

# MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

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American Planning Association  
**Massachusetts Chapter**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

**Summer 2020**



## **Impacts of COVID-19 on the Hotel Industry** *page 3*

*COVID-19 Alters City Planning ..... 5*

*It's Time for Digital Procurement!.... 10*

*Case Studies in New Ruralism ..... 12*





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On the cover: Picnic tables tented in plastic at the Natick, MA I-90 Turnpike rest area during the pandemic closure. Photo: Strmsrg (wikimedia.org)

## From the President



Hello, APA-MA members. This year sure did take an interesting turn. We have seen our communities shut down physically, with many of us quarantined weeks on end in our homes. The senseless killing of George Floyd, which underscores the years of maltreatment to the black community and our nation because of racism. But the planner's spirit is restorative and regenerative. As APA's Executive Director, Joel Albizo said during the opening session of APA@Home: "Planners aren't just a resiliency profession, we are a *resilient profession*." I am in constant awe over the stories on MassPlanners of how you adapted to a virtual reality, ensuring that everyone in our communities has a voice in planning decisions. The quick turnaround of webinars on virtual meeting tools, reclaiming our streets and public spaces to re-open our economy, and the ever-growing focus on creating equitable communities despite years of harm caused to communities of color. And the patience and compassion you all have shown for each other as we wade through these

**The patience and compassion you all have shown for each other as we wade through these changes is remarkable. I have had some trying moments myself over the past several months, but my planning friends supported me and lifted me up.**

changes is remarkable. I have had some trying moments myself over the past several months, but my planning friends supported me and lifted me up. And I will continue to pay that forward. Please know that I am here for you during these uncertain times, and so is the APA-MA Chapter. Reach out any time to tell us what you need. We want to remain responsive and adapt to the changing needs of our members. Please email me any time at [president@apa-ma.org](mailto:president@apa-ma.org).

Behind the scenes, the Board is busy shifting gears to a more virtual reality! Please visit our [website](http://www.apa-ma.org) ([www.apa-ma.org](http://www.apa-ma.org)), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/28602923/admin/) ([www.linkedin.com/company/28602923/admin/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/28602923/admin/)) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/apa_mass) ([httwitter.com/apa\\_mass](https://twitter.com/apa_mass)) for regular updates on Chapter activities, including Virtual Planner's Therapy and the progress organizing a virtual SNEAPA Conference in September. In the meantime, I hope you have a safe summer and take time to feel the sunshine on your face.

Please take care and keep smiling,

*Angie*

Angela Cleveland, AICP  
[aclevelandaicp@gmail.com](mailto:aclevelandaicp@gmail.com)

