

MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

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American Planning Association
Massachusetts Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Fall 2022

*Art on the Marquee,
Boston Cyberarts*

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On the cover: Developed by Boston Cyberarts and the MCCA, Art on the Marquee is an ongoing project to commission public media art for display on the 80-foot-tall multi-screen LED marquee (the largest urban screen in New England) outside the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center in South Boston.

From the President

Happy Fall!

I don't know about you, but I feel like this summer flew by in a blink and I can't believe it's time for us to send you the fall edition of *Massachusetts Planning* magazine. The BIG THING for our fall season is that we're thrilled to be back in person at SNEAPA this fall in Providence October 6-7. If you haven't already, please register at www.sneapa.org. We're so excited to see our friends from Connecticut and Rhode Island and offer two days' worth of CM credits. During SNEAPA, please stop by and visit us at the APA-MA table in the Exhibitor's area and join us at our Annual Business Meeting on Friday at 9 a.m.

Our committees continue to offer exciting programming! Visit our website to view recordings of some of our past talks and to view a list of upcoming events. As always, please contact us with your ideas and suggestions or to volunteer for a committee. You can reach me directly at president@apa-ma.org or email Brian Currie, Chapter Manager, at communications@apa-ma.org.

Please enjoy this edition of *Massachusetts Planning*—read on to learn how communities are implementing the new MBTA zoning, arts and culture planning, solving for feasibility, and more. If you'd like to write for the magazine, reach out to Peter Lowitt, Newsletter Editor, at peterlowitt@devensec.com.

We do still have vacant board positions. If you're interested in volunteering or simply want to learn more, email us at communications@apa-ma.org.

Alison

Alison LeFlore, AICP
president@apa-ma.org



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Five Lessons Learned Drafting an MBTA Communities Overlay for Lowell

by Nels Nelson and Sarabrent McCoy, Stantec Urban Places

MBTAs Communities (also known as Section 3A) is an exciting and bold program that affordable housing proponents and lawmakers from across the country are closely watching to see what kind of impact can be made in Massachusetts. With the release of the final DHCD Guidelines on August 9th, we can share our early experience drafting a compliant zoning overlay (see this [City Council agenda, page 77](#) for the draft language) around Lowell's commuter rail station. One caveat is that we're still waiting for DHCD to release the Compliance Model in the Guidelines appendix which may contain further guidance. Here are some lessons learned from applying the legislation and guidelines.

1. The final Guidelines boil down the requirements

The headline requirements of Section 3A, the criteria for compliance as laid out in the statute, appears fairly straightforward: zone for a certain number of multi-family housing units by right, within a half-mile of an MBTA station, for a total zoned multi-family density of 15 units/acre. But knowing those criteria alone, municipalities, familiar with the realities of the location and context of their MBTA stations, might wonder if their community's compliance is possible or



Nels Nelson



Sarabrent McCoy

worth it. What if preserved open space surrounds the station? What if the station is near the town boundary and only so much of that half-mile radius is theirs to zone?

The final Guidelines give community-by-community texture to the headline requirements and are clear about exceptions to each rule. For some of the headline requirements, it seems, exceptions are the rule: The Guidelines provide a database of, among other individual requirements, the minimum share of each community's district to be located within a half-mile of an MBTA station; per the database, only 39 (of 175 total) implicated communities must locate a majority of their multi-family district within a half-mile of an MBTA station.

That said, DHCD is yet to publish one important part of the final Guidelines: Appendix 2, the communities' means of calculating their zoned

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Zoning is just part of it – station access needs to be improved to connect residents to transit. These station area improvements within the draft zoning overlay boundary are intended to expand the 5- and 10-minute walksheds with more direct and comfortable connections.

unit capacity and density. Appendix 2 may help answer a big question we had in Lowell: how are communities reasonably expected to consistently account for various dimensional and parking requirements, or define a threshold for excluding too-narrow or too-shallow or strangely shaped parcels when estimating the total capacity/density of potentially thousands of development sites? In the absence of the calculator, we landed on a ballpark estimate for capacity and density based on a combination of extrapolated test fits and GIS analysis. Our confidence in this approach is benefited by the fact that the draft zoning far exceeds the required capacity, for reasons made clear in lesson #5 below.

2. There is a lot of flexibility in how the requirements can fit within a community

The degree of flexibility was an unexpected feature of the draft Guidelines, and the flexibility has only been expanded in the final Guidelines. While the minimum density and capacity thresholds are predetermined, communities have multiple levers to pull and adjust to reach (or exceed) those thresholds.

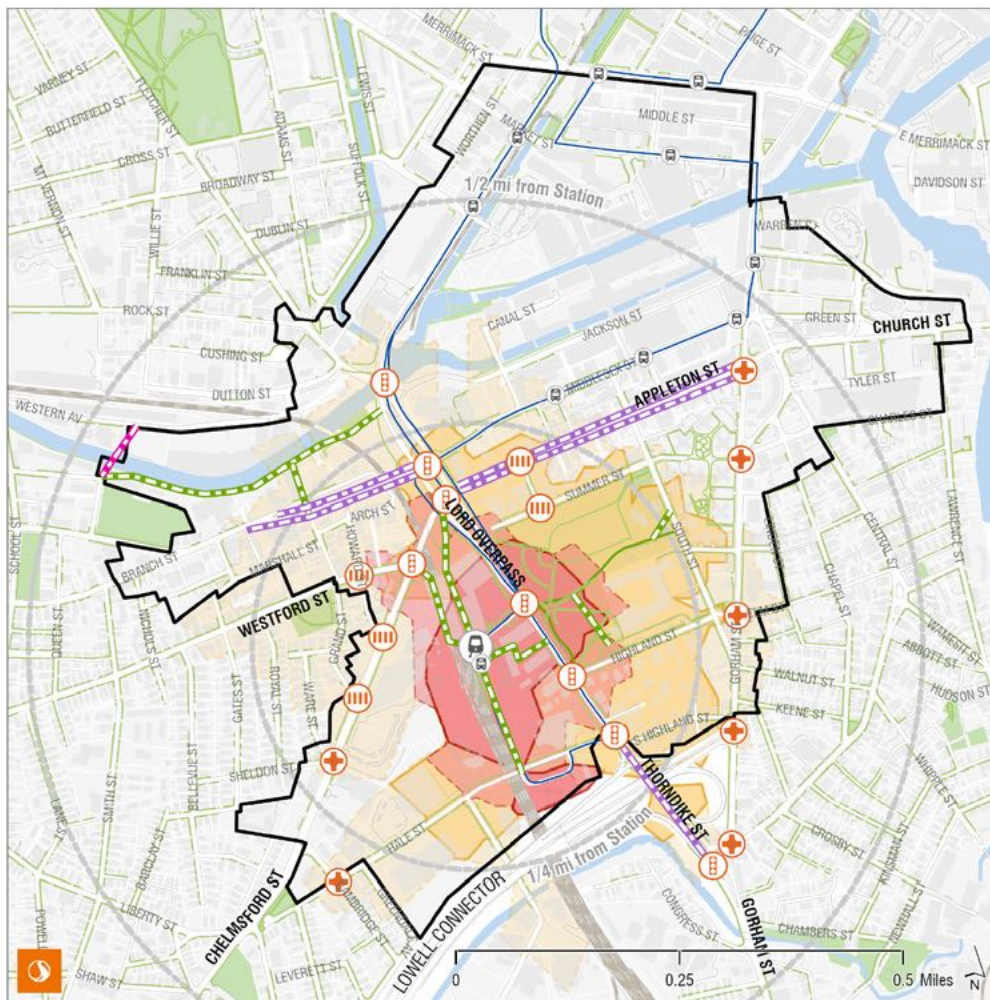
This wide latitude of flexibility will certainly make communities think twice before defaulting to non-compliance, and it is clear that DHCD wants municipalities to have plentiful reasonable options for meeting the requirements. However, with all this flexibility in siting the zones, choosing between multiple scenarios could become contentious due to perceived economic benefits or negative externalities being distributed unequally.

