

# PLANNING MATTERS



American Planning Association  
Colorado Chapter  
Making Great Communities Happen

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Volume 7, Issue 4

## When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Finds a Partner!

Andy Hill

*Colorado Department of Local Affairs*

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Our state and nation are often split on basic community values. Many people are excited about sustainability, energy efficiency, transit oriented development, walkability, and other topics of particular interest to the typical planner. However, with an economy that is struggling to recover, the spotlight on government spending places much of the debate on the value of government. Securing funding for planning projects is challenging and the competition for the remaining private and public funds is incredibly intense. It has become increasingly difficult for planners to find new pots of money to support the critical work we carry out for communities that are so cash-strapped. Instead, planners are reaching out, pooling resources, and thinking creatively about how increased collaboration benefits our communities.

The federal sustainability partnership agencies, Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency, have directed some existing funding to focus on sustainable community development. As refreshing as that appears, those agencies alone cannot meet the demand of resources required to meet all communities' needs. We can, and should, begin to look differently at the funding sources that already exist at the national and state level. We can also think creatively about how to leverage different funding sources, and other resources that do not involve money, but rather free assistance, expertise or information that saves money in the long run.

### The Colorado Sustainable Main Streets Initiative

For years the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) has advocated for communities, serving as liaison for local governments to other state and federal agencies. The DOLA field representatives have been particularly successful in this capacity. This year we have enhanced that role by spear-heading the Colorado Sustainable Main Streets Initiative (SMSI). The SMSI adopted the federal livability principles, slightly modified, as the starting point for discussion. A menu of outcomes was developed based on those principles and the related issues where state government could actively contribute. This outcome-based approach created the framework from which the government, nonprofit, and private sector partners could work directly with the communities to explore creative solutions that maximize collaboration. This method forced state departments to break out of traditional silos and look at the issues from new perspectives.

Governor Ritter chose four pilot communities: the Five Points neighborhood in Denver, the Town of Fowler, and the Cities of Monte Vista and Rifle. These communities were selected based on their existing work toward sustainable futures, management capacity, geographic diversity, and other criteria. The Sustainable Main Streets Initiative is timely in

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## Get a Partner, continued

that communities are interested in solving the problem of finding time and resources for sustainability efforts while keeping their communities financially healthy during the economic downturn. The SMSI has provided clear evidence of the added value of a more collaborative approach among local, state, and federal government along with nonprofits, foundations, higher education, and the private sector.

The program has been particularly instructive for state agencies. Things we thought we knew about some of our common partners like the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), Governor's Energy Office (GEO), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), universities and others, were reinforced, plus we learned how to enhance these internal partnerships. Naturally CDOT and DOLA have partnered on projects that help jurisdictions make the connections between land use and transportation. Both agencies are working to address the common issue of the state highway as Main Street, and develop solutions that meet both transportation and economic development goals. We are especially excited to partner with APA Colorado and the Department of Public Health and Environment to offer walking or pedestrian safety audits for the pilot communities, free of charge. These local governments are eager to learn how to make their downtowns more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, which presents an opportunity to integrate with their existing downtown revitalization goals. Our partnerships with both Downtown Colorado Inc. and the Sonoran Institute have further expanded in these pilot communities, due in part to our common objective to deliver valuable services.

### **Beyond the Usual Partnership**

The initiative has also forced us to work beyond our usual partnerships and reach out to different agencies, with remarkable results. We found more agencies who were interested in the same outcomes we were pursuing, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), and others. For example, CWCB has funds available to help support water supply elements, which can leverage DOLA funds for comprehensive plans. Also, HCPF has funds to help market a community's downtown, provided that the health care assistance office is located downtown. Locating a health care assistance office downtown serves HCPF's goal of improving accessibility of health care assistance to residents, and it meets the local government's goal of attracting more residents downtown, which has proven to get more people to stop and spend money in that downtown. There are more connections with agencies we would have liked to have made, and we know there are more yet to be discovered.

Through this initiative, state agencies are working diligently to collaborate effectively and serve communities in a more unified, coordinated fashion, with the additional focus on helping communities to break down their own silos, both locally and regionally. First, communities must begin asking tough questions. Are we talking with old partners while reaching out to new ones? Are all relevant partners at the table? A sample of potential local partners that communities may want to involve include school districts, energy conservation nonprofits, special districts, chambers of commerce, local foundations, community leaders and champions for the effort.