# Impacts of COVID-19 on the Boston and Cambridge Hotel Industry

by RKG Associates and Pinnacle Advisory Group

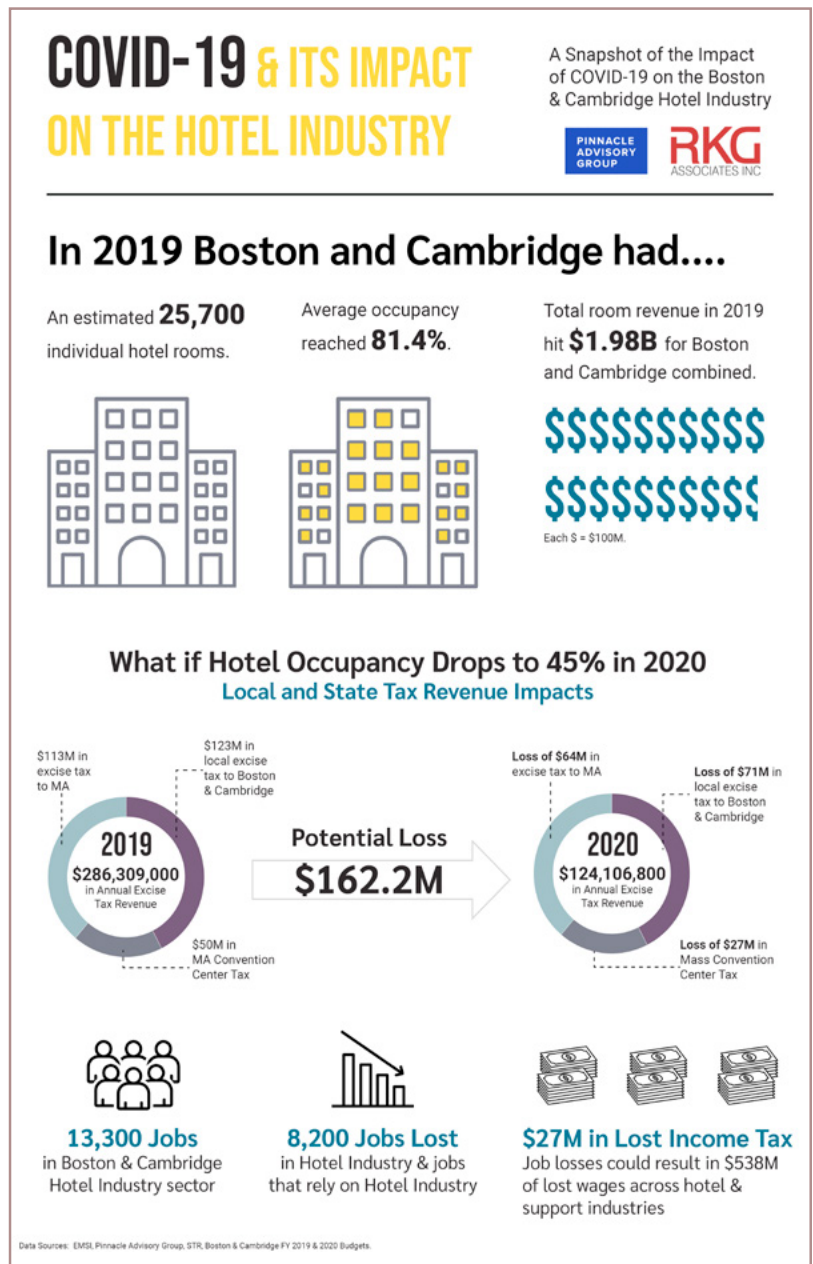
For 2019, Pinnacle Advisory Group estimated that Boston and Cambridge hotels generated nearly \$2 billion in rooms revenue, based on a total supply of nearly 25,700 rooms, an average occupancy of 81.4 percent and an average daily rate (ADR) of \$259. Over 13,300 people are employed in the hotel industry sector in Boston and Cambridge. Due to the pandemic and the stay-at-home requirements starting in March of this year, demand for hotel rooms has dropped precipitously, with many hotels closing completely and others only renting rooms to essential workers, often at discounted rates.

According to the Pinnacle Perspective, Revenue Per Available Room (RevPar) declined 66% for March 2020 as compared to the prior year. Hotel occupancy for March 2020 dropped to 30%, and when compared to March 2019 is a decrease of over 50%. Hotels in the Back Bay recorded the lowest average occupancy in the Boston/Cambridge market at 24% for March 2020. We anticipate further declines in occupancy and RevPar in April and May while business and leisure travelers stay at home and most hotel remain closed.

To estimate the economic impacts, Pinnacle and RKG Associates assumed a worst-case scenario where the annual occupancy rate for 2020 drops to 45 percent and the average daily rate to \$200. This assumes that the economy begins to recover this summer and fall but does not regain its former strength, including a severe cutback in tourism, conventions, and international visitation—a mainstay of the city's hotel industry. These impacts were analyzed using EMSI, a leading econometric modeling tool, to determine the direct, indirect, and induced impacts on the two cities and the region's economy.

Under this scenario, hotel revenues decline by over \$1.1 billion and 6,000 hotel jobs would be lost. Additionally, we estimate another 2,200 jobs in industries that support the hotel sector would also be impacted, resulting in a total of \$538 million in lost wages. This in turn would result in a loss of over \$27 million in state income taxes. Massachusetts room excise taxes would decline by \$64 million, while Boston and Cambridge would lose nearly \$71 million in local option rooms tax. The rooms tax comprises 2.8% of Boston's annual budget and 2.3% of Cambridge, a shortfall that will need to be made up somewhere else. The Convention Center tax, which at 2.75 percent of room sales goes to support the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, would lose \$27 million.

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Municipal Excise Tax Revenues	2019	2020 (Projected Scenario)	Change in Revenues
Total Room Revenues	\$1,977,861,857	\$844,264,080	(\$1,133,597,777)
<b>Excise Taxes</b>			
Boston-Cambridge Room Excise Tax	\$123,616,366	\$52,766,505	(\$70,849,861)
Convention Center Excise Tax	\$49,954,576	\$23,217,262	(\$26,737,314)
Massachusetts Room Excise Tax	\$112,738,126	\$48,123,053	(\$64,615,073)
<b>Total Excise Taxes</b>	<b>\$286,309,068</b>	<b>\$124,106,820</b>	<b>(\$162,202,248)</b>

2020 Projected Employment Impacts	2020 Change in Jobs	Loss of Earnings	Loss of Income Taxes
Hotel Jobs	(6,015)	(\$346,588,052)	(\$17,329,403)
Hotel Support Jobs	(2,228)	(\$191,410,156)	(\$9,570,508)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(8,243)</b>	<b>(\$537,998,209)</b>	<b>(\$26,899,910)</b>

### Impacts of COVID-19 on the Hotel Industry *cont'd*

While a 45 percent drop in occupancy levels over last year may seem extreme, it is not out of the question, given the length of time it is taking to get the economy back on track, and the longer term impacts the pandemic will have on business and tourism.