3. You can get the job done with an overlay

The benefit of using an overlay is that it does not disturb the status quo while also delivering exactly what is required in Section 3A. The overlay we drafted in Lowell allows multifamily as of right in addition to allowing the underlying zones' uses. To enable mixed-use development but avoid having the more permissive dimensional standards abused by primarily non-residential projects, we indicated that the overlay is only applicable for projects where a majority of the project's square footage is dedicated to residential uses.

4. Together, multiple character zones can meet the requirements

We decided to use three complementary overlay zones in Lowell that are each compatible with the MBTA Communities act and together meet (and exceed) the overall requirements. This approach is supported in the final Guidelines. The three zones intend to step down from high-density high-rise construction at the MBTA station to mid-rise on the primary corridors approaching the station, and finally to neighborhood infill



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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalk Shared Use Path LRTA Downtown Circulator (Rt 18) Stops LRTA Downtown Circulator (Rt 18) Route Draft Overlay Boundary | Spot Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian-Oriented Signal Timing Changes New Crosswalk Intersection Upgrade and New Pedestrian Crossings | Corridor Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalk Reconstruction and Improvement Shared Use Path Walking & Biking Bridge | Existing Walkshed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 min or less 5-10 min Future Walkshed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 min or less 5-10 min |
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The Gallagher Transportation Terminal is the end of the MBTA Commuter Rail Lowell Line and provides connecting bus service. The team has found multiple opportunities for multifamily redevelopment within a half mile of the station during the MBTA Communities rezoning process.

continued next page

around the station at historically-appropriate scale and density.

On top of the additional use standards (allowing multifamily, of course) and dimensional standards, we drafted variations of parking requirements and development standards that would apply to projects that seek to use one of the overlay districts.

5. Multifamily capacity does not always equate to redevelopment potential

Redevelopment at a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre can be as of right but unlikely to pencil out in already highly developed station areas, like existing even higher density multifamily and office parks. The final Guidelines choose to (probably smartly) avoid the issue of pre-existing private improvements when it comes to rezoning for multifamily (see section 5(c), bottom of page 9). But this does open the door to more decisions by the municipality in terms of opting to rezone for feasible redevelopment for housing production or simply having paper capacity that will be unlikely to be redeveloped in the next half-century. Either way, this potential de facto waiver does reward good behavior in terms of high-value investments around stations.

When drafting Lowell's Section 3A zoning, we chose to only count parcels towards meeting the capacity goal if

it seemed like there would be a reasonable chance of redevelopment in the short-term or met the other requirements for housing development (i.e. on publicly-owned land that can be redeveloped for housing). Viewed through this lens, properties with substantial pre-existing improved values were not counted towards achieving the target, and our resulting "total capacity" with those parcels included in the districts had a much higher result than strictly required by Section 3A.

Wrapping up

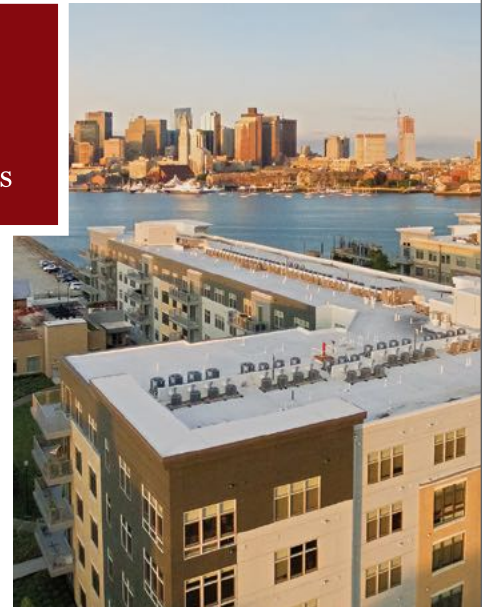
This is an exciting time for action that meets housing goals and facilitates transit-oriented development. We are interested in how different jurisdictions approach compliance with these final Guidelines and hope that these lessons learned are useful. Feel free to reach out to the authors with follow-up questions or comments. We have a lot to learn together in this process!

— **Nels Nelson** is a senior planner with Stantec Urban Places in Boston. His 12 years of experience include authoring development standards for walkable mixed-use centers and working with the 40B General Land Area Minimum assessments. He can be reached at Nels.Nelson@Stantec.com. **Sarabrent McCoy** is an urban planner with Stantec Urban Places in Boston; email her at Sarabrent.McCoy@Stantec.com.

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Growing Public and Private Roles in Arts and Culture Planning

by Claudia Zarazua and Jennifer Emiko Kaplan, AICP

Residents of Massachusetts rate arts and culture organizations as critically important, more than the national rate, and believe that these organizations are integral to building community (according to the 2021 *Culture & Community in a Time of Transformation: Focus on MA* report). This appreciation for the arts is not new but recent developments show how the public and private planning field is growing to reflect that.