Next, communities must look outward to see if there are common issues or solutions to be realized through regional partnering, whether within a specific geographic region, transportation corridor, district, or other defined region. This is becoming more and more essential, and as we see further proof that cooperation beyond jurisdictional boundaries produces better results, funding contributors are de-

## Get a Partner, continued

manding those partnerships. The SMSI has helped the pilot communities look for foundations and nonprofits who can bring technical and financial assistance to the table. State and federal government agencies can be better partners in directing communities to possible funding sources and providing technical assistance and expertise. States, nonprofits and regional groups can act as intermediaries to represent local needs and assist with grant writing and reporting, interpreting and complying with regulations, and conducting research.

Communities are faced with tough choices about what to support with taxpayer dollars. Because of this increased scrutiny, we must take advantage of the fact that a broader group of organizations are paying attention to the connections with planning – through the integration of land use, transportation, affordable housing, public health, public safety, economic development, historic preservation, the arts, and more. How do we ensure that we reach the best possible partners who can help contribute resources toward common objectives? Planners naturally make terrific ambassadors to communities on these topics. They educate communities about these issues, share experiences, and generally inform the process. Today's planners must demonstrate to a wider audience that sustainable community development is a necessary means for the betterment of our communities and the vibrancy of our downtowns.

### Accountability

Leveraging a broader set of resources from a larger group of partners requires us to break away from the lexicon and deliver our message in a language that resonates with people right now – economic development, jobs, revitalization, saving money and improving quality of life (at least so far as to save time and money). We cannot afford to risk alienating any potential partners or losing community support. We need to do a better job of measuring performance to tell the story of why sustainable community development should matter to all of us, and why it simply makes sense. Documenting our lessons learned and missed opportunities, and adjusting our course accordingly, will guarantee a brighter future for agency coordination. We need to be more accountable and demonstrate how this approach works and why it is valuable among competing – actually complementary – interests.

It is hard to involve so many partners. It takes more time and more work. The benefits of this extra work are worth the effort – bringing in fresh ideas and perspectives and access to additional resources. Having more partners forces us to explain our intentions in common terms, help us to evaluate our successes or failures, and results in better solutions for building resilient and sustainable communities.

For more information on the Colorado Sustainable Main Streets Initiative, please visit: <http://dola.colorado.gov/sustainability>



Colorado Sustainable  
Main Streets Initiative

## President's Message: Partners in Planning

Susan Wood, AICP



This year, at the APA Colorado Annual State Conference in Steamboat Springs, we adopted a new Strategic Plan that establishes the theme “*Partners in Planning*.” At the heart of good planning, both in spirit and in action, is collaboration. This is played out daily in community outreach; public involvement efforts; information sharing with other planning professionals; and joint projects with allied groups. Typically, “partnering” and “planning” go together because, quite simply, partnering is something that we, as planners, do well.

Over the past year or so, this charge has been taken up at the Federal level. In June 2009, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities was formed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This coordinated effort was initiated to help communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable, with the recognition that by joining forces, multi-faceted issues can be addressed with a multi-agency approach.

From this interagency partnership, six livability principles were established that include providing transportation choices; promoting affordable housing opportunities; enhancing economic competitiveness; supporting existing communities; leveraging federal policies and investments; and valuing communities and neighborhoods. Since that time numerous grant opportunities have been announced and awards have been made based on these principles. Federal dollars have been targeted toward planning including, among others, \$100 million for Regional Integrated Planning Grants. This partnership has been further supported legislatively through the efforts of Senator Chris Dodd from Connecticut, who introduced the Livable Communities Act of 2009; followed by our own Representative Ed Perlmutter who introduced sister legislation in February 2010.

As planners, we acknowledge and appreciate the emphasis that has been placed on planning at the Federal level and recognize that by partnering with others, more can be done with less. In that same spirit of collaboration, we have pledged to keep opportunities for outreach to and coordinated efforts with allied groups at the forefront.

For example, though we have barely closed the door on the successful 2010 Conference in Steamboat Springs, we are already hard at work planning for 2011. Every 5 to 10-years, APA CO has joined with our neighboring state chapters to hold a joint conference. It has been almost a decade since our last joint effort, so at present, the Colorado and New Mexico Chapters of APA and Western Planning Resources, are actively planning next fall's conference.