Working closely with Pinnacle Advisory Group LLC, a leading hospitality industry consulting firm, RKG Associates analyzed the potential impacts of the current pandemic on the hotel industry in Boston and Cambridge.

— *Craig Seymour and Eric Halvorsen, AICP are Principals with RKG Associates ([www.rkgassociates.com](http://www.rkgassociates.com)), an economic, planning, and real estate consultancy with offices in Washington, DC, Boston, Atlanta, Dallas, and Durham, NH specializing in economic analyses, market studies, financial forecasting, strategic planning, feasibility analyses, real property valuations, and housing strategies. Rachel Roginsky, ISHC, is the Owner and Principal of Pinnacle Advisory Group ([www.pinnacle-advisory.com](http://www.pinnacle-advisory.com)), providing advice and analysis on the full spectrum of hospitality properties throughout the U.S and Caribbean, including hotels, resorts, conference centers, mixed use projects, convention centers, and exhibition centers.*

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# Planner Spotlight: Graham Holmes

## COVID-19 Alters City Planning

by Allan Hodges, FAICP

We didn't plan for this. So say planners who have altered planning priorities because of COVID-19. But this virus is not a "one off." We have experienced several viruses before in the U.S. in recent years but none as contagious as COVID-19. This contagion led our political leaders to shut down cities and states and required us to quarantine at home, keep "socially" distant when we went out, wear masks and wash our hands. These mitigation measure helped flatten the curve of virus cases, hospitalizations and deaths. However, these positive public health results also came at a huge economic cost to many previously employed workers and successful businesses.

But what we didn't anticipate because of the three-month-long shut down in early 2020 were the innovations and retreads of the past that will change city planning for the future, both short-range and post-COVID. Consider the following:

- Using public transit now is viewed by some as a health hazard, especially during a contagious virus because of the close contact and crowded conditions on buses and railcars. This fact flies in the face of a long-standing major planning policy that has aggressively promoted public transit as an alternative to commuting by automobile. Public transit ridership has plummeted during the pandemic; it may take years for riders to return. But many essential workers have no other choice but to use public transit to get to work. How to make it virus-safe and restore confidence?
- Drive-throughs to pick up prescriptions, food and liquor have become essential to avoid contact with other people. Carry-out windows, curbside pick up at formerly inside sit-down restaurants and outside dining as the economy opens up have changed our habits. In Boston's North End, for example, on-street parking lanes on restaurant-loaded Hanover Street have been replaced by protected space for outside dining. Restaurant food, alcohol and grocery deliveries to our homes are likely to continue to be commonplace in the near future. How do these practices change city planning policies affecting economic development that until three months ago promoted brick-and-mortar retail and restaurants to enliven business districts?
- There is a sudden renewed push for wider sidewalks to give pedestrians more space, more bike lanes to encourage use, and fewer travel lanes for cars and trucks in our dense cities. Already these moves are visible, many on a temporary basis. In downtown Boston, Washington

Street has been repainted to permit a bike lane, a bus lane and one general travel lane intended to speed up the Silver Line Bus Rapid Transit vehicles through this congested district.

- Going out to the movies, the theatre and sporting events with crowds of people may be an activity of the past in the near-term. What happens to these facilities in the near future? Will they return as major venues for urban entertainment? Or will they permanently be repurposed for other uses?

- Going remote due to technological changes in communication, such as the Zoom phenom, has now become common for meetings for public and private organizations, working at home and socializing with friends. While this may be a short-term adjustment, it may also be with us for a long time as people are actually enjoying not commuting to work or sitting for a long time in public meetings. For example, the Beacon Hill Village, a virtual retirement community in central Boston, has tripled its member participation in exercise classes, lectures, teas, travel presentations and business meetings using Zoom. But how will remote meetings affect municipalities post COVID?

We asked Massachusetts planners to describe more specifically how COVID-19 has affected planning procedures with a series of questions. Here is one very comprehensive response from across "the pond." Graham Holmes recently participated in a Massachusetts Chapter Planners Therapy session (yes, Via Zoom) and answered my call for responses to these questions. Graham is a senior planner in the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, Cambridge, England. He has a Masters Degree in Planning from the University of Manchester and is a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Many of his answers are relevant to similar issues we face in Massachusetts.