The City of Cambridge is the latest municipality to create a public-sector planning position exclusively dedicated to the support of the arts and culture sector. The impetus for this position came from a 2019 community engagement effort to strategize ways to improve the status of the sector. This role ensures that the city remains a place for artists to thrive, for arts organizations and venues to contribute to the cultural vitality of Cambridge, and for residents to experience art for the sake of art.

Founded in 2011, **Isenberg Projects** is a creative consulting agency based in Boston that specializes in place-based work and community engagement. Isenberg Projects provides creative public realm advisory throughout the lifespan of a real estate project, helping to solve the complex challenges that reside at the intersection of community, business operations, and the built environment. Believing that magic happens when community members are an integral part of the changes happening around them, they work alongside clients to uncover an engagement plan that brings the most shared value — to a neighborhood, community, the city at large, and the various teams involved in building. As part of this work, the community impact team identifies opportunities on projects



The Foundry is a dynamic cultural space funded by the City of Cambridge, which also includes **Jukebox**, a digital storytelling and story-sharing public art project commissioned by Cambridge Arts. The Foundry, which is currently open but will have its opening celebration on October 8-10, addresses the problems of financial and spatial inequities affecting artists and other makers by providing access to specialized space and equipment for hands-on creation. Offering maker spaces, multi-purpose rooms, a dance studio, art studio, performance space, and demonstration kitchen, the Foundry brings STEM and the Arts under one roof for the Cambridge community with its spaces available for reservation and public programming.



where partnership with artists and cultural organizations strengthen a project's identity and connection to the surrounding community.

As former regional planners who have now found ourselves as leaders in these organizations, we have had time to reflect on the growth we have seen in this burgeoning field of arts and culture planning. With this new area of planning practice,

we ask how do we create even more positions like this?

In the public sector, planners can start by engaging with their local cultural council (LCC), a public grant funding body that reports to Mass Cultural Council. Each municipality has a locally appointed cultural council composed of volunteers representing various arts disciplines

continued next page

Arts and Culture *cont'd*

and organizations. LCCs are funded through the state agency Massachusetts Cultural Council and are often the primary source of funding for public arts and culture initiatives. However, given the voluntary nature of their appointments, they are not often up to date with the needs of the sector and don't have staffing support for larger planning initiatives that consider arts and culture critical to community life. A planner whose job responsibilities are dedicated to broadening the municipality's efforts to incorporate arts and culture into public programs should also be identifying opportunities for collaboration with the private sector who may be more actively engaged in growth and development.

In our cities and towns, development offers an interesting opportunity to bring the region's arts community to the table. This partnership can manifest in various ways. When a new development is being built, thoughtful programming



The Studio Allston Hotel is a redeveloped hotel that featured contemporary artists to embody the spirit of adventure and creativity. Artist: Jason Woodside. Photographer: Melissa Ostrow

during construction can be planned with the intention of featuring the work of local visual artists on interim walls and fences. After a project is built, there is again another moment to recognize and celebrate the identity of the project and its relationship with

the larger community by collaborating with muralists, sculptors, and performance artists whose work will strengthen that connection between new and existing.

This work starts with the setting

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Arts and Culture *cont'd*

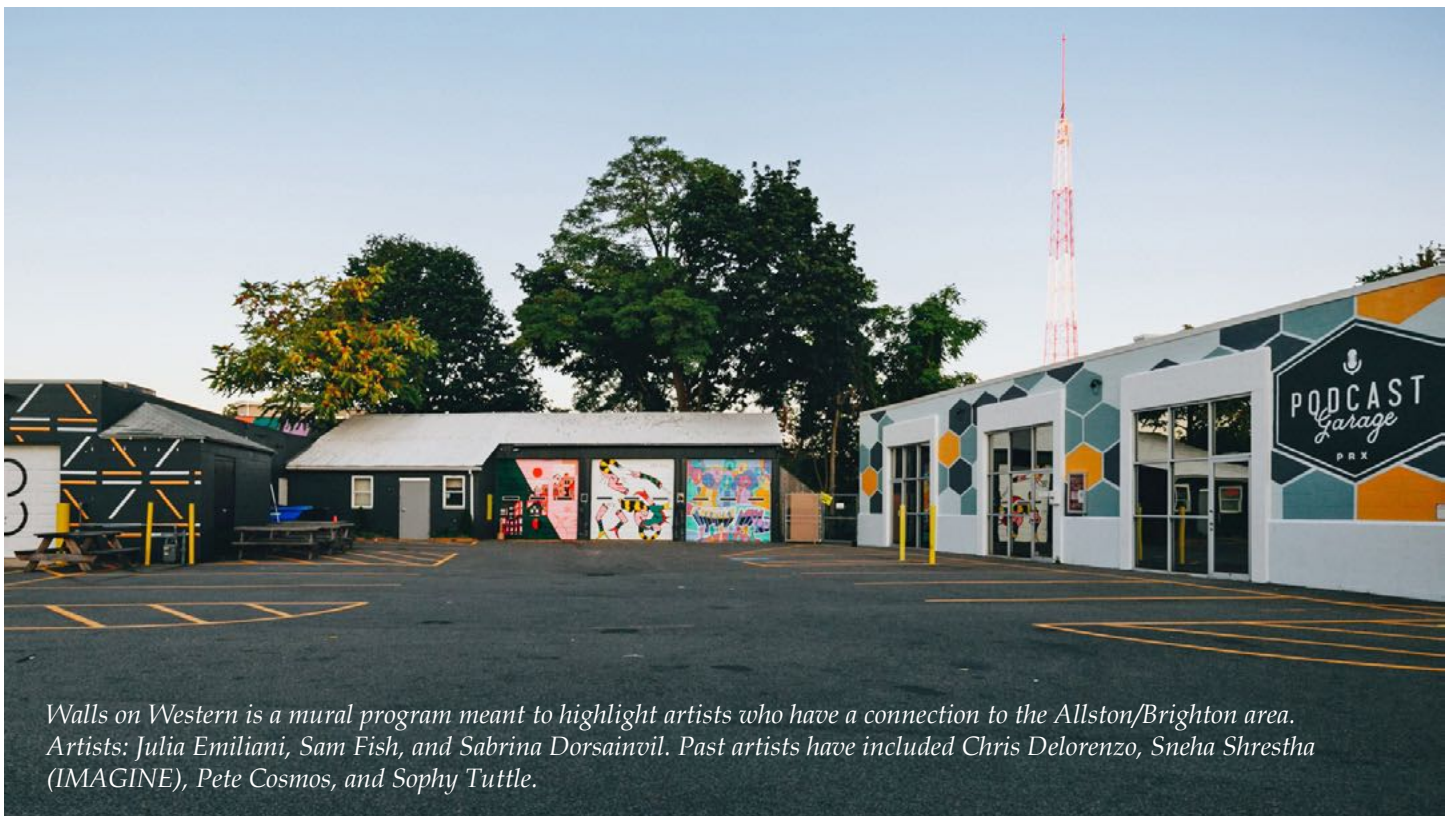
of honest intention when building the partnership. Artists must be fairly compensated for the economic value that their mural and sculpture will bring to the project while also respected for the perspective they bring to the table. Artists share their identity, love, and critique of the community in their work, and celebrating those skills is just as important as the visual end product. As our communities grow, spaces that are new or being re-used/re-inspired are often the subjects of both excitement but also critique for the role they play in the community. Public and private sector planners working closely with artists who will bring their perspective and skill to sharing that story is an important part of the community growth process.

