

PLANNING MATTERS



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Colorado Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

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Community Collaborative Planning, the Planner, and the Internet: Message from the APAS President



Chris Dixon
*Masters Candidate, Urban & Regional Planning
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As a student, and as someone who has a love for anything technological, it's difficult for me to find a situation where the use of a more technical or innovative approach to solving a problem can't be found. I have always been of the belief that tools and technology can make our lives, especially our working lives, easier, more efficient, and less monotonous. I have been wondering recently what our field might be like in the future. It's only possible to make educated guesses at this point, but I wanted to focus on the area of collaboration and communication with the public.

I have only been in the planning profession for a short time, but my experiences and insights thus far have lead me to believe that it is possible that the future of online collaborative planning will be very different from the way we might see it today. I see planners as online mediators. This isn't a far cry from a current role we have today, such as planners mediating community meetings or focus groups. However, I imagine the future role of planners as that of an online expert, a mediator although not in the sense that planners would be relegated to that of customer service reps for communities. No, these planners would act as information gateways, analysts, and distributors. As networks get upgraded and online processes get stronger it's easy to imagine the community planning process changing simultaneously. I wonder what would this process look like if no members of the community had to come to meetings? Would community members be able to leave comments or imprints of their positions on various topics somewhere online where these thoughts would be vet-

APA Colorado Embraces Technology!

Social media, like Facebook, is the latest way to stay informed and in touch. Your Colorado Chapter is in, are you? It's a great place to post event photos and learn more about our Chapter, its events and its members. To become a fan of APA Colorado on Facebook and receive updates and invites, click here

[facebook](#)

We are also launching an RSS feed for several of our web pages - get updated every time the page is updated. Participation is totally voluntary, click the RSS logo on the pages you'd like -- then you don't have to worry about forgetting to check the website on a regular basis and missing announcements.



Planning, Planner and the Internet, continued

ted by professional planners? I see the new interface of planning as similar to Google Earth where community members collectively and collaboratively work together towards solutions that reflect city-wide goals as well as community needs. This community-based approach takes the role of planners and changes it from expert knowledge holder into a guide or a facilitator of multi-party needs. As online collaborative planning programs become easier to use and manipulate, isn't it wise to consider that the public will want to become more involved in this process? As we're seeing more and more each day, residents will want to have more say in their planning processes as those processes become easier to understand and manipulate.

Can you imagine a community where the planning process was so simple that zoning codes, public meetings, and stakeholder analysis need not even exist? What if planning a community was as easy to do as using Google Earth? For example, a person can go online and express their opinion about a property via a map-like interface and that property owner is alerted of an opinion. Residents around the property can see this opinion and a whole conversation is sparked. This conversation is mediated by a planner and on the spot new issues are planned and put in place. Of course, there are both benefits and drawbacks to this, but consider if some of the red tape and complex veil were lifted from our profession. There would need to be safe guards put in place that would prevent rogue and manipulative community groups from drastically affecting the welfare of community residents, and that is to say nothing of the need for equity and fairness to those whom comments are being made against in this new age of online communication.

Stoking the fires of imagination and thought is always a healthy thing. It is rather interesting and compelling to consider the effects that a faster internet, a more tech savvy generation, and governments that are increasingly more open to online communication and collaboration will bring. Only time will tell where the field of planning will go in the coming years, and, for those willing to consider the different avenues and forms planning might take, very interesting possibilities lie ahead.

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President’s Message: The Benefits of APA