**Will your Town or City continue to have public committee and commission meetings using Zoom, Google Meet or other technologies to replace in-person meetings?**

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Graham Holmes



Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (in the UK) have continued to host meetings using Zoom. Staff members have their own “Think Pad” laptops, which have Microsoft Teams installed, so they have been able to continue with their work.

**How did your community respond to the COVID-19 Crisis? Did you create a Task Force, develop a grant program or hire a specialist? Were there any best practices that you could share with other communities?**

A national volunteer group was created in the UK with members of the staff able to volunteer to help those vulnerable and elderly who are at greater risk of the Coronavirus. Over 500,000 people volunteered for these groups. These were then coordinated by Local Authorities; during the lockdown these members of staff helped deliver essential supplies to those in need of it most.

**How has your community started planning differently in light of the State’s Phase 1 Reopening Plans? For example, have you had to relax certain regulations? What are you doing to help your restaurants get up and running? How has this crisis affected your work as a planner?**

From a planning policy perspective in the UK, there has not been much of a change in regulations in the short-

term. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan had its first round of public consultation in early 2020 so we were able to complete this before the lockdown took effect. It is more the medium- and long-term impacts that are of concern for a planner.

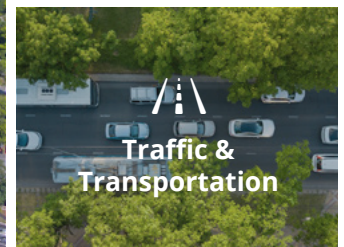
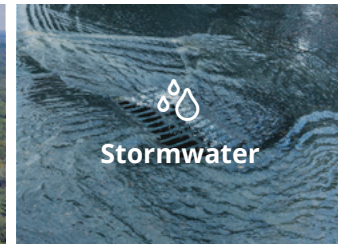
Local Plans have to go through a “public examination” (public review) before they can be adopted. These plans cannot go ahead in the current pandemic, which causes delays. It is also difficult for authorities to undertake consultation on their Local Plans, as there is a requirement for documents to be placed in Libraries for access as well as at Council Offices. Because these are both closed at present, consultations on Local Plans cannot take place.

Councils also need to demonstrate that they are meeting their housing targets. For example, an authority may need to demonstrate that they are building 600 homes a year in order to meet its overall housing target. If this target is not met for three consecutive years, authorities are generally required to undertake an early review of their Local Plan. Given that the majority of house building ceased in March and has only recently begun, this is going to have a dramatic effect on overall housing completions.

Finally, there is the issue of five-year housing land supply. If an authority has a target of building 600 homes a year, it will need to demonstrate that it has a supply of 3,000 homes through Local Plan allocations or through planning permissions. If Local Authorities cannot demon-

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strate a five-year housing land supply, any planning applications is likely to be given planning permission as long as it is considered “sustainable development.” Given that Local Plan preparation in some cases is being delayed and the number of applications registered has declined due to COVID-19, it maybe come increasingly difficult for authorities to demonstrate they have a five-year housing land supply.

### **Will open space and recreation planning become more urgent as a way to reduce density of development and the potential consequent effects of future contagious viruses?**

Open Space is already an important aspect of UK Planning, where Open Space and Recreation Supplementary Planning Documents identify what the future needs are for open space and recreation space based on future population growth, the quality of existing open spaces and how accessible these spaces are. In new developments on Greenfield sites, it is likely that post-Covid there will be increased impetus to provide more open space as part of these new developments.

For City Centre sites, where it is more difficult to reduce densities, it is likely there will be an increased focus on making these open spaces more accessible through increased pedestrian footways. E-scooters are also set to be legally allowed on UK footpaths and cycleways in the near future, which will also increase access to public spaces. We are also likely to see more focus on improving these open spaces, with these open and recreation spaces being embraced by the local community, rather than being treated simply as a requirement by developers to provide the open space and providing the bare minimum open space in order to obtain planning permission.

### **How affordable will lower density housing development be? Where will such subsidies come from to attract developers?**

In the UK, there is already a requirement for affordable housing to be provided on developments over a certain threshold (usually 15 units). Most of these schemes

above this threshold are required to provide between 30% to 40% affordable housing.

It is too early to say if any kind of “incentives” will be given to developers in order to build at a lower density, it purely depends how long the pandemic continues before considering what incentives would be offered.

### **Will the pandemic and future pandemics result in a new type of planning for small towns and rural areas?**

In the UK, there is likely to be a slowdown in the “rush to the cities” where there has been a dramatic increase in city centre populations, such as in cities such as London and particularly in Manchester, which has seen its population increase by 185% in the last 15 years.