The American Planning Association recently recognized the Arts and Planning interest group as a division. This comes after years of work led by a group of planners and practitioners from across the country, led by former Arts & Culture Department director Jenn Erickson and current A&C Director Annis Sengupta

at MAPC, coalesced around an interest in elevating the role that arts and culture have in creating livable communities across the country. Municipalities in Massachusetts have understood this relationship and have seen a growth in the number of arts and culture staffing, in particular within planning departments. In the metropolitan area, Watertown, Boston, Cambridge, Newton, Salem, Lynn, and Somerville have created positions that recognize the need for planning staff with arts and cultural development knowledge. The growth and demand for staff have also increased in the private sector. The success of the work of firms such as Isenberg Projects is proof. Support in this field is needed as we continue to see communities and arts organizations struggling through a post-pandemic recovery. As planners, we have the skills and duty to find innovative and interdisciplinary solutions to these struggles in a more equitable manner. Arts and planning as a recognized area of practice is new, but the need for art in our communities is long-standing and the role of cultural programming is critical to quality of life too. With this

new cohort of planners, Massachusetts is leading the way.

— **Claudia Zarazua** is the Arts & Cultural Planning Director at the City of Cambridge. She is an urban planner with experience in community development, public art, cultural infrastructure, and arts programming prior to joining the City. Claudia was a Senior Land Use Planner at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the regional planning agency providing technical assistance to municipalities in the metropolitan Boston area... **Jennifer Emiko Kaplan, AICP** is currently the Community Impact Manager for Isenberg Projects. In this role, Jenn builds relationships with artists and local organizations, grows IP's community engagement practices, develops frameworks for civic and cultural programs tied to real estate development, and fosters shared value created for both IP's clients and partner organizations. She previously worked as an Economic Development Planner with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for the Greater Boston region. She also serves as the Greater Boston Regional Representative on the APA-MA Board.



Walls on Western is a mural program meant to highlight artists who have a connection to the Allston/Brighton area. Artists: Julia Emiliani, Sam Fish, and Sabrina Dorsainvil. Past artists have included Chris Delorenzo, Sneha Shrestha (IMAGINE), Pete Cosmos, and Sophy Tuttle.

Photographer: Rachel Giannasio

Managing the Curb

by Alison Felix, AICP

On July 20, the Transportation Committee of the Massachusetts Chapter of APA and the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization/CTPS co-hosted a virtual event titled **Measuring and Managing the Curb**. **Managing and Measuring the Curb** featured two recent studies the Boston MPO/CTPS authored that address curb management:

- [Managing Curb Space in the Boston Region: A Guidebook \(October 2021\)](#)
- [Transportation Recovery Guidebook for Commercial Business Districts \(January 2022\)](#)

Blake Acton and Betsy Harvey, the Project Managers of each study, spoke to curb management in the Boston region by identifying case studies, best practices, and strategies as well as how to develop a curb management framework. Attendees then heard from Jason Schrieber of Stantec, who discussed how municipalities can measure the curb, a basic step in understanding curb usage, and what tools are being used to collect, share, and analyze curb data. The online event then concluded with a Q&A-paneled session with the three speakers. Daniel Amstutz, Sr. Transportation Planner for the Town of Arlington served as moderator. About 90 participants attended the webinar. See the recording: [Measuring and Managing the Curb](#).



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Solving for Feasibility

by Ernest Bleinberger, Strategy 5

Inevitably, every project, plan, concept, and development vision, encounters a set of feasibility questions: How much will it cost? How will it be paid for? Is it sustainable? Is the return worth the investment? Feasibility analysis has many facets, but one thing is clear; it is not a binary, “yes or no” proposition, although many people consider it as such. Rather, approaching the issue by “solving for feasibility” reveals a very different process, and often, results in a different – and positive – outcome. The approach is valuable for developing a stand-alone project, as well as broader applications such as an entire downtown revitalization effort, or community master plan.

At its core, solving for feasibility means helping to determine either: 1) *what* may be feasible, and under what circumstances, or 2) how to *make* a desired project feasible. Both are based on economic methodologies crafted for the task. These methodologies boil down to a combination of cash flow analysis, conceptual project modeling, and adaptive funding and finance strategies. The components of the basic methodology further include a rigorous market analysis, projecting operating revenues and expenses, calculating supportable debt and equity, estimating capital costs, assimilating data, and synthesizing project characteristics. Outputs typically include projections of net operating income (or loss), cash flow, ability of the project to pay for its development costs, and forecasts of long-term economic sustainability.



It is important to state that solving for feasibility is *NOT* a process of manufacturing a pre-determined positive outcome.

As with any solid feasibility analysis, the process must begin with a rigorous and pragmatic market analysis, one that does not simply regurgitate data and information but provides the meaningful interpretation and application of understanding that is needed as a foundation for further progress along the project development decision-tree. All too often, market analyses are heavy on data but light on the actual analysis which is so important to this step.

A good market analysis includes both a “top down” approach that includes the use of data such as demographics; and a “bottom-up” element that is often more important in real-time applications to the feasibility question. Depending on the project type, the bottom-up approach should include a recognition of both “supply-pull” and “demand-push” economic principles. The supply-pull principle involves the ability of a project to draw demand, potentially from distant geographic areas, based on the nature of the project. The demand-push

principle involves identified and quantified unsatisfied demand being fulfilled.

