department. She needs to improve staff morale and productivity and promote the importance of planning and urban design. Also, she must have the authority to make normal management decisions without waiting for sign-off from the mayor.

Our group suggested that the new director review each staff member’s abilities and workload, make changes as necessary and ensure that everyone understands the department’s mission and goals. We also recommended a general reorganization – GIS, for example, should be part of the department, but administering the city transit system should not.

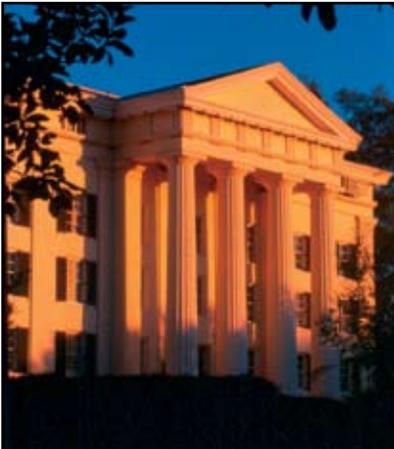
Economic development should be a separate department of its own, and planning should concentrate on planning, design, preservation, development, and code enforcement. More efficient and effective processing of applications and building permits should be a top priority, along with increased access to GIS information.

Jackson’s mayor has made crime the city’s top priority, and crime was always the first issue brought up by community leaders during our discussions; beyond that, there’s little or no understanding of the mayor’s and council’s vision for the city. We heard a lot about crime, and little or nothing about the many positive opportunities that Jackson offers – a rich archi-

tectural, economic, and social history, expansion of the medical industry, downtown and neighborhood redevelopment, and linkages with Jackson State University.

We advised that the department and city leadership focus on a more positive message that helps stakeholders and the public understand how Jackson can grow and move forward. Controlling crime is obviously an important issue for the local community, but it can’t be the only one.

Overall, we saw great problems and great potential. Jackson’s planning process, and the community’s growth in general, are faced with fundamental challenges which go far beyond anything a team of visiting planners could address. Several city leaders were very receptive to our suggestions and seem prepared to make the necessary improvements; they have already started to take action on some of the most pressing issues. If that trend continues, we’ll be able to say before long that it’s a new day in Jackson, Mississippi – or at least the beginning of one.



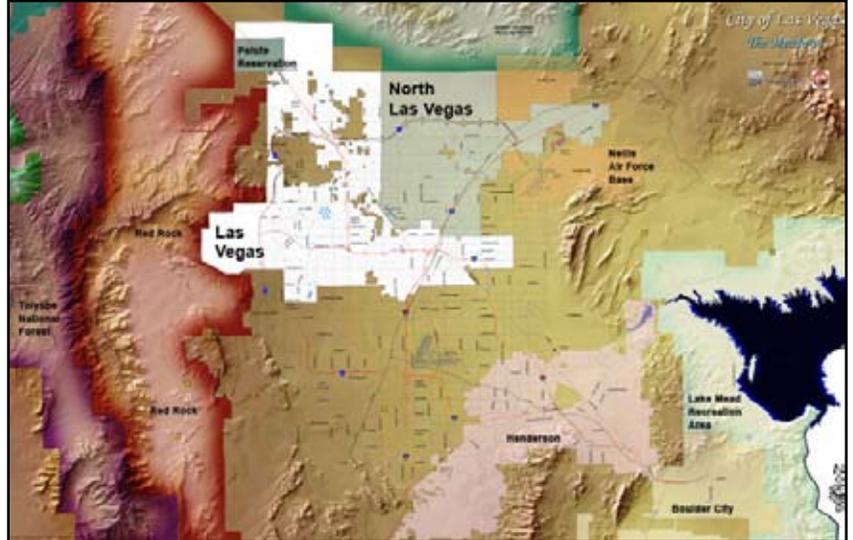
Courtesy of city of Jackson, Miss.

Regional Scope for High Speed Growth

By Flinn Fagg, AICP,
Planning Manager
Las Vegas Planning & Development Dept.

The Las Vegas metropolitan area is often viewed as a haphazard sprawl of suburban development, stretching uncontrolled across the desert landscape. While Southern Nevada has faced unprecedented growth over the last two decades, local leaders have recognized the challenges it presents in maintaining basic quality-of-life elements such as land use, transportation, recreation, public safety, and a healthy environment. For that reason, the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC) was formed in 1999 to address issues that transcend jurisdictional boundaries.