Smaller towns are, however, having a “double whammy” of town centres retail decline, which has been further exacerbated by COVID-19. This has been offset somewhat with the conversion of these vacant retail units into residential units, but if there is a decline in residential conversions in Town Centres then the outlook for town centres could look bleak.

### **What impact will this pandemic (and future ones) have on future public transport planning and services. Are we headed for a resurgence of private automobile use? What implications will that have for highway planning?**

In relation to Cambridge City, we are unlikely to see a resurgence of private automobile use. The city is already very restrictive to automobile use, with many cycle and bus only lanes. The majority of people use the seven Park and Ride facilities at the edge of the city to enter Cambridge City Centre. It is however likely in the short to medium term that people will not feel comfortable going into Cambridge on public transport.

It is likely that we will see increased provision of “rent a bike” at these important public transport nodes, or alternatively we may actually see an increase in the frequency of public transport so that there are not as many people on buses and trains. There is however a question of the affordability of providing increased public transport links and what subsidies would be provided to support public transport.

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**What specific strategies did your Town or City employ during the pandemic that had or will have an impact on community planning?**

I am not aware of any specific neighbourhood planning strategies. Neighbourhood Planning has been affected by COVID-19 as meetings are held in village halls which have been closed due to the pandemic.

**The highly contagious COVID-19 virus scared many in New York City, Boston and other dense North Eastern cities to escape to their second homes in rural and or less dense areas like the Hamptons, Long Island in New York, Cape Cod in Massachusetts and Newport RI. What does this “escape” portend for dense city living in the future. Is the urban renaissance and back to the city movement dead?**

I do not believe that the city movement is dead, but more likely to be in a “coma.” The majority of those who live in City Centre locations are young and those who are least affected by COVID-19. However, this is also the age group that has been most impacted economically by COVID-19, so some will have put-off moving to city centres due to lack of financial certainty.

It is likely that brownfield sites which have been vacant for many years in city centres may also be converted to Green space, in order to improve the overall mental health of those city centre residents who do not have second homes and are unable to leave city centres during this pandemic. We are also likely to see an increase in “innovative” Green Spaces, such as “Micro Parks” that have appeared in recent years in Manhattan, as well as “Green Roofs” — both of which not only give greater access to green spaces but also help with the fight against climate change and provide a community focus for these city centres, improving community cohesion through “shared ownership” of these spaces.

**What impact does this pandemic have on health facilities planning?**

It is likely that the overall design of these health facilities will be changed, rather than the overall provision. How can hospitals and health facilities be designed to reduce the spread of the pandemic?

What there is more likely to be a change is the design of care homes. COVID-19 has particularly affected care homes with a higher proportion of deaths attributed to COVID-19 taking place there. Is this a result of bad design practices and

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## A Regional View of COVID Impacts on Planning

*by Ralph Wilmer FAICP, Technical Assistance Program Manager and Principal Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Boston*

**Will your Town or City continue to have public, committee and commission meetings using Zoom, Google Meet or other technologies to replace in-person meetings?**

Most of the 101 cities and towns in the MAPC region (serving the Boston area) have proceeded with virtual meetings, albeit somewhat delayed. MAPC is providing technical assistance to communities on strategies and techniques to make this happen. I know some municipalities have not convened virtual meetings which can be a mix of reluctance to do that for fear of hindering participation or lack of the technical know how to make it happen. We have run some very successful virtual public meetings with open houses/surveys that run on the Internet for a month afterwards. We get more people participating than at a one-night in-person meeting, but you don't get the benefit of one-on-one interactions that you do in public meetings. I have seen that some towns, including Arlington where I live, is convening Town Meeting outdoors (with rain dates), but very limited, if any, seating for the public.



**Will open space and recreation planning become more urgent as a way to reduce density of development and the potential consequent effects of future contagious viruses?**

I think open space and recreation will be very important moving forward, especially if gyms remain closed or limited and if other cultural options are limited. Plus the benefits of physical activity should be encouraged to help keep people healthy. So planning for these opportunities becomes important to make sure there are resources available for people of all ages and abilities.

**Will the pandemic and future pandemics result in a new type of planning for small towns and rural areas?**

One change I see, which is not limited to only small and rural towns, is in hazard mitigation planning that has typically focused on things like storm events. The State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness planning program looks at the environment, infrastructure and societal issues in preparing for climate change. But we have not looked at things like a pandemic and I think that this will be a future consideration as municipalities continue to plan and implement this program.