The Theme Park in the Swamp

The classic example of the supply-pull dynamic involves the question: What was the market for a giant theme park in the Florida swamp? No traditional market analysis would have seen the potential for Disney World, as did its creator Walt Disney. The nature of the project and subsequent successful development captures demand from around the globe. The classic example of the demand-push dynamic is a grocery store built to answer unsatisfied demand from an underserved market that may consist of a geographic area just several square miles in size. Either way, it is important to recognize that the *nature of supply heavily influences demand*.

Once the findings of the market analysis are in place, and they are determined to be both comprehensive and accurate, then the financial feasibility analysis may be taken to the next level.

Cash (Flow) is King

Financial feasibility analysis can be accomplished in different ways, but we favor use of a good 10-year cash flow pro forma as its foundation. The pro forma can serve several functions, including identification and incorporation of basic development and operating assumptions that help planners and proponents to understand how their project will perform in the previously dimensioned market. It should also generate outputs that establish levels of important economic and financial thresholds that are indicators of feasibility. Perhaps most importantly, the cash flow pro forma can serve as a tool for deeper understanding of not only how a project *may* perform, but how a project *must* perform, for the feasibility goal to be achieved.

For example, in a proposed hotel project, a market analysis may show that the achievable Average Daily Rate (ADR), and the average occupancy, results in a RevPAR (revenue per available room) that yields a marginal “go-decision” or a “no-go” threshold for a

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developer. Furthermore, when departmental and other expenses are balanced against gross revenues generated according to these variables, the project may show insufficient Net Operating Income (NOI) and cash flow to support conventional financing. Therein lies the challenge in solving for feasibility. By adjusting the inputs based on further investigation of the market and refinement of baseline assumptions, one can see how the project must perform and/or how the building program can be modified to balance the operational characteristics against costs, including those for land and construction.

Davis County Conference Center

One project example that illustrates a successful answer to both the *what* and the *how* questions is the Davis County Conference Center and Hilton Garden Inn, located in Layton, Utah. The County wanted a project of this general type to spur economic development in the community, located about 30 miles north of Salt Lake City. Two feasibility studies were commissioned in succession that both came back with a negative result. The first ignored the overall growth in the Salt Lake Valley, and based projections on a “convention center” and separately located mid-scale hotel. The second study ignored the demand source represented by nearby Hill Air Force Base and failed to account for the County-owned property resources that were available for the project.

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Davis County Conference Center

CASE STUDY: Florence, SC

Downtown Florence, South Carolina, was experiencing a 70% vacancy rate in leased business space, an endemic problem with absentee building owners, a fractured residential neighborhood, decaying streetscape, and increasing competition from suburban commercial centers. The challenge was to induce both near- and long-term revitalization, and to ensure a sustainable future.

In this case, solving for feasibility included development of a downtown attraction in the form of a performing arts center complex. This was achieved through a joint effort between Francis Marion University, the Florence Little Theater, and the City of Florence.

It enhanced downtown's ability to draw visitors, including restaurant patrons and others, thus improving its position in the marketplace. The physical problems with downtown were addressed through a detailed set of design guidelines, and a pragmatic implementation and funding strategy. The neighborhood problems were solved, in part, by a Master Plan that identified building opportunity sites on abandoned or vacant parcels, establishment of housing development incentives, and ultimately the re-knitting of this part of the downtown community.

Through application of the prescription for a feasible solution to the downtown challenges and sustained hard work by the Florence Downtown Development Corporation and the business community, the vacancy rate today is under 6%, retail stores and restaurants have flourished in an attractive, walkable, and pleasing environment, and cultural arts and entertainment have served to anchor the renaissance. The neighborhood has rebounded with a mix of multi-family, single-family, market-rate and affordable units, with connectivity to the downtown district improved. The revitalization of Florence took nearly a decade, beginning with initial feasibility work in 2005, key implementation steps completed by 2010, and numerous stakeholders marking progress that continues to the present.

The project recently won the Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Award for Economic Development from the Municipal Association of South Carolina.



Downtown Florence. Photo by Blue Edge Photography



Kress Corner. Photo by Florence Downtown Development Office



Downtown Florence at Dusk. Photo by True Light Photography

The third feasibility study incorporated potentials associated with the omitted market forces, modeled a properly-sized, functionally integrated conference center and hotel facility that bolstered shoulder season demand for rooms, thus boosting achievable ADR, occupancy, and RevPar. This in turn gave the County the necessary confidence to provide funding for the conference center which remained publicly owned and induced the necessary private investment for a higher-quality hotel than previously envisioned. A land swap resulted in the assembly of the necessary property, and a successful developer solicitation was completed. The facility has been operated profitably, according to projections of the third study which solved for feasibility, for 18 years.

— Ernest E. Bleinberger is principal of Andover-based Strategy 5 LLC, an urban economics consulting firm with national experience. His 28-year career has included work in 300 cities and towns, spanning downtown revitalization, large-scale master plans, cultural arts and heritage attractions, gaming facilities, hotels and conference centers, mixed-use development, aviation industry projects, and innovation centers, among other varied assignments. He can be reached at eb@strategy5.net.



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Book Review: New York City Zoning Code for Babies

Written and illustrated by Lucas Posada, independently published (August 14, 2022), Paperback

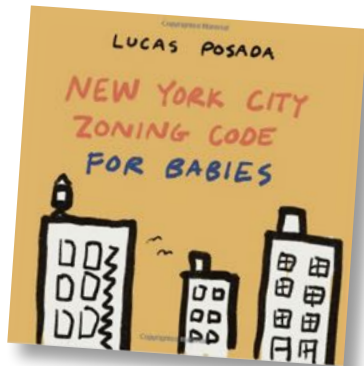
by Mark Favermann

Except for perhaps a minority of municipal bureaucrats, property developers, real estate lawyers, architects, urban planners and some community-minded activists, zoning codes represent an often-confusing cauldron of somewhat necessary evil that occasionally boils over. To most citizens, zoning is a seemingly esoteric set of rules and regulations that somehow need to be followed for a city or town's development in terms of a community's business, industry, housing, commerce, and open space. But usually, they are stated in hard-to-understand ways. In essence, zoning codes are a set of rules that regulate what can and can't be done on a particular piece of property established and enforced at the town or city level that the average citizen does not quite grasp.