The “Western Planner – APA Four Corners Conference 2011” will be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on September 11-14, 2011, and the Arizona and Utah Chapters of APA are also supporting this effort. We anticipate attendance from planners from across the West, which will create an excellent opportunity for sharing information on common topics, ideas, issues, and approaches, and to learn from each other and our experiences. Though this conference will fall within the time slot typically reserved for our annual State conference, we will be holding a “mini-conference” in June to provide an in-state opportunity to learn, network, and hold our awards celebration. As plans unfold for both the “mini-conference” in June and the joint conference in September, look for information both on the APA Colorado website and in e-mail notices so that you do not miss these events.

## President's Message, continued

Teamwork is a hallmark of successful conference planning and the collaborative efforts put forth have marked our greatest past successes and will usher in our future endeavors. The just-past Steamboat Springs Conference was a great success due to the efforts of Denise Henasey, Katie Guthrie, and the Steamboat Springs Local Host committee. Without their focused and coordinated efforts, this conference simply would not have been nearly so successful. We thank you for your efforts. We, as APA Colorado members and conference attendees, are the beneficiaries. Further, because of the efforts of APA New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Utah, and Western Planning Resources, the "Western Planner – APA Four Corners Conference 2011" will be a resounding success, too. Please mark your calendars and join us there.

## 2011 Legislative Session Begins Soon

Coral Cosway, AICP  
*Legislative Committee Co-Chair*

The 2011 legislative session begins in January. In order to speak on behalf of the membership, the Committee needs to know what's important to you. The **Legislative Survey** gives you an opportunity to tell us! [Click here](#) for the survey or use the link on our web site (at <http://www.apacolorado.org/content/legislative-committee>). The intent of the survey is to understand what planning-related issues are important to our membership so the Committee can focus on those issues during the session.

Another way you can tell us what you think it to **join us!** The Committee meets on Monday evenings every two weeks for the duration of the legislative session (from January to May). We read and discuss bills and identify positions on them (support, oppose or monitor). Members of the Committee also testify before House and Senate committees and talk to legislators about planning issues. Meeting dates and locations are posted on the APA Colorado web site (on the legislative page). Notices are also sent through the APA Colorado legislative listserv. To have your e-mail address added to the listserv, send a message to [ccosway@pbsj.com](mailto:ccosway@pbsj.com) with the phrase "add me to the listserv" in the subject line. Listserv members receive notices of meetings, the weekly legislative update (which provides information about the status of planning-related bills being considered by the Legislature), and other announcements related to our activities.

Additionally, this year APA Colorado is planning a "Planners Day at the Statehouse". The day will include a policy briefing on planning-related bills being considered by the Legislature, a tour of the Capitol Building, and meetings with your state representatives. Become an advocate for good planning policy in Colorado by participating in this event! More information will be provided as the details become available.

The APA Colorado Legislative Committee represents you! If you cannot participate in committee meetings, but would like to provide input on planning-related bills, please feel free to do so! Contact me anytime at [ccosway@pbsj.com](mailto:ccosway@pbsj.com) or 720-475-7086.

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Thanks one more time to our 2010 Conference Sponsors:

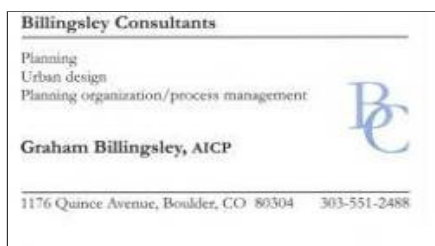
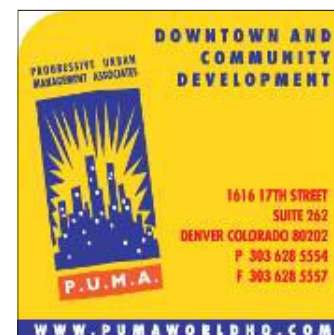
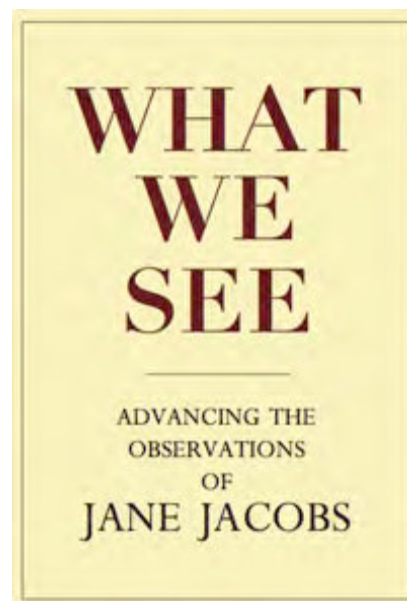
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## Keynote Extraordinaire: Stephen Goldsmith

Stephen Goldsmith gave an excellent keynote address to the 2010 State Conference in Steamboat Springs. He is the editor of a new book honoring the work of Jane Jacobs.