## In Memoriam: Tim Brennan

Earlier this year, Western Massachusetts lost an important ally. Former long-time Executive Director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), Timothy Brennan, passed away peacefully surrounded by loved ones on March 12, 2020, at home after a brief illness. Tim served the Commission for nearly 50 years, with forty at the helm of PVPC as its Executive Director, only recently retiring in September 2019. Among his many professional accomplishments, he will be remembered for fighting tirelessly for the cleanup of the Connecticut River and its tributaries, establishing the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and Valley Flyer passenger rail service, helping launch Valley Bike Share, as well as championing East-West passenger rail service, pursuing policies and programs that improved Valley residents' quality of life.



"Tim Brennan was a consummate gentleman and public servant to his core who will be sorely missed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission family and the Valley at large, after giving quite literally his entire adult life to the betterment of our region's 43 cities and towns," said PVPC Chairman Walter Gunn.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Tim Brennan Leadership Fund with Leadership Pioneer Valley, 1 Federal Street, Building 101, Springfield, MA 01105.

Tim was a valued contributor to our community and the planning profession here in Massachusetts. He will be greatly missed.

**Has COVID changed planning and zoning for high and moderate density housing developments in cities? Will there be changes in the design and site planning to create less dense living?**

There will be no overall reduction in densities in UK cities due to high land values. We will see changes in design, however, and there are likely going to be increased emphasis on design in planning in the next few months and years to prevent the high transmission we have seen in higher density areas.

For example, we may see taller buildings being proposed than before, with less flats (apartments) per floor to prevent transmission. In Cambridge this could present further problems, as the increased height of these buildings would impact the protected historic skyline of Cambridge. Therefore, there is a balance between protecting heritage but also protecting people's health.

**Will single-family, detached housing be more the norm in dense cities?**

In most UK cities, there is simply not enough land available for this type of development to take place. It would also not be a financially viable for developers to build at such a low density given high land values and need to build at such a high density in order for the development to be viable.

In the UK, there has been a focus on property being of a suitable size, with most authorities adopting the government's optional "Minimum Space Standards" which ensures residents can live within suitably sized properties.

Instead, I believe going forward the focus will be on designing not only new but also existing buildings. There will be far more focus on design codes and practices as to how developers can, on the one hand, try and ensure people's health and safety, but on the other not to isolate residents and lead to more mental health problems. It is a fine balancing act.

*— Interviewer Allan Hodges retired in 2014 following a 50-year career in planning, the last 34 years of which were with Parsons Brinckerhoff (now WSP) as Director of Planning in urban planning and environmental impact analysis.*

## Planner Spotlight *cont'd*

regulation, due to the increased need for care homes due to an aging population and a need to build these homes quickly? Or, is it a result of poor working practices?

Future projections show that the aging population is only going to increase in the UK, as well as other developed nations. There are increasing calls for an inquiry to be held to identify why there have been more deaths in care homes. Undoubtedly from a planning perspective, there is going to be increased scrutiny in the design of these care homes and we are going to see how care homes should be designed. This is something that needs to be done quickly to ensure we do not have the same problems arising again.

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## NEWS FROM MACP | Consulting Planners' Perspective

### Hello, Cities & Towns: It's Time for Digital Procurement!

The Covid-19 pandemic is spotlighting the overdue need for digital responses to RFPs and RFQs. Many planning boards, city councils and select boards are now meeting digitally using different video conference platforms. The Mass Planners listserv for several years has been sharing tips for receiving plans and plan review applications online, and how best to share submissions along with staff and peer reviews digitally. Cities and towns have been submitting grant applications, like MassWorks, online for several years. So, why are municipalities still requiring paper submissions, sometimes with as many as ten to a dozen or more copies?

During this Great Pause, some cities and towns have scrambled to adapt and have accepted digital submissions. MassACP thanks you! This should become routine. Here are some reasons for and tips on digital submissions.

#### The Challenges with Paper Submissions

**Paper Submissions require a lot of unneeded touches.** Many consulting planners, large and small, send out submissions for printing. After copying, the submission still needs to be checked, signed, and packaged for submission according to the directions, and then delivered. Cities and Towns need to log it in, open, and distribute to other offices and the review committee. A digital submission can save time and could be "touch-less." It can also be done by remote workers.

**Drop-Off and Delivery to City/Town Halls when closed to the public can be confusing.** It is difficult to provide clear instructions for the delivery of paper submissions when municipal buildings are closed or partially closed to the public. FedEx, UPS, the U.S. mail, and couriers are considered part of the public, so how do they deliver? Consulting planners have

had to sometimes send proposals early to assure timely delivery, given the over-burdened delivery services and challenges accessing Town Halls. Sometimes the quick fixes, such as leaving a box at the door step to City Hall especially when the front door to City Hall fronts directly on the sidewalk, are unsatisfactory — providing no security or weather protection, much less a receipt of delivery.