Its formation was required by the Nevada Legislature for the political entities in the Las Vegas Valley to come together to produce a regional policy plan. The SNRPC is comprised of Clark County, and the cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder City.



Courtesy of City of Las Vegas

The Clark County School District was added to the coalition soon after, as the nation's fifth largest school district is an important player in land use planning in the valley.

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Global Gateway

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gies are imperative as the United States charts the course for its third century. Already, Europe and Pacific Asia are initiating mega-regional strategies for cohesion and competitiveness through intra-regional and intra-national infrastructure investments. Similar large scale strategies must be pursued in the United States that focus on reversing current trends to develop more efficient urban forms; infrastructure systems that have the needed resiliency, redundancy and capacity for growth and national security; and the infrastructural and educational foundations for economic growth and opportunity.

Vision Framework

How can this growth be accommodated in regions that are already approaching build-out in their land use and infrastructure, while contending congestion, environmental degradation, and increasing socio-economic inequity? In less than 50 years the nation will need to build half-again as much housing, commercial development and infrastructure as during the past two centuries, if current development patterns are continued. The nation would consume four times as much land by 2050 as in its history. Housing affordability is increasingly

Los Angeles metro area
Population: 12,924,000
2005

difficult in the nation's megaregions, where housing costs are rising twice as fast as incomes. Meanwhile, social and economic disparities have widened further with the economic restructuring of recent years, limiting opportunities to upward mobility.

Current Growth Trends

The mega-region requires a new and improved framework for cooperative governance and financing. As in the past, the president may promote this vision and lead efforts to coordinate federal agencies towards policies at the mega-regional scale. State, regional and local officials, as well as coordinating groups, foundations, and universities could work to shape these policies. Using a basic Return on Investment structure, both public and private investments must focus on efficient networks that increase productivity, while generating affordable outcomes in housing and transportation. A goal oriented, performance-based decision process that supports this objective is integral, while government policies and tax structures reinforce this approach.

For more information contact Mark Pisano, SCAG Executive Director 213-236-1808 or pisano@scag.ca.gov.

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Growth

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SNRPC's funding and operations are governed by an inter-local agreement between the member agencies.

As there are only four municipalities and the county government engaging in local planning activities the coordination process is greatly simplified. The quasi-governmental agencies — the regional transportation and water authorities — and energy utilities also support and participate in regional decisions. Consequently, coordination and cooperation is enhanced because all are readily involved and accessible in the decision-making process.

The SNRPC was charged with adopting and implementing a regional policy plan to encourage the efficient use of land and promote sustainable growth. Building upon a prior valley-wide planning effort, the regional plan was developed under the guidance of a technical committee through a series of community planning workshops. The adopted plan contains seven elements: conservation/open space/natural resources; population forecast; land use; transportation; public facilities; air quality and infill development.

The SNRPC is supported by two committees: The Technical Committee, consisting of managers and administrators from the various member jurisdictions, and the Planning Directors Committee which includes professional planning staff from the

various jurisdictions. The Planning Directors Committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss work plan items and prepare items for review and consideration by the Technical Committee and Coalition Board. The Technical Committee and Coalition Board meet on a bi-monthly basis.

The work is performed by those who are directly engaged - by the members of the committees and planning staff from the member jurisdictions. Support staff for the SNRPC is limited to a secretary, who is responsible for producing the agendas, mailing packets, taking minutes at meetings, and manages the annual budget.

Each year, the SNRPC adopts a work plan with specific tasks that advance the implementation of the regional policy plan. One significant work project

scheduled for the upcoming year is the implementation of a regional open space plan. The open space plan, adopted by the Coalition Board in July 2006, includes five critical components: preservation of mountain and desert backdrops; a trail system encircling the valley; a regional trail network throughout the valley; preservation of natural washes; and the creation of open space and heritage sites. During this year, determining the alignment and conceptual design of the trail system encircling the valley, and developing connections to other regional trail alignments and open spaces will be the first tasks.