*What We See, Advancing the Observations of Jane Jacobs* is a collection of original essays by more than thirty respected activists, scholars, economists, planners, and public figures around the world whose work has been inspired by Jane Jacobs. Urbanist-activist Jane Jacobs is known best for her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961. Her observations of city life changed the discipline and discourse of urban planning as it was known. By challenging planners, developers, and policymakers of her time, Jacobs engaged an intergenerational, international audience that continues to apply her wisdom.

The link for ordering the book is <http://www.newvillagepress.net/book/?GCOI=97660100041170>



## Great Sigh of Relief

Greg Moberg

*Planning Services Supervisor*

*City of Grand Junction*

There was a great sigh of relief on the night of November the 2nd when it became apparent that “The Dreaded Three” were headed for failure. Though a lot of our jobs were at stake, many of us were just as concerned with what these ballot initiatives would do to our State. I went to sleep that night with the assurance that all would be well and our educational institutions, our utilities, our infrastructure, our libraries, and our jobs were safe for at least one more year. However, as I to pour my second cup of coffee that next morning I began to reflect on what had happened the night before and consider what the future might hold.

Like most cities in the State, the City of Grand Junction has been hit hard by the most recent economic downturn. I’ve heard it called a downturn, a recession, and a depression but does it really matter what we call? Does it matter how we package it or categorize it? Because no matter what you call it, it is a mess for many people. We all have friends and acquaintances who have been laid off, had pay and/or job reductions, and hardships beyond what few had predicted. People are anxious, concerned, and frightened. They wonder if they will be able to make the rent or mortgage, buy groceries, or keep the car. At a minimum, most of us wonder if there will be a job in 2011.

Not to cast too dark a shadow, it would seem that things are easing up and in some areas turning around. But we need to quite hoping for the past and reflect and consider the future.

Planning offices are seeing unprecedented change; from reduction in workforce and reorganization, to the complete removal of planning divisions and dispersment of planning functions throughout other divisions and departments. The role of the planner is being put to question. By-the-way; “What is the need for an entire division that only says no and puts up road blocks to potential development?” Queries of the practicality of existing parking ratios, landscape requirements, and dimensional standards are being raised. And the phrase I hear over and over is; “Because that is what the Code requires.” Has anyone taken a hard look at our codes? Quite honestly most are really nothing more than the re-working of codes written in the 60’s and 70’s. And those times were a little different then what we see today.

It is time for our profession to take a hard look at our position within the development and political community. It’s time to “retool”, to move away from codes that are based on a suburban model that assumes a clean canvas, flat ground and cheap money. We must begin to acknowledge that society is changing. Money is expensive and hard to get, grant funding will continue to be almost nonexistent, fuel will always be costly and “Ozzy and Harriet” and “the Beaver” are things of the past. The demands for infill and redevelopment will become stronger and we need to either lead or get out of the way.

We are on the parapet looking toward a new future and we can either jump off the wall and get involved or just stand and watch. The choice is ours and I would suggest that we all think long and hard before we again utter the words; “Because that is what the Code requires.” We may miss out on an incredible opportunity.

# A Management Framework for Colorado Downtowns and Commercial Districts

## Organizing Development Tools and the Toolbox for each Phase of a Business District's Growth Cycle

Brad Segal

*President, Progressive Urban Management Associates*

There are a variety of public/private partnership options for advancing downtown and community development. The menu can include a dizzying array of tools such as tax increment financing, business improvement districts, community development corporations, parking management authorities and others. Given the variety and complexity of tools, how do local government officials, property owners, businesses, residents and other stakeholders determine the starting point for organizing a business district to advance their economic development? While there are many options, each district has its own unique economic, demographic and political dynamics, therefore, one size does not fit all.

Much like a business, there is a natural lifecycle for a business district. If it can be determined where the district is evolving along the lifecycle, then a general framework can be employed for matching the most appropriate resources and designing an effective organizational structure.

The following management framework considers business districts in one of three stages of evolution:

**Stagnant:** The stagnant business district is challenged with high vacancies, underutilized properties, and an uninviting public realm and suffers from a poor regional image. There are several local leaders motivated to change the fortunes of the district, but high levels of apathy and cynicism among property and business owners create formidable barriers to pursuing public/private partnership solutions.