To assist folks to understand these often obscurely written in language only obfuscating lawyers could love, the New York-based architect, planner and new father Lucas Posada has revealed in children's book form the often unintelligible world of New York City's famous Zoning Code. The author/illustrator uses this zoning code to explain the fundamentals of almost any American zoning code in a basic and appealing way. The simpler-the better is his approach. Here the obscurity of zoning is uncomplicatedly explained in a way that even babies (or anyone) can understand. Focusing on defining things like lots, setbacks, floor area ratios (FAR), and the sky exposure plane, the author has cleverly created this short-but-sweet picture book to skillfully break down complex concepts using fun words, phrases, and drawings that young kids and especially their parents will each be enlightened by while being amused.

Zoning as fun? Not in historically dreary planning or law school classes. And not often at very procedural wordy zoning board of appeals meetings. This little book makes us aware that zoning is most importantly about being good neighbors. Now, Mr. Posada is really on to something here.

— Mark Favermann is principal of Boston-based Favermann Design, a creative urban design practice involved in community branding and wayfinding, strategic placemaking, civic branding, streetscapes, and public art.



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Traffic and Housing: Related? A Cape Cod Case Study

by Lynne D. Sweet, LDS Consulting Group, LLC



Andrew Bossi, Wikimedia

Housing Assistance Corporation of Cape Cod (HAC) hired LDS Consulting Group, LLC (LDS) to provide market research services to better understand the need for year-round rental housing in the fifteen towns that comprise the peninsula of Cape Cod, Massachusetts to assist HAC as part of their advocacy efforts for year-round rental housing on Cape Cod. One of the items LDS examined was commuting patterns on the Cape and below is an excerpt from the report.



Commuting Patterns

Studying commuter patterns can show who is employed on Cape Cod but does not live there. The table below summarizes the traffic volume over both the Sagamore Bridge and the Bourne Bridge at peak commuting times on a Wednesday and Thursday in each of the four seasons comparing the most recent data with traffic counts from 2010 and 2011. In the morning from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. we counted traffic traveling southbound on to Cape Cod and in the evening from 3 pm to 6 pm, we counted traffic traveling Northbound off of Cape Cod. These two bridges are the only two ways on and off the peninsula by

automobile and therefore are the route taken by all commuters.

In 2021, between both bridges, there are an average of 5,093 automobiles traveling southbound during morning commuting hours and an average of 5,772 automobiles traveling northbound during the evening commute (MA Department of Transportation, 2021). An additional 5,000 rental housing units on Cape Cod would house those employees. Ten years ago, automobile traffic over the bridges during commute times was significantly less averaging 4,552 morning commuting cars and 5,196 automobiles commuting in the evening (MA Department of Transportation, 2021). In the past 10 years the number of those commuting to Cape Cod increased by approximately 2,125 cars or 41% more volume. While the number of automobile travelers is slightly higher in the Spring and Summer months when many people vacation on Cape Cod, there is still a significant amount of people traveling to the cape at peak commuting hours. The traffic data suggests that there are many employees of Cape

continued next page

Cape Cod Commuter Traffic Counts (2010-2021)

		Average # Commuters	10 year Change # Commuters
# Cars Bourne Bridge	7-10 am Southbound 2010/2011	4,479	422
	7-10 am Southbound 2020/2021	4,902	
	3-6 pm Northbound 2010/2011	4,682	424
	3-6 pm Northbound 2020/2021	5,106	
# Cars Sagamore Bridge	7-10 am Southbound 2010/2011	4,626	551
	7-10 am Southbound 2020/2021	5,177	
	3-6 pm Northbound 2010/2011	5,710	728
	3-6 pm Northbound 2020/2021	6,438	
Total increase in average number of commuters			2,125

Traffic and Housing *cont'd*

Cod businesses that commute from off Cape Cod daily to work. Information gained from stakeholder interviews confirmed this claim when landlords mentioned that potential renters were moving to New Bedford and Fall River when they found no available rental options on Cape Cod.

LDS concluded that there is a pressing need for more rental housing on Cape Cod. Studying vehicular commuting patterns onto Cape Cod over ten years revealed that there is a large population of the workforce that cannot afford to live in the towns that they work in due to a lack of housing choice. In the past 10 years the number of those commuting to Cape Cod increased by an approximate average of 2,125 vehicles per day or 41%. Based on commuting patterns, the low annual turnover of existing units combined with a low volume of construction, this causing a housing deficit. Based on LDS estimates of waitlist and other factors, LDS estimated an unmet demand for rental housing of more than 3,900 units on Cape Cod.

— *Lynne D. Sweet is the founder and owner of LDS Consulting Group, LLC, based in Wellesley, MA. She has more than 35 years of experience working in the planning and development field, most recently as a consultant involved in many different types of engagements with municipalities throughout New England. Lynne is also a licensed real estate broker. She can be reached at ldsweet@ldsconsultinggroup.com.*



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The PDO Corner

by Ralph Willmer, FAICP, MA Chapter PDO

Congratulations to MA Chapter members listed below that passed the May 2022 AICP Exam! Pass along your congrats to them next time you see them in person or online (perhaps at SNEAPA in Providence next month)!

Thomas Abdella

Susan Barrett

Jessika Brenin

William Dorfman

Phil Goff

Eileen Gunn

Justin Klaparda

Suzanne Lepage

Ian McElwee

Julia Miller

Paul Nelson

Claire O'Neill

Nicole Stephens

Taskina Tareen

After you pass the AICP exam, the next step in the process under APA's new One Path to AICP is to earn and document the required education and professional planning experience. Once the experience assessment is completed and the criteria have been met, they officially become AICP members.

Anyone interested in taking the November AICP exam should note that the registration window opens October 3 and closes October 28. The exam window is November 1-30, 2022. And once you have passed the exam, you can complete the Planning Experience Assessment and submit the information between December 5 and December 30, 2022.

In an effort to help make the planning profession more diverse and accessible, APA/AICP is again awarding Diversity Scholarships that would reduce the fees for both the AICP exam and the Planning Experience Assessment from \$255 to \$85. The number of scholarships awarded annually has been increased (50 for the fall cycle and another 50 next spring). If you would like to apply, please ask me for the application form at pdo@apa-ma.org. The deadline for submitting the form is September 23, 2022.