Another project scheduled for the current fiscal year is a continuation of a regional economic study. The

first phase of the study, accepted in 2006, examined existing economic conditions and cluster-based economic development strategies. The second phase will address barriers to economic growth, the expansion of industry clusters and a formal framework for the Southern Nevada jurisdictions to share in the economic development of the region.

Other projects planned for the coming year include the creation of a school master plan for each of the individual jurisdictions in the valley in conjunction with the Clark County School District, an examination of the potential for co-locating public facilities in order to use public land more efficiently, and a review of sustainability issues in relationship to the existing regional policy plan.

The SNRPC also administers a "conformity" process through which local planning documents are reviewed for adherence to the regional plan. Master plan elements are submitted to the Planning Directors Committee, which performs a conformance review on behalf of the Coalition Board. While the SNRPC is not empowered to make modifications to the plan elements of the local jurisdictions, the cooperative nature of the organization allows for comments and recommendations on the elements to be returned to the jurisdictions.

While the Las Vegas metropolitan area remains challenged by growth issues into the future, its regional board provides a comprehensive framework and effective direction for coordination.

For more information, go to snrpc.org.

Las Vegas Metro Area
Population: 1,711,000
2005



Photo by Julie Ray

Message From The Editor

A Word from the Editor

I just returned from the California State APA conference. Regionalism seems to be as important an interest as sustainability for the nearly 2,000 planners gathered. Indeed, both these topics are about sharing resources. Whether through conventional councils of government (COG's) such as SCAG, SANDAG, or ABAG or creating



new sub-regions; new initiatives are being created to solve transit, housing, water, and school issues through voluntary collaborations. "In these days of dwindling budgets, 'jurisdictional fiefdoms' are going the way of the mastodon," said the introduction to the Grand Boulevard Initiative vision, a collaboration of 29 city, county, and regional agencies in the Bay area.

As planners, we are at our best

when we are fearless and creative. Yet we are also skilled efficiency practitioners of "not reinventing the wheel." That's why we enthusiastically trek to professional conferences to learn from others. I encourage planning leaders to investigate the web sites of local COG's and sessions presented at conferences such as the recent CCAPA to continue our leadership in regional planning through innovation.

Best regards,

M. Margo Wheeler, AICP
Editor

Message From The Chair

By Rollin Stanley, AICP
Chairperson
APA City Planning & Management Div.

Our regionalism theme for the newsletter follows on the national attention that metro and megalopolis areas are receiving. The message about the expected rapid growth in this country is finally gaining traction. The numbers are staggering. Over 50 percent of the housing stock expected in 40 years does not exist today. Over 100 million people will be added in the same period. Our membership can help lead this discussion and push regionalism up the agenda in their areas.

This quarter I would like to hear from members on several topics. Next year is an election year for several positions on the APA Board of Directors and AICP Commission. Nominations are open for several positions and the division should be filling some of these. If you are interested, or if you know someone who would be an asset to either the board or commission, please e-mail me (stanleyr@stlouiscity.com) or visit www.planning.org/elections. The deadline for nominations is October 31, 2007.

The division is about to undertake an

update of our web page. We are interested in the type of content members would find useful. From current studies to surveys, we hope to provide information and links to topical information like regionalism and create a dialogue among managers. Please e-mail me with any thoughts you may have.

Finally, we have all prepared for and written the AICP exam. If you have any thoughts on the exam, format, subjects, etc., please let me know. I will pass them along to the folks looking at the current test.



Invitation to Exhibit & Call for Papers

46th International Making Cities Livable Conference on

"True Urbanism: Designing the Healthy City"

& Exhibit on

"New Designs for Mixed-Use Urban Fabric"

La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, NM, June 1-5, 2008

Co-sponsored by The City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County
& NM Dept. of Transportation

Co-organized with the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture

Deadline for papers
November 30
www.livablecities.org

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To subscribe, go to the division web site at www.planning.org/cityplanning and click on "Listserv." Type in your e-mail address, choose a password, and submit your request. You'll receive a confirmation and instructions on how to use listserv. If your e-mail address for listserv is different than the one in your APA membership record, further information may be asked in order to verify your membership.



Regional Newsletter Contributors

The following division members have graciously accepted the task of collecting newsletter articles and updates for cities in their U.S. census regions. Be sure to keep them in the loop on any planning news in your city.

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