**Cities and Towns advertise RFPs and RFQs digitally, why not receive responses digitally?** Let's take the next step in digital procurement and accept electronic submissions.

**Paper Submissions are not sustainable.** Paper submissions, quite frankly, kill a lot of trees. Let's use procurement processes that advance our values of sustainability and caring for the environment. Using paper and bindings composed of recycled materials is simply not good enough.

**Paper Submissions cost money.** Paper submissions can be expensive, depending upon the RFPs requirements, number of copies and required resumes, project sheets and work samples. A submission can easily cost a consulting firm \$500 to \$1,000+ for printing alone to respond to an RFP for a planning project. This does not even account for the staff time required for paper submissions. Let's support small businesses and eliminate this needless expense, particularly as small businesses, including planning firms, are making expenditures to respond to the pandemic, and are likely experiencing tougher economic times.

#### Digital Submission Tips

**1. Clearly Specify the Digital Submission Process.** Including an email address is often not a sufficient

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instruction. A master plan submission often requires a multi-disciplinary team and the inclusion of resumes, project sheets or work samples from several collaborating firms can easily create a file greater than 10MB. What is the largest file size your community accepts via email? Is it big enough? And does the email recipient have enough file space to accept submission from multiple proposers?

**2. Consider use of Drop Box, WeTransfer, or an FTP site.** When accepting digital submissions, consider the use of DropBox or WeTransfer. Please check to make sure that your municipalities' IT system does not block these file sharing services.

**3. Consider Proprietary Online Procurement Services.** Many cities and towns beyond Massachusetts regularly use proprietary digital procurement services, such as BidNet, Bonfire, DemandStar, Onvia, ProcureWare, to name a few. (MassACP makes no endorsements as to the various services.) Boston and CommBuys have set up their own online portals. This may help you and your procurement officer go digital.

**4. Our Municipality Requires Original Signatures.** There are several ways to address the requirement for original "wet" signatures. Once your committee has selected a finalist or short-listed firms for an interview, you could require the intended-awardee or if need be all firms you are interviewing to submit paper copies with original signatures of the required forms. Your community can also use legal counsel to draft appropriate language that the respondents submitting digitally are bound by the digital signature. Docu-Sign is another helpful tool for documents requiring legally enforceable digital signatures. Proprietary software packages also address this issue.

**5. Develop Protocols and Policies for the Safe Distribution and Use of RFP responses during the deliberation process.** Cities and Towns should adopt policies governing the sharing file submissions of proposal responses amongst staff and volunteer boards and committees.

It's time for all Massachusetts cities and towns, large and small, to digitize the procurement process, and accept electronic submission of RFP, RFQ, IFB responses and quotes. It will make all our lives easier and safer, protect the environment, and help cities and towns more nimbly procure high quality planning services at competitive costs.

— Kathleen "Kathy" McCabe, FAICP, is Principal of McCabe Enterprises and Vice-Chair, Massachusetts Association of Consulting Planners.

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# Case Studies in New Ruralism — Sharing Lessons for Success in Rural Communities Nationwide

by Jennifer Whittaker

The [New Ruralism Project](#), an initiative of [APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division \(STaR\)](#), [APA Northern New England Chapter](#), and the [APA Divisions Council](#), has been busy teaming up with communities nationwide to develop an online collection of case studies in New Ruralism. The project, which started by featuring efforts in Northern New England, has now expanded to feature grassroots initiatives to strengthen rural communities from Alaska to New York to Alabama.

We are excited to announce five new case studies featuring communities from across the United States who are reinventing local markets and developing grassroots driven programs to meet the needs of their rural residents. Two of our feature communities, Kodiak, Alaska and Port Townsend, Washington are embracing cooperative models of providing food and housing. [Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op](#), located on Kodiak Island, is skipping the high shipping costs of bringing groceries to the island by providing a market for produce and seafood grown and caught locally. Senior residents of Port Townsend, in the Puget Sound, are passing up oversized maintenance-heavy old homes in favor of the self-governing and personally designed cooperative housing community, [Quimper Village](#). Two more communities are demonstrating how meeting a specific local need can blossom into broader community revitalization. Parents in Frewsburg, New York wanted more affordable local activities for their children, so they transformed a downtown empty church into the [Relief Zone Community Youth Center](#), now a thriving anchor for community activities for families. Residents of Camden, Alabama also revamped a downtown vacant building, turning an old car dealer-



*Featured communities from the New Ruralism Initiative, from the Black Belt to the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Alaska, are demonstrating that investing in the arts, childcare, local foods, cooperative housing, and unified planning has a positive impact for rural communities.*



*The Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center in Camden, AL is enhancing the regional economy through arts-related jobs and tourism while also preserving, reviving, and sharing the arts and craft movements, like basket weaving, of the region.*

ship into [Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center](#), now a flourishing regional center for the arts and crafts sales, cultural preservation, and arts education. Meanwhile, residents of Allen County, Indiana are planning to be a vital part of regional economic growth. The NewAllen Alliance is bringing together residents and officials from seven rural communities to create a unified voice for small towns in larger economic development planning in the nearby city of Fort Wayne.