**Growing:** In the growth phase, the business district is viewed as “up and coming,” with a sprinkling of new businesses, pioneering new investments and an image of a district in transition. There is a core group of vested property and business owners that are benefitting from the additional energy created by new entrepreneurs entering the district. Local stakeholders are motivated to explore public/private partnership approaches to improve the district.

**Mature:** The mature business district has an established brand identity, a strong mix of retail, restaurants and jobs, an inviting public realm and a successful regional image. Mature districts are often led by an experienced core group of property and business owners that are well organized and have a track record of participating in public/private partnerships to market and manage the district.

For each stage of the business district lifecycle, different program priorities, organizational options and resources are suggested.

### **Stirring Up Stagnant Districts**

In a stagnant business district, development advocates need to demonstrate the advantages of collaborative approaches to revitalization in order to inspire and engage cynical stakeholders. A history of inertia often needs to be overcome to create momentum. There is a premium on visible results and on



## A Management Framework, continued

solutions that can be viewed as accessible to many stakeholders.

Program priorities for management organizations in stagnant districts include attracting new investment, stabilizing the environment, creating confidence among local stakeholders and combating regional stigmas. A market-based approach requires an organization to be savvy about real estate development and finance, and realistic about the investment options that can be sustained by the district's primary market segments.

At this stage of the district lifecycle, it is unlikely that private sector stakeholders can be motivated to invest in a collaborative approach to move the district forward. Public and non-profit organizational structures are most effective for generating the visible results that can in turn inspire private property and business owners. Organizational options that can be effective in stagnant districts include:

**Appointed Commission:** If revitalization is a top priority of the community, a city council or mayor-appointed commission can help mobilize energy and bring focus to the business district. Appointees include community leaders and business district stakeholders that are charged with creating and/or implementing a revitalization plan. The commission must be backed with local government resources, including staff, services and project funding.

**Community Development Corporation:** Underutilized in downtowns and business districts, community development corporations (CDC) are non-profit grassroots organizations focused on revitalization. As non-profit organizations, they can obtain charitable and government funding. With community-based boards of directors, CDCs can help to secure land use entitlements, build neighborhood support and bring specialized real estate expertise to a tough market, envisioning and developing innovative housing, commercial real estate and small business concepts.

**Redevelopment Agency:** Redevelopment agencies are quasi-public organizations that are able to use tax increment financing to jump start development in a stagnant business district. Tax increment financing is a common redevelopment tool whereby a project area is identified and the existing property and sales tax collected is designated as a "base" for government collection. A portion of future increases in property and sales tax collections (i.e. tax increment) is then captured within the area to support the costs associated with development. In addition to tax increment financing, the redevelopment agency brings an institutional presence that is committed to a long-term effort to improve the business district.

**Main Street Program:** In rural areas, the Main Street Program sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation can provide a useful framework for improving a stagnant business district. Main Street's "Four Point Approach," which includes organization, promotions, economic restructuring and design, offers a structure for guiding local civic leaders through the basic foundations of revitalization.

### Accelerating the Development of Growing Districts

In a growing district, the need for collective action shifts from development to marketing. District stakeholders seek to capitalize on the sense of momentum that is present by accelerating new investment and promoting district offerings to a broader consumer market.

## A Management Framework, continued

Program priorities for a growing district may include attracting and growing businesses, marketing the district to consumers, beautifying and improving the public realm, providing meaningful participation for new owners and businesses, and conveying a positive image as an emerging destination.

Stakeholders in a growing district tend to be more receptive to public/private approaches to improve the area. Led by a core group of property and business owner champions, a variety of options are available for the private sector to financially contribute to improvements and leverage public sector resources.

**Membership Organization:** Most established downtown and business district management organizations started as a dues-based membership group. The membership organization remains useful to broaden participation among district constituents and mobilize marketing efforts and as a platform for advocacy. As the business district grows, representation on policies, issues and regulations affecting the district becomes more valued by property and business owners. Membership organizations can be difficult to sustain over time due to the voluntary nature of the dues base and the uneven distribution of benefits – stakeholders that do not pay dues become “free riders” benefiting from, but not paying for, district improvement efforts.