— Ralph Willmer, FAICP is the Technical Assistance Program Manager and Principal Planner at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

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The 2022 Southern New England Planning Conference (SNEAPA) will take place at the Rhode Island Convention in beautiful downtown Providence on October 6-7. This event provides one of the best learning experiences for planners and associated professions in the region. Join your fellow planners in person for two days of high-quality, hands-on and interactive sessions, mobile workshops, networking, a fun reception, exhibitors, and more! A block of discounted hotel rooms available at the [Marriott Courtyard Providence Downtown](#).

Go to www.sneapa.org for full details and to register. See you there!

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Prioritizing Green Building and Clean Energy in Your Planning Process

by Celeste Frye, AICP

Incorporating green building and clean energy into your municipality's development projects is no longer optional or a luxury—it's a necessity. More and more, sustainability is becoming the cornerstone of successful projects across Massachusetts.

Indeed, the practice is backed up by law in the Bay State. The [2050 Decarbonization Roadmap](#), which serves as the framework for the law, lays out ambitious aims to protect the climate, fuel a green economy, and combat global warming. Its chief goal? To reduce Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions at least 85 percent by 2050, and achieve net-zero emissions.

In this new landscape, many municipal leaders in Massachusetts are seeking the best strategies to promote green building and clean energy from the start—that is, from the planning process to project completion. Fortunately, there are a range of strategies local leaders can implement to ensure that new developments within their borders support community and state-wide sustainability goals. They include:

■ **Capitalize on existing projects.** "Going green" doesn't have to mean launching a series of brand-new developments. Indeed, green building or clean energy initiatives are easiest and most successful when municipal leaders fold them into projects that are already underway. For example, consider incorporating LEED buildings, rain gardens, and green roofs into projects that are already in the works. Additionally, transitioning energy-intensive systems, such as heating and cooling, in existing buildings to more efficient electrical systems can be a cost-effective way to [reduce emissions](#).

Post-industrial small- and medium-sized cities across the state can help rebuild once-polluted or abandoned land, converting that real estate into parks and other outdoor recreational spaces. A [recent report](#) by Housing Matters explains that "green and sustainable initiatives can help arrest further decline," but also boost the local economy by "inducing people to return."

At the other end of the spectrum, large cities in Massachusetts can direct their capital pools toward making projects that are underway—or that are soon to break ground—more sustainable, looking to cities that have implemented sustainability action plans as examples, including Boston's own Climate Action Plan.

■ **Mitigate community concerns transparently and effectively.** Despite the vast improvements sustainable projects can bring, some residents may be wary. For



example, residents may worry that an offshore wind farm will obstruct a pristine waterfront view. To address concerns, municipal leaders should maintain open, frequent communications with residents throughout the entire development process. This could include opening up community forums, hosting multi-modal town halls (both virtual and in-person), and/or conducting surveys to include community voices throughout this process.

Meanwhile, for those who are hesitant about sustainable projects in general, municipal leaders can tout the economic benefits. The U.S. Department of Energy's [2022 U.S. Energy and Employment Report](#) noted that more than 50,000 new energy efficiency jobs were created in 2021. "Amidst the unique challenges of a nation coming out of a global pandemic, America's energy sector stands out with considerable job growth across nearly all industries," noted U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm.

■ **Attract sustainable projects.** When it comes to new projects, municipal leaders should build a reputation for their city or town as one that welcomes sustainable builders. How? Show that you have broad, strong community support. Engage citizens through town halls and other public meetings. Explain how sustainable projects lead to clean air, purer water supplies, beautified cities, booming economies, and [even more](#)—and also let residents know that they are key stakeholders and decision makers in this transformation. Then, showcase your residents' zeal for prospective developers.

■ **Think of "equity" right alongside "green" and "clean."** Green projects aren't just about buildings—they're about people, too. For decades, the [pollution has disproportionately impacted low-income communities and communities of color](#). New policies and initiatives should seek to address this injustice head on. The Massachusetts Decarbonization Roadmap's environmental justice amendment serves as a model policy by identifying historically underserved communities as "environmental justice" populations and codifying equitable solutions for these communities as a statewide priority. At the federal level, the EPA's [Equity Action Plan](#) can provide guidance, stating: "EPA's Equity Action Plan carries forward our work to break through barriers and advance equity and justice across our efforts to ensure clean water, air, and land for all communities."

■ **Avoid common pitfalls.** As municipalities move toward sustainability, there are a few common missteps.

continued next page

Prioritizing Green Building *cont'd*

First, municipalities must try to stay focused on the big picture while making sure all impacted stakeholders are heard. Transparency and open communication go a long way, even if every demand cannot be met. Small interest groups can pose roadblocks to implementation (for example, a handful of property owners who believe a new development could impact the value of their homes). Listen to what these groups have to say, explore the equity implications and the needs of those impacted, and then communicate this thinking and the final decision-making process back to those stakeholders, alongside the benefits of your final decision.

Another misstep is failing to fully understand all the regulatory roadblocks that can arise during a project. To avoid this, Massachusetts' municipal leaders should familiarize themselves with the [Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act \(MEPA\)](#) and its corresponding Environmental Impact Review.

Rethinking your planning process to prioritize green building and clean energy can be difficult, but it's well worth the challenge. For inspiration, look to the [Vineyard Wind](#) project—one of the largest offshore wind initiatives in the United States, which cost nearly \$3 billion and is based 15 miles south of Martha's Vineyard. While it faced (and continues to face) many challenges, the project has



Greenovate works with Bostonians to carry out the City's Climate Action Plan in neighborhoods and communities. [Learn more.](#)

been approved and will be completed in 2023. And it was made possible by collaboration among labor organizations, indigenous peoples, local stakeholders, and environmental groups—and by using strategies similar to many of those listed above.

— Celeste Frye, AICP is co-founder and CEO of Public Works Partners, LLC, a WBE/DBE/SBE-certified planning and consulting firm specializing in multi-stakeholder initiatives and building strong connections across the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. For more information, visit www.publicworkspartners.com.



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Ralph Willmer Named AICP Ethics Officer

Longtime APA member **Ralph Willmer, FAICP**, has been hired as the new AICP Ethics Officer following the retirement of Jim Peters, FAICP.

Willmer's career as a planner has shown breadth across the varied world of planning, including both private and public practice. Most recently, he retired from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in Boston.

Willmer has been an active and engaged member of APA including serving on the APA Board of Directors, as APA Massachusetts Chapter president and chapter professional development officer, and as chair of APA's Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division.