Leaders in all five of these projects offer up lessons for success to share with other rural communities interested in developing grassroots-driven solutions to local challenges. New Ruralism communities note that they have found success by emphasizing collaboration over competition to build cross-sector support for projects. They credit the power of listening to and sharing with the community, observing that projects are most successful when they listen and adapt to the needs of residents while communicating well and often about progress. All five of the communities convey the importance of celebrating successes early, often, and publicly, noting that recognizing incremental movement keeps projects focused and moving forward. We hope lessons from these

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## Case Studies in New Ruralism *cont'd*

case studies serve as a resource for communities who may be interested in replicating similar projects without reinventing the wheel.

For more lessons for success, stay tuned to APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division's [social media feeds](#) in April. Each week, we will be featuring one of these innovative rural communities and sharing more details about what makes their projects exemplars of innovation. Not on social media? Check out each of these in-depth case studies on the New Ruralism [website](#).

Most importantly, *tell us* if you think your community should be included as a case study in New Ruralism. Is your community tackling environmental, social, or economic challenges in a unique way? Nominate your people and projects by clicking [here](#) and telling us a few details about the efforts happening in your community. We want to hear your stories!

We are excited about the future of small towns and rural communities across America, and our excitement is rooted in the belief that people are our best assets. Each of these case studies emphasizes residents uniting to invest in their place and drive change. Help us cross-pollinate the ingredients of successful rural innovation across diverse rural communities by sharing the power of your rural story.



—Jennifer Whittaker can be reached at [whjenn@upenn.edu](mailto:whjenn@upenn.edu).





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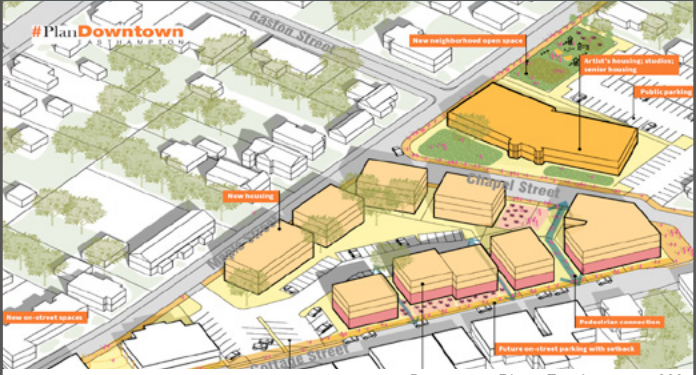


  
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Downtown Plan, Easthampton, MA

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## The PDO Corner

by Amanda Chisholm, APA-MA Professional Development Officer

Hope that everyone has been staying safe and well during these past few months. I know it has been a difficult time for so many and wanted to keep everyone in the loop on recent updates that may impact your

individual professional development plans and hopefully offer some flexibility as well.

APA is now offering the COVID-19 Extreme Hardship CM exemption which is available to members in the 2018-19 grace period who were not able to obtain all of the required CM credits to maintain their certification. Members who qualify will receive a 4 credit reduction of their general credits (1.5 law and 1.5 ethics are still required). Members can apply [here](#).

If you are considering taking the November AICP exam, reduced fee scholarships are available. These scholarships reduce the exam fee from \$425 to \$75. All applicants still have to pay the \$85 application fee. Final registration for the November exam is by June

26th and the exam window will be November 9th through the 23rd. Email me at [pdo@apa-ma.org](mailto:pdo@apa-ma.org) if you are interested in learning more.

The APA-MA Chapter is participating in the APA Region 1 Chapter Webcast Series. Make sure to check out the June 30th webinar, [COVID 19 Effects on Real Estate Demand](#), presented by the APA-NJ chapter. You can find many other upcoming virtual opportunities to earn CM credits at the APA National Calendar of Approved events [here](#). And, as always, please reach out with any professional development questions.

— Amanda Chisholm can be reached at [amanda.chisholm.nd@gmail.com](mailto:amanda.chisholm.nd@gmail.com)



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