**Business Improvement Districts:** Business improvement districts (BIDs) are ideal for helping to advance growing and mature districts. Through a BID, stakeholders assess themselves via a petition and/or legislative action creating reliable and sustainable resources to improve and market the district. BIDs are self-governed, usually by boards of directors consisting of affected property owners and businesses. BID assessments are also mandatory and enforceable through property tax collections, eliminating the free rider problem found in membership organizations.

**Downtown Development Authorities:** Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) differ from state to state, but generally a DDA combines the benefits of tax increment financing found in a redevelopment agency with an operating assessment found in a BID. Most DDAs require affirmative action by stakeholders and local legislation to form them. They are recommended for growing and mature districts with the expectation that these areas are better organized, and similar to BIDs, have a group of private sector champions to lead the DDA formation effort.

**Foundation Subsidiary:** A 501(c)3 foundation subsidiary can be a valuable addition to a growing business district. The 501(c)3 status expands opportunities for government grants, charitable giving and sponsorships from corporations. Common uses for a foundation subsidiary include raising funds for a public art program, a special event with broad community benefit or studies to chart the future of the business district.

### Managing the Success of Mature Districts

In successful mature business districts, complacency can become a primary challenge and the role of the management organization becomes more proactive. A premium is placed on research, education and communications to anticipate change, guide adjustments to the land use mix and update the overall experience to keep the district competitive. The management organization becomes the business district’s reliable leader – the place that new investors, businesses, local government agencies and elected officials seek direction for the district’s current market dynamics and future vision.

## A Management Framework, continued

Program priorities for a mature business district may include retaining and growing existing businesses, strategically guiding new investment, marketing the area to consumers, managing the parking supply, keeping the organization fresh to keep stakeholders engaged and strengthening the overall image of the district.

In addition to many of the preceding organizational options, management organizations in mature districts are often found with additional tools:

**Parking Districts:** A variety of parking management tools is available to growing and mature business districts. The most common is a designated parking district that utilizes revenue from paid parking to reinvest in expanding and managing the parking system. Resources for a parking district can include revenues from parking meters, lots and structures, and/or special assessments on properties. Some business districts also pursue private sector management of public parking, whereby a local government contracts for management and marketing of parking with a BID or other business district organization. The guiding philosophy is to view parking as supporting the overall economic development of the district, as opposed to simply infrastructure or a lucrative source of revenue for the community's general fund.

**Transportation Management Organization:** Common in urban areas with traffic congestion, transportation management organizations (TMOs) offer education, marketing and incentive programs to promote transit and reduce vehicular traffic. In a mature business district, a TMO can be helpful to reduce parking demand and advance transit alternatives, including streetcars and light rail.

**Events Production Company:** In many mature business districts, major special events, such as arts festivals, holiday promotions and music and food celebrations, can develop their own identity and financial sustainability. As a subsidiary to a business district management organization, a formal events production company can elevate professionalism and provide focus on the event business, plus maximize accountability for sponsors.

**Entrepreneurial Holding Company:** Many of the preceding organizational options for all types of districts can be connected and unified in a holding company structure. An example of a typical business district holding company may include a BID, membership organization and parking management company all connected as subsidiaries to one "umbrella" organization. The umbrella organization is the home for all program staff and administration, provides the organization's primary identity to the outside world, plus can be led by an executive committee consisting of officers from the subsidiaries offering leadership and vision.

While the preceding framework offers guidelines for matching public/private partnership tools to each stage of a business district's lifecycle, there are no absolutes. Every business district is different, and each will require its own tailored approach. By evaluating the business district's market conditions and the capacity of its private sector champions, and identifying its priorities for improvements, a reasoned organization and financing approach can emerge.

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## Current Events

For more info go to [www.apacolorado.org](http://www.apacolorado.org)

# SAVE THE DATE!!!!

## WESTERN PLANNER/FOUR CORNERS CONFERENCE 2011

Santa Fe, New Mexico

September 11th-14th, 2011

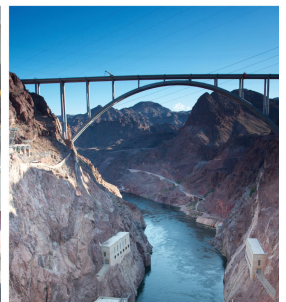
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## THE NEXT WEST: 20TH ANNIVERSARY LAND USE CONFERENCE



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**RMLUI**  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
LAND USE INSTITUTE

# APA Colorado Board

Please contact anyone on the Board with ideas, suggestions, comments or complaints.  
Or contact them to see how you can get involved!

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