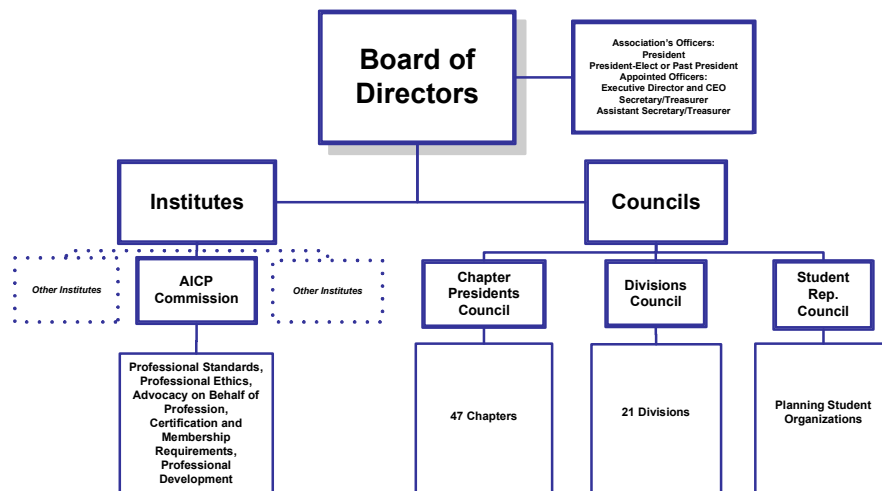
Susan Wood, AICP



As a new chapter president, there have definitely been many things to learn; skills to develop; and responsibilities to maintain. One of these is the relationship of APA Colorado to APA National, which is important and not-to-be overlooked. I have learned in these first few months that APA National is something like the Mother Ship, in that it is home base, our supporter and sustainer; and just like any parent-child relationship, it is sometimes trying. For the most part, though, we “get bang for our buck.”

Without question, APA National provides services and support and serves as an umbrella group for our chapter, as well as other chapters throughout the US. They also expect in return, membership dues (we receive a rebate back to the local chapter on a quarterly basis); adherence to standards, such as our logo (they provide this to us); and participation at the national level. We are part of a large, 40,000 member organization as shown in the org chart below. We fall into the box of 47 chapters and we can avail ourselves of a number of services offered.

Services that APA National provides to local chapters include public relations, funding/rebates, grant services, legislative services and assistance (provided through the Policy Department which works out of the D.C. office), professional development workshops and support for our Professional Development Officer (Mike Sutherland), overall maintenance and support (such as online registration for our state conference, hosting our member and committees listservs, survey software program, and conference call capabilities), and training opportunities. Some of the training opportunities offered include: APA’s Audio/Web program, Planners Training Service, and Packaged workshops.



To help us run efficiently, we are somewhat unique among state chapters in that we have two chapter administrators, Denise Henasey and Katie Guthrie, AICP. Both serve APA Colorado in many ways, including maintaining our relationship with APA National. They make sure we keep up any reporting requirements; adhere to APA policies; and pass along opportunities for grants and awards applications, training, webinars, and others to APA Colorado members. We would not be able to accomplish nearly as much without them.

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Denise and Katie can answer many of your questions regarding both our State Chapter and APA National. I know because they answer many of mine. They are a major pipeline to APA National and the variety of services offered. As a chapter we will continue to work closely with National and take advantage of the opportunities offered. If you have questions or see opportunities for our chapter, please do not hesitate to contact Denise (denise@apacolorado.org), Katie (Katie@apacolorado.org), or me (susan.wood@rtd-fastracks.com).

An Interactive Mapping Methodology to Monitor Noxious Weed in Boulder County

Molly Molter, GIS Specialist
Boulder County Land Use Department



Pursuant to the enactment of the Colorado Weed Management Act, the Boulder County Board of County Commissioners adopted a Noxious Weed Management Plan for the unincorporated lands in Boulder County in 1992. The purpose of the Boulder County Noxious Weed Management Plan (the Plan) is to effectively protect against designated noxious weeds which pose a threat to the economic and environmental value of lands in the unincorporated County and to carry out the goals and objectives of the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan related to preserving and improving the quality of life and the aesthetic and functional fitness of land uses within the County.

The Parks and Open Space (POS) Department currently administers the Boulder County Weed Management Program. They control noxious weeds on approximately 25,000 acres of POS land designated as natural areas, 7,000 acres of leased agricultural land, and 685 miles of County maintained road right-of-way. Concurrently, the Boulder County Land Use Department enforces the Plan on private lands in the unincorporated County. Weed infestations on POS lands are surveyed and monitored using Global Positioning System technology. The Land Use Department, however, does not have a noxious monitoring system in place. Zoning Enforcement staff can track the location of noxious weed complaints, but this method does not provide information on the size or density of infestations on private lands.

The Land Use Department is launching a new program which will allow us to monitor and track noxious weed infestations like never before. The goal is to collect and maintain noxious weed data that is consistent with the POS Department to create a countywide standardized monitoring system. This will result in reliable spatial data that can be compared from year to year through analysis and mapping to be used as a decision support tool for weed management and future planning purposes. The development of this monitoring system can do the following:

- Determine and record locations of noxious weeds on public and private lands in Boulder County.
- Accurately calculate the number of acres infested for each weed on the County or State weed list.
- Determine how fast noxious weeds are spreading by comparing weed inventories over time.
- Provide maps as communication tools for public awareness and education.

The Land Use Department currently has a SMART™ Technologies Inc. interactive whiteboard and projector that is underutilized. An interactive mapping methodology consisting of ESRI® ArcGIS software and a SMART Board system will be used to digitize spatial data related to noxious weed locations, densities, and types. Enforcement staff will make notes of weed locations on paper base maps out in the field. Subsequently, ArcGIS will run on a laptop and the ArcMap base map document will be projected on the SMART Board. Enforcement staff will draw the noted weed infestation polygons on the SMART Board using the Editor Toolbar. With the SMART Board connected to a laptop, the edits are entered directly into the geodatabase. This system will allow GIS and field personnel to work together as a team to successfully capture spatial data.



Current Events

For more info go to www.apacolorado.org

Hop on your Bike, Bike on your Hops: Sustainability Tour of Colorado Springs!

Saturday, June 26, 10am - 3pm, Come out and join local planners, architects and bike enthusiasts as we ride through various Colorado Springs neighborhoods, touring Spring Creek (TND), Rio Grande Village (re-development housing project)/CSU Water Lab, Nosh, Cornerstone Art Center (LEED Certified) and ride South Along the Shooks Run Trail to Lowell Neighborhood (urban re-development, live/work). FREE!! RSVP at www.usgbccolorado.org/registration Contact [Meggan Herington](mailto:Meggan.Herington@springsgov.com) for more details. (3 CM applied for)



Finding Common Ground: LED Sign Workshop, Wednesday, June 23, Noon - 3pm, Northglenn Maintenance and Operations Facility, 12301 Claude Ct. The program is designed to give you a solid understanding of the key issues concerning these displays and help you develop easily understandable and enforceable code language. More info and registration on the front page of www.apacolorado.org (lunch is included). \$5 (2 CM)

The Virtual Staff Report, June 2, 1 - 2:30pm, Colorado Springs, contact Meggan Herington at mherington@springsgov.com

This Fall, Pikes Peak Community College will offer Community Assessment, a planning-oriented GIS class. The instructor is Chuck Donley, AICP, who participated in the development of CommunityViz, and teaches several other planning and GIS courses. Topics will include build-out, suitability, forecasting, and impact analysis as they relate to site design, comp planning, transportation, and geodesign. Students will receive demonstration licenses of the software. Planners may choose to team with a GIS student. The college will waive the prerequisite of GIS 101 for planners, but you must register in person. Cost is around \$500. Classes will meet from 1PM to 2:20 with conceptual discussions on Tuesdays and GIS labs on Thursdays from August 24 through December 9. The campus is east across the interstate from the Air Force Academy (Rampart Campus, Interquest Exit 153). For more information visit the college website at www.ppcc.edu or contact Chuck Donley at donleyco@gmail.com. This is rare opportunity to learn CommunityViz and ArcGIS as they apply specifically to planners.

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



Full Conference will be \$220 and the room rate at the Sheraton is \$109/night. Registration will start in July. Steamboat has a lot to show off, so, free mobile tours for everyone!!

2010 Legislative Session Wrap Up

Coral Cosway, AICP
Legislative Committee Co-Chair

The 2010 legislative session is coming to a close. The APA Colorado Legislative Committee met throughout the session to review proposed bills and advocate for positive changes to Colorado planning law.

During the session, APA Colorado supported 4 bills and monitored 15 others. Our biggest success was HB 1107, which limits the use of the urban renewal statute to develop agricultural land. APA Colorado actively supported this bill as it made its way through the legislative process and was signed into law by the Governor. The bill was sponsored by State Representative Randy Fischer (District 53, Ft. Collins) in the House and State Senator Morgan Carroll (District 29, Aurora) in the Senate. The new law restricts the inclusion of agricultural land in urban renewal district unless: the agricultural land is a brownfield site, or at least 50 percent of the land in the urban renewal district has been developed in an urban character and is deemed to constitute a slum or blighted area, and at least two-thirds of the perimeter of the district is contiguous to that urban development, or the land is an enclave, meaning wholly within a municipality and fully surrounded by urban level development for at least three years, or all impacted taxing entities agree to include the land in the urban renewal district, or the land was included in an approved urban renewal district prior to the effective date of the law (which is August 11, 2010).

The other 3 bills APA Colorado supported this session were either signed into law, or they are well on their way to becoming law. HB 1143 allows the Regional Transportation District (RTD) to use its facilities for residential or other land uses in addition to transportation, commercial or retail uses. The Governor signed HB 1143 into law in April. Another bill, HB 1147, would codify the Colorado Department of Transportation's existing bicycle and pedestrian policy directive (i.e., complete streets). This bill has passed the House and Senate and is currently waiting to be sent to the Governor for action. The last is SB 46, which would allow the creation of forest improvement districts that do not necessarily follow municipal or county boundaries. SB 46 was signed into law by the Governor in March. There are links to more information about each of these bills on the web page (<http://www.apacolorado.org/content/legislative-committee>). Additionally, you can read about the bills the Committee monitored (i.e., did not actively support or oppose) on this web page as well. Just click on one of the 2010 Legislative Update links.

Even though the legislative session is ending, the Committee will continue to meet during the off-session months. Topics at these meetings will include our pro-active agenda for the 2011 legislative session, summer study committee activities, and ballot propositions that could affect planning activities.

The Legislative Committee serves as the voice of APA Colorado to policymakers and the public on planning-related issues. However, the Committee is only as strong or as active as the members who participate in it. Be part of that effort and help us advocate for good planning law in Colorado! For more information about the Committee or its meetings, visit our web page or contact me at 303-221-7275 x7086 or ccosway@pbsj.com.

Front Range Fiber

Mark Heller, AICP

Executive Director, Golden Urban Renewal Authority

Early this year Google announced its new experiment to install 1 gigabyte broadband fiber networks to select communities across America. Dubbed "Google Fiber," this initiative asked cities and towns to complete a request for information to identify which communities would like to become candidates for pilot programs next year. Over 1,110 communities across the nation submitted responses, including a group I helped organize: Colorado Broadband Communities (CBC).

Google's purposes for this initiative include experimenting with different kinds of installation technology, securing the growth market for its services, and ensuring a platform for future "killer apps." Other parts of the world already have super fast networks, but providers in the US have not kept pace. Google Fiber is Google's effort to jump start that upgrade.

Deploying a super fast fiber network along the Front Range would have lasting positive impact on our economy and residents. Such infrastructure would give communities a competitive advantage in attracting and expanding industries. Medical, financial, research and development, and information technology are just a few industries that would view Google Fiber communities as an excellent location for expansion or relocation. Another potential winner would be the education system. Higher education could pioneer the next level of interface between users and the internet. Even consumer useage will require vast network upgrades in the not-too-distant future as anyone using an i-Phone in a big city with overwhelmed networks already knows.

For reasons similar to Google's and a few years ago, ten Front Range cities collaborated to form the Colorado Wireless Communities. The "CWC" included Arvada, Boulder, Broomfield, Lakewood, Northglenn, Thornton, Golden, Louisville, Superior, and Wheat Ridge. Back when "Muni-WiFi" was sweeping the nation, these relatively small cities hoped that they could attract a large, regional wi-fi network installation by working together and offering a potential market much bigger than in each city alone. Our concept was strong, but our timing was unfortunate, as we completed nearly two years of negotiations among the member cities and a variety of potential vendors just as the Muni-WiFi industry imploded. We were certainly disappointed that our unique experiment never got a chance to be implemented, but we also agreed to not disband: perhaps something else might come along that would be a good fit for our organization.

Our patience was rewarded when Google announced a month-long window to reply to its RFI. Many cities put hard work and creativity into their responses, and some employed rather attention-getting media stunts such as Topeka, Kansas renaming itself "Google" for the month. Our big stunt was swapping the word "Broadband" for the word "Wireless" in our name. What sets our application apart from most other applicants is the number and organization of participating municipalities, the size, demographic and topographic diversity of the region, and the prior citizen outreach regarding the benefits of broadband. Since it took us well over a year to form our intergovernmental agreement, we are sure that no other collaboration like ours submitted a response.

Google will make its selections by the end of the year.

More information, please visit: www.coloradobroadbandcommunities.com
www.google.com/appserve/fiberrfi/public/overview



GIS Helps Shape Sustainable Policies in Eagle County

John Hageman

University of Colorado

Masters in Urban and Regional Planning Candidate

This spring semester the University of Colorado Denver Brian led a combined studio of graduate planning and landscape architecture students to continue research initiated by Eagle River Valley Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT). Eagle County and the Vail Valley are world renowned as a vacation destination and it is hard to overlook the 300 plus annual days of sunshine along with the endless streams that flow down from the mountaintops. Myself and fellow student Andrew Iltis recognized these aesthetic qualities and began to uncover the potential for renewable energy within Eagle County. We soon realized that the best way in which this could be done would be to work with bane of many planning students and professionals, geographic information systems or GIS. Notorious for its steep learning curve, less than intuitive interface, and enough pastel pallets to make even the Easter Bunny uncomfortable, GIS can be one the strongest policy and decision-making tools for planners.

Starting only with a digital elevation model (DEM) or topographic layer of the study area, we began to assemble suitability models for solar, hydro, and wind power for Eagle County. The strongest analysis came from a solar potential model of the Valley. This model was combination of aspect, direction of the mountain face at a specific point, and area solar radiation. The values of the topography were then pegged to existing building footprints to have a better understanding of the potential for rooftop solar systems. Although the solar potential was calculated for the entire landscape, our study avoided quantifying data for locations other than rooftops because of the negative impacts that solar systems have on barren land and the importance of the environment in Eagle County.

The potential for hydroelectric power in the Eagle River Valley is significant because of the extensive stream network. The hydrology toolbox from ArcGIS enabled a quick suitability analysis for electrical generation. Keeping in mind the sensitivity of the environment and the impacts that accompanies traditional hydroelectric power generation, micro-hydroelectric generators were identified as the best source for electrical generation with the least amount of negative environmental impacts. Small or micro sources of hydropower are 5-20 kilowatt systems that have significantly less impact on wildlife, sediment flow, and stream characteristics when compared to larger hydro systems that come to mind.

The National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) in Golden, Co already completed a wind potential characteristics model for all of Colorado. Once the data for Eagle County was isolated, public lands and topography were overlaid to identify locations for large-scale wind generation. Many of the prime locations for wind power generation are located along ridge lines and while there is contention over the aesthetic impact of wind turbines among individuals, the potential for wind power exists in Eagle County.

Moving forward our GIS analysis of Eagle County can help to direct a number of sustainable policies for the Valley. The recommendations made to the SDAT team include further exploration of micro-hydro electric generation and a continuation of solar panel subsidies countywide. We soon realized that energy generation was only part of the solution. Conservation methods and quantitative results showed that it had an equal if not greater impact on energy use in Eagle County. While the mountainous setting dictates how energy is used and more importantly who uses it, GIS proved that the Valley has significant potential for renewable energy.

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