Additionally, he also serves as a site visitor for the [Planning Accreditation Board \(PAB\)](#). Beyond his involvement with APA, Willmer also comes with high recommendations from respected [Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners](#) members.

He steps into this role with enthusiasm:

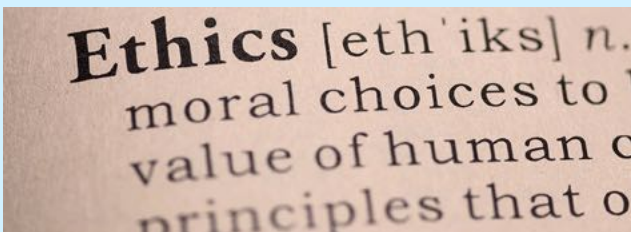
"I am pleased to take on the role of AICP Ethics Officer. I want to thank Jim Peters for his years of service in this role and assistance in the transition. I look forward to helping AICP certified members as they navigate their way through the AICP Code of Ethics."

The AICP Ethics Officer plays a vital role in the organization's upholding and enforcement of its ethics code. Ethics in practice among planners is a priority for AICP. Members are not only required to acknowledge and embrace the [AICP Code of Ethics](#) but ongoing education for all members includes a requirement to keep current with ethics issues and how they apply to the planning environment today.

To reach Willmer or make an ethics complaint use the [AICP Ethical Conduct Complaint Form](#). For informal advice, please call (312) 786-6360.

Links of interest:

www.planningaccreditationboard.org
www.planning.org/faicp
www.planning.org/ethics/ethicscode
www.planning.org/ethics/conduct/form



APA-MA Sustainable Development Committee Fall Speaker Series



The recently reinvigorated APA-MA Sustainable Development Committee (SDC), led by Co-Chairs **Brian Creamer** and **Jeanette Tozer**, is responsible for providing forums for professionals, students, and other interested parties involved with sustainability planning; increasing fellowship among Committee members through the exchange of information and ideas; and furthering sustainable development and land use planners' knowledge of the growing sustainability practices throughout all aspects of the planning field within Massachusetts. Please email fiona@barrettplanningllc.com if you are interested in becoming a member or to discuss future collaborations.

The SDC's 2022 Fall Speaker Series included the following programs:

• **SEPTEMBER 14: Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Action: A Conversation with Kim Lundgren and Michele Paul on Resiliency Planning in New Bedford.** This discussion demonstrated how New Bedford is making strides in coastal resiliency by highlighting their recent work on the MVP grant and their Green Infrastructure Master Plan. The presentation focused on the project's background, how these efforts are incorporated into other citywide planning efforts, grant success stories, equitable community engagement strategies, and project eligibility for other interested communities. [Watch the video.](#)

• **SEPTEMBER 21: Apple Country Natural Climate Solutions: A Regional Collaboration with Nature and Community to Enhance Resilience.** This program discussed a first-of-its kind Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness Program project in central Massachusetts, showing how wetlands, floodplains, forests, soils and other ecosystems can be integrated into broader climate resilience and carbon mitigation planning projects. [Watch the video.](#)

• **SEPTEMBER 28: Density, Sustainability and MBTA Communities Zoning: A Conversation with Nate Carlucci and Jenn Goldson on Multi-family Zoning District Guidelines & Incorporating Equity, Economy, and Environment.** This program discussed how to use the new guidelines as an opportunity to pursue sustainability through zoning and density, focusing on what the guidelines mean for different communities, and density examples at the neighborhood scale. Participants learned how broader development and large-scale planning integrate the guidelines; how to be a resource for communities pondering new and diverse housing; and how to incorporate the three prongs of sustainability – Environment, Equity, Economy – into the process. [Watch the video.](#)

NEWS FROM CPM | Consulting Planners' Perspective

by Kathleen "Kathy" McCabe, FAICP, Vice-President, Consulting Planners of Massachusetts



Conversations

Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM) is launching a new series of programs for the 2022-2023 season, called Conversations. The programs are aimed to be thought-provoking and spark discussion and conversation. So, join us. All are welcome. Registration is at www.consultingplanners.org. The Conversations will be via Zoom, unless stated otherwise.

October: Classic Planning with Dr. Nir Buras

The October Conversation will start with Dr. Nir Buras, the founder and Director of The Classical Planning Institute based in Washington, DC. We will be looking at the role of traditional architecture and classical planning in forming livable cities, and what we can learn for today's interest in walkable cities and town centers.



Dr. Nir Buras is an architect and urban design professional, and the author of *The Art of Classic Planning: Building Beautiful and Enduring Communities*. Buras has over thirty years of specialized experience in large, complex, and sensitive projects, strategic planning, and architecture and transportation design. His goal is to serve the cities of the world by helping residents to understand their cities to make them more beautiful, healthy, and resilient.

The terms classical planning and architecture, often infer ancient Greece and Rome. Buras takes a more expansive and multi-cultural approach to classic planning drawing from a variety of cultures, Greek, Roman, Chinese, Indian, Islamic, Japanese, and other traditions.

Join the conversation on Friday, October 21 at 12 p.m. via Zoom. Register at www.consultingplanners.org.

November: Cognitive Architecture – Planning for Humane and Happy Environments with Ann Sussman

Ann Sussman is currently teaching a course on perception and the human experience of place. She is the author of several books, including the award-winning publication, *Cognitive Architecture: Designing for How We Respond to the Built Environment*, with Justin Hollander. Ann Sussman is interested in how buildings influence our behavior and how unconscious tendencies are at work when we navigate the world around us. These 'hidden' predispositions reflect our long evolutionary trip per recent research in psychology and neuroscience and can help explain



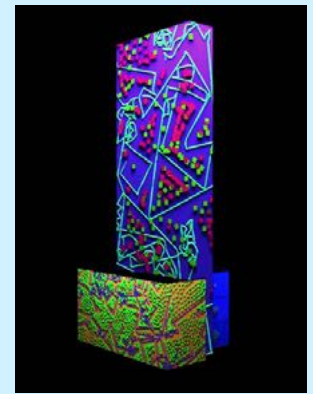
why we favor certain urban conditions and building configurations and shun others. Understanding ourselves better, Sussman believes, can lead us to build more humanely and ultimately, more successfully for people.

Join the conversation on Thursday, November 17 at 12 p.m. via Zoom. Register at www.consultingplanners.org.

December: George Fifiel and the Boston Cyberarts Story

George Fifiel is the founding director of Boston Cyberