

PLANNING MATTERS



American Planning Association
Colorado Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

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Affordable Housing Finance Melts Down with the Rest of the Economy

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Financing drives affordable housing like any other part of the real estate industry. Consequently, new construction and refurbishment of affordable rental units ground to a halt near the middle of 2008 with the rest of the real estate industry. Since that time, virtually the only development or redevelopment activity has been through programs of the federal government that were added to or expanded in the spring 2009 stimulus bill, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Since the 1980's, the federal government's role in expanding affordable rental housing has shrunk dramatically and is delivered primarily through two major programs—housing block grants to state and local governments (the HOME Program and, to a lesser extent, Community Development Block Grants or CDBG) and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. The former programs provide grants that, typically, account for less than 20% of the total costs of a typical affordable housing project. LIHTC allows affordable property owners to form partnerships with corporations who get a return on their investment through the Federal tax code instead of the cash flow of the property. LIHTC funds typically account for 30% to 60% of the costs for a typical affordable housing project. Both programs were heavily supported in ARRA.

The other programs of the federal government that support affordable rental housing are the small but steady Sec. 202/811 program of direct loans for senior and disabled households (268,000 units since 1959) and diminishing support for the operating costs of public housing units owned by state and local housing authorities. Both of these enjoyed extensive fund increases under ARRA.

Most of the publicity regarding housing finance since the economic meltdown in the middle of 2008 has focused on for sale housing. With the huge number of foreclosures, many commentators have suggested that the supply of affordable housing need not be expanded since these foreclosed units will "fill the gap" and make up for any shortage of affordable rental housing. The main problem with this suggestion is that the numbers don't work. Using the projected 2010 median home price for the Denver metro area (\$217,000) and assuming this home can be purchased using a 95% loan at 5% (30 years) and \$200 for taxes and insurance, an annual income of approximately \$56,000 would be required to purchase this home. This is approximately 80% of the median income for a family of three. Virtually all affordable rental housing programs are aimed at households below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) and most programs aim to serve those below 60% of AMI. None of these targeted households could buy this home. If this "median

FEATURE ARTICLES

Affordable Housing Finance 1-2

Platinum Homes 2

Boulder Housing Partners 4

Energy Star Homes 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Message 3

Regional Trainings 6

Growing Up Boulder 8-9

Message from Student President 9

APA Colorado Redistricting 10

APA Colorado Board Contact Info 11



Finance Meltdown, continued

priced home" were bought by a landlord who could more easily get a loan on it, the rent this landlord would have to ask to break even (making zero profit) would be approximately \$1,300/month. To afford this rent without paying more than 30% of their income (the national standard) a family would need an income equal to or higher than 80% of the median. Without significant write-downs by banks, resold foreclosed homes generally don't serve the "affordable" market.

Affordable housing has benefited greatly from ARRA but most people in this field are uncertain about the future of their industry when the stimulus dollars run out. Only limited activity has yet been stimulated in the private sector.

Platinum Homes for Nickel Budgets

Susan Andre
Thistle Homes

How do we provide affordable homes in one of Colorado's most expensive housing markets, and why? In Boulder the median household income cannot afford the median priced home. The middle class is shrinking. Workforce housing is critical to sustainable communities: It reduces sprawl and traffic congestion, provides a base for economic growth, and fosters economic diversity and civic participation.

Thistle Communities has won national and regional awards for green building from the Home Builder's Association, EPA's Energy Star Award, and the 2007 Planning Award from APA Colorado for its Blue Vista Community in Longmont (mybluevista.com). "The Committee was impressed with excellent collaboration that resulted in an effective affordable housing project. This planning effort provided a transferable mix of design and social engineering, addressing the environment as well as resident needs, for real community progress."

A charitable non-profit since 1989, Thistle has created over 1,000 affordable homes in Boulder and Adams Counties, serving 4,000 people per year. Thistle's Mission is to create and preserve quality, permanently-affordable rental and ownership homes for working families, seniors and people with disabilities.

"Thistle's newest project in Boulder at Toby's Lane shows a balance of progressive planning to meet affordable housing needs. It is scaled small for current financing conditions, using modular technology. LEED Platinum solar homes at this mixed-income site will be priced for low- to moderate-income buyers," said Mary Roosevelt, Thistle CEO. The City of Boulder has made affordable housing a priority with funding to match (from taxes and IZ fees), and set a goal to make 10% of housing stock affordable.

To make quality homes affordable, Thistle and others need to use smart design, maximize density, and rely on grants to underwrite part of development costs. Delays and high costs associated with zoning and permitting can be barriers to affordable housing's extremely tight margins. Inclusionary Zoning is a proven benefit, as are fee waivers.

See www.thistlecommunities.org, NeighborWorks America (www.nw.org), Center for Housing Policy (studies on IZ and Shared Equity, two strategies on which Thistle relies), and National Low Income Housing Coalition for more on the intersection of planning policies and the community need for affordable housing.



President's Message: A New Year - A New Beginning

Susan Wood, AICP



As planners, we plan for the next 25 years; we plan for next week; and we sometimes plan for this afternoon. However, we all know what happens to the best laid plans. Such was the case when I assumed the duties of Colorado Chapter President in December, some 7 months earlier than scheduled and planned. Last November, James van Hemert, AICP, announced that he had accepted a position as the Planning Director in a small town in British Columbia called Duncan. Neither APA, nor the Rocky Mountain Land Institute let him go easily and I have warned him that he is only a phone call away. We appreciate James' dedication to APA and his service to the organization. He brought his own sense of priorities to this position and both shared his ideals and "walked the talk." He is a tough act to follow.

This year marks the start of a new decade, one that begins with its share of challenges, but also opportunities. The 2000s ended in a different economic climate from the one that ushered it in. With the economic downturn, planners often have to bear greater workloads, yet remain concerned about sustainable work; and see greater pressures on infrastructure and services, yet have fewer funds to tackle the issues. In spite of this, many see opportunities, as well. A slower work pace provides more time for updating plans or pursuing educational opportunities, to name only a couple.

Also important to remember, is that we have resources among us. There are approximately 1,400 APA members in Colorado. They work in the public sector and the private sector and have expertise in land use, transportation, environmental, design, and many other specializations. APA Colorado serves as a common point for planners Statewide. Regional events (see page 6) and the Annual Conference (Steamboat Springs Oct 6-9, 2010) provide opportunities for learning and networking and the list serve provides an avenue to share information and inquire about others' practices or experiences. Likewise, the website offers information about events, committees, CM credits, job opportunities, and more.

In these times, we may be looking for ways to do more with less, but it behooves us to strategically look for ways we can do more - period. With 1,400 members, we are our own resource. Please avail yourselves of the services and events the Chapter offers and let us know of additional ideas or approaches that we should consider.

We will be looking for opportunities, too. Here's to the beginning of a great year!

Join the Board in 2010

Elections for the 2010-2011 Board of Directors will be held in May. Nominations are being accepted NOW! The following positions are open for 2 year terms - Vice President of Communications, Southwest Area Representative and Metro B Representative. The general descriptions of these positions can be found in the bylaws ([www.apacolorado.org/about us](http://www.apacolorado.org/about-us)) or someone from the Nominating Committee could answer more specific questions. Think about it!

Contact denise@apacolorado.org if you'd like to nominate yourself or someone else...

BHP Provides Transit and Affordability to Families

Stuart Grogan
Boulder Housing Partners

On January 20, 2010, Boulder Housing Partners, aka, the Housing Authority of the City of Boulder (BHP), celebrated the grand opening of the 70 unit, permanently affordable Broadway Apartments. It was the culmination of almost seven years of work and represents one of the first communities in the country to convert public housing to market based financing. BHP combined that new construction to create a mixed income, service enriched neighborhood that incorporates a high level of environmental sustainability.



The Broadway Apartments are located in central Boulder. It is approximately one mile north of local shopping and the hospital. The housing is immediately south of the North Boulder Recreation Center; residents have access to the center with reduced cost passes. The City of Boulder's SKIP, a short headway commuter bus, stops adjacent to the site. An eco-pass is available to all residents at no cost. The SKIP stops at Pearl Street, the University, City and County offices, as well as at local elementary, middle, and high schools.

In the early 1980's, BHP constructed 46, two and three bedroom dwelling units at Broadway with a subsidy from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The new public housing units were available to households with incomes between 0% and 30% of the area median income (AMI). Because of the excellent location, the site was almost 100% occupied for more than twenty years. By 2000, it was in desperate need of sheathing and siding repairs, replacement doors and windows, insulation, flooring, and new bathrooms and kitchens. BHP successfully petitioned to have the units removed from the public housing program. To finance the \$6 million dollar effort, BHP combined 4% low income housing tax credits with Private Activity Bonds and grants from the St. John's Foundation and the City of Boulder. Following the rehabilitation, BHP was able to serve the same very low income population by committing 44 Section 8 vouchers to the site.

To further a sense of community, BHP demolished two of the original units and replaced them with a 3,000 sq ft community center. In addition to educational and other resident events, the I Have A Dream Foundation (IHAD) will run an after school program for the resident children. Participants who complete the program are eligible to receive a full scholarship to secondary education programs including college.

Broadway West is an extremely energy efficient three-story building abutting Broadway that includes 26, one, two and three bedroom units. Each unit has a storage locker and parking is located underground. The \$7 million dollar new construction project was financed with 9% low income housing tax credits, a conventional loan, a bridge loan from the Mile High Community Loan Fund, and grants from the City of Boulder and the State of Colorado. The units are available to households at or below 50% of the AMI.

BHP is happy to provide additional information about this project or other development projects in our portfolio. Please contact Stuart Grogan, BHP's Director of Development, if you have questions or would like to arrange a site visit.

Energy Star Homes Strengthen Communities

Elizabeth Rowan
Housing Resources of Western Colorado

Housing Resources of Western Colorado was originally founded in 1977 as The Energy Office, Inc. It was incorporated as a not-for-profit 501©(3) organization in 1982 and began its corporate life administering and delivering solar energy workshops, energy conservation projects, and a low income energy conservation program. We have steadily expanded our service and projects to include assistance with energy, home rehabilitation, and other residential repair programs as well as housing development activities. For several years, HRWC has been actively involved in the development of affordable housing. Our challenge is to change the perception regarding “affordable” housing in a very conservative environment and establish a niche in providing energy efficient housing for working families.

Our Mutual Self Help Housing program gives lower income families the chance to afford their own homes. Past participants have included people from a variety of professions, such as teachers, nurses, bank employees, energy-industry employees, and others. We have built over 200 homes during the multi-year tenure of this program. Typically, groups of ten families at a time participate in the program performing approximately 70% of the construction labor, under qualified supervision. The construction then counts as a down payment on their home. Every participant helps his or her neighbor in home construction, and no one moves in until all homes are completed. This unique program provides a sense of community and pride to participants which is often lacking in more traditional subdivisions.

In recent years, we have discovered the perfect niche by emphasizing energy efficiency in our self-help homes. Through minor improvements to our construction process such as increased cellulose insulation, documented utility costs reflect an annual savings of over 50%. This past year, we achieved Energy Star ratings on all of the homes built, and were able to pass along additional savings in operating costs to new homeowners.

We continue to experience a demand for this program, in spite of the current housing market. This could be due to several factors, including our willingness to work with potential homeowners to clear up credit issues; the substitution of labor for a cash down payment; and the attractiveness of owning a new Energy-Star rated home with quality construction that is familiar to the homeowner.

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Regional Events

For more info & to register go to www.apacolorado.org

Ski Resort Development Seminar - Planner's Ski Day!!, Friday, March 19, 10am – 4 pm, Breckenridge (3.5 CM)

This one day session will explain how through cooperative planning between the Town of Breckenridge and Vail Resorts, the Breckenridge Ski Resort continues to be the one of the most popular winter resort destinations in North America. Participants in this program will have the opportunity to gain resort planning information through both the classroom, and on-mountain site visits via skis or snowboards. On snow tour groups will be broken up into differing ability levels if necessary. The on-snow tour will include plenty of skiing and time to network with fellow planners. Participants are expected to provide their own equipment and must be an intermediate skier or above to participate in the on-mountain tour.

Fees: \$25 for members, \$30 for nonmembers. Registration fees include lunch (lift tickets and equipment are the participant's responsibility). Fees are nonrefundable; however substitutions may be made at any time.

Technology for Today's Planner, Thursday, March 11, 7:45am - Noon, with extra time for hands on training, Tivoli Center, Denver (3 CM)

The learning intent for those that attend is to review technologies and trends that may have not been addressed in planning school or may not be relevantly addressed on the job. 3 Sessions will include public engagement technology, integrating media and 3-D visualization. The sessions should be interesting and relevant for all planners from students to seasoned professionals. At the conclusion of the sessions there will be computer workstations available to try out the new knowledge, the presenters will be available from noon - 1 to encourage and answer questions!



Fees: \$25 for members, \$30 for nonmembers, \$10 for student members. Registration fees include breakfast. Fees are nonrefundable; however substitutions may be made at any time.

Funding for this training is being supplemented by a grant from the Chapter Presidents' Council of APA. And all the organization is a result of the student chapter.

INFORMATION ON TRAININGS AND CM OPPORTUNITIES ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE AT APACOLORADO.ORG

If you need to earn CM credits, check it out!! There are always free and low cost choices



Annual State Conference: Steamboat Springs Oct 6-9, 2010

THE LOCAL HOST COMMITTEE IN STEAMBOAT AND ROUTT COUNTY INVITE YOU TO **SAVE THE DATE** AND STAY TUNED FOR PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANTICIPATE SOME CHANGES TO BRING VALUE AND A CHANGE OF THE ROUTINE TO THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE.

Watch for the call for session proposals by the end of March. The Awards application will also be available online by the end of March.



6 PT



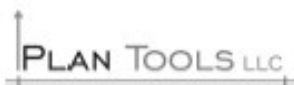
5 PT



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4 PT



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Growing Up Boulder – A new child and youth-friendly city initiative in Colorado

Debra Flanders Cushing and Mara Mintzer,
Co-coordinators of Growing Up Boulder

Aligned with efforts around the globe to create more child-friendly cities, *Growing Up Boulder* is a new local Initiative to provide opportunities for all young people to have a say in decisions that affect them. This Initiative represents a partnership between the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design, the University of Colorado, the City of Boulder, and the Boulder Valley School District, along with other organizations such as Boulder Housing Partners, the I Have A Dream Foundation, Voices For Children CASA, the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, the Youth Opportunities Advisory Board, and independent local schools.

Growing Up Boulder focuses on building meaningful connections between young people, local community leaders, and decision-makers in an effort to address current issues of concern and make Boulder a more inclusive place for ALL young people who live or go to school in Boulder. Although the United States is one of only two UN member nations that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the other is Somalia), Boulder is well positioned to implement this Convention's principles at the local level and to set a national standard for ensuring children's rights (go to <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm> to read the Convention).

The Initiative's kick-off celebration took place on October 10, 2009. It brought together approximately 200 youth and adults interested in making Boulder a better place to grow up. The free event featured opportunities for youth to create graffiti art with a local artist, explore natural alternatives to drinking and doing drugs, and discuss issues such as transportation and nightlife with Boulder City Council and community members.

Moving forward, the Initiative has formed three action groups focused on issues identified by youth who attended the kick-off event: youth-created public art for middle-school students to express their views of Boulder, a business survey to determine youth-friendly business practices and local job opportunities for high-school students, and a teen nightlife survey to identify barriers for youth to enjoy safe and enjoyable nightlife options and explore additional opportunities youth want to propose. The action groups follow a participatory action research framework in which youth and adults work side-by-side to identify issues, conduct research, and implement solutions.



Through *Growing Up Boulder*, children and youth will also have the opportunity to provide input for the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Update. For example, in an interactive community-wide meeting, faculty and students from CU's College of Architecture and Planning will facilitate activities designed to be educational and fun. Additional opportunities for children and youth to give input will be available

Message from the APAS President



Chris Dixon
*Masters Candidate, Urban & Regional Planning
 University of Colorado Denver*

Next month, APAS-CO and APA Colorado will be jointly hosting a symposium entitled *Technology for Today's Planner* (see page 6) . It is our hope that this event will showcase some of the latest trends in technology and provide some new and relevant tools for planning professionals and students. We'll be providing a half day of speakers and hands-on work showcasing the latest in Sketchup and Google Earth, online mapping software, and facilitating a community meeting. We'd like to invite and encourage as many professionals and students to attend as possible as we believe this event will provide valuable tools and information for any planner.

Recently, Diana Denwood stepped down as the Events Committee Chairperson for APAS-CO. She worked in that position for the past year and a half. With her help, APAS-CO was able to successfully put on three picnics, a number of brown bags, several student sports activities, and some other great get-togethers. Diana's efforts to maintain student connections and bridge the professional and student worlds is much appreciated.

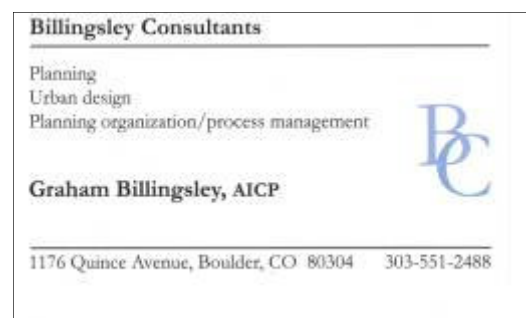
Stephanie Bowker will be replacing her as the Events Committee Chairperson and she has plans to continue the ongoing efforts of this committee's brown bags and social get-togethers. If you'd like to present a brown bag presentation at the university or are interested in more information please email Stephanie at bowker.stephanie@gmail.com.

Growing Up Boulder, continued

through local schools.

In order to assess and improve the Initiative, we will soon begin piloting the CERG/IRC "Child Friendly Cities and Communities Assessment Toolkit", developed within the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre/Childwatch Child-Friendly Cities Research Initiative with the collaboration of the Children's Environments Research Group and the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2010, www.childfriendlycities.org Like other aspects of the Growing Up Boulder Initiative, this assessment will follow a participatory model and involve children and youth in assessing their own community.

For more information or to find out how you can get involved, go to www.growingupboulder.org or email us at growingupboulder@gmail.com.



Redistricting for Area Representatives

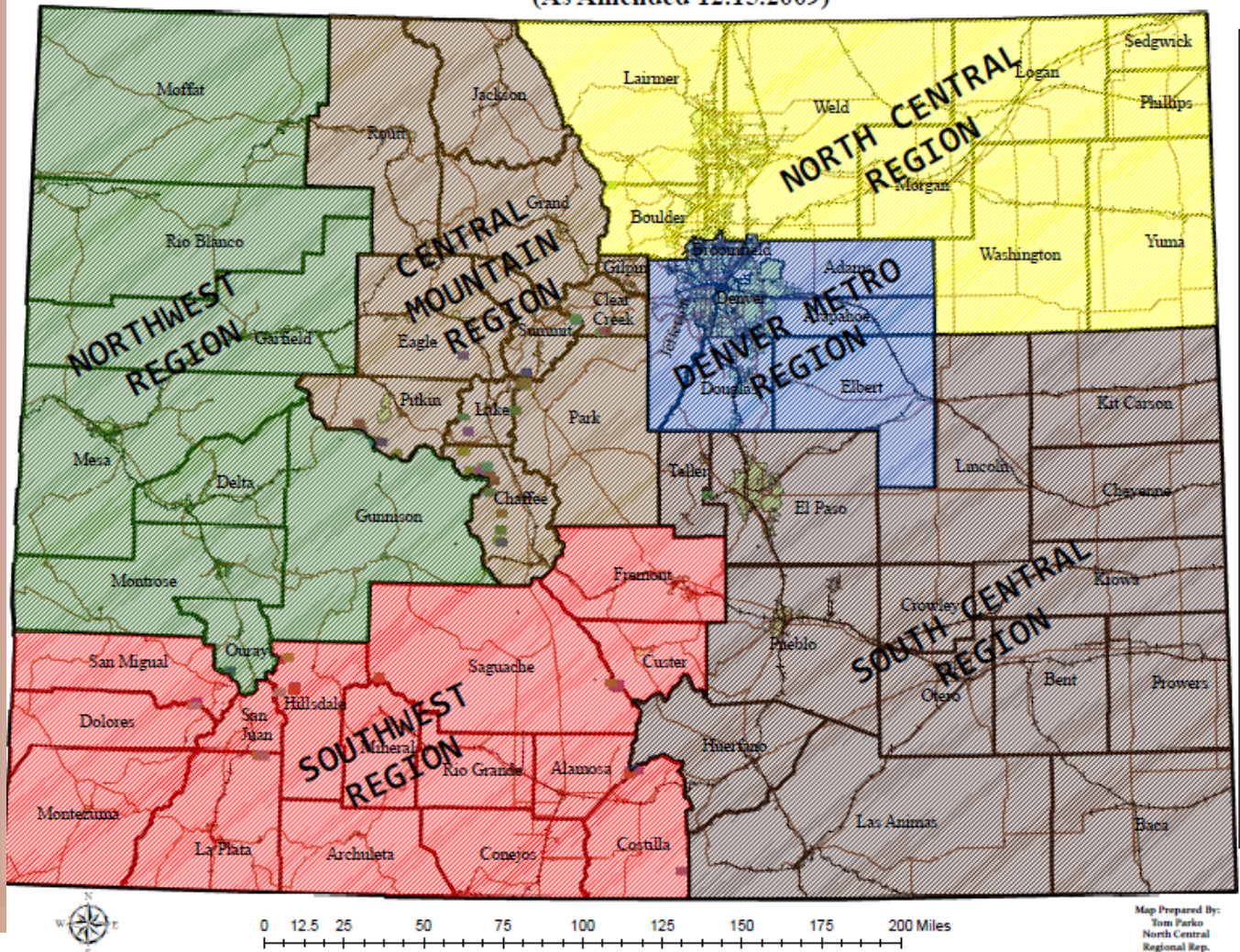
Last year a Redistricting Sub Committee was formed from the APA Colorado Board to take a look at the boundaries for Area Representatives. In the past changes had been made to address representational equality. This time the focus was more geographical. The new districts create regions that offer easier traveling opportunities. With an emphasis on regional trainings it made sense to keep regions on the same side of any given mountain range! Of course, travel can be difficult and time consuming from anywhere, and members can attend trainings offered anywhere in the state. The Board supports this new map.

Changes of Note:

- Previously, Brighton and Westminster had some division between the Metro and the North Central regions. Now, they are entirely in the Metro region.
- Previously, Garfield County divided the Northwest region. Now, it is part of the Northwest.
- Routt County has become part of the Central Mtn region.
- Gunnison County has become part of the Northwest region.

These changes can only take place through a vote of the membership. If you have comments before a special election is held later this year, please contact Tom (tparko@fortlupton.org) or Greg (gregm@ci.grandjct.co.us). The current map can be viewed at apacolorado.org/about-us

Colorado APA Regions
(As Amended 12.15.2009)



Map Prepared By:
Tom Parko
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Interested in joining the Board or a Committee, contact anyone on this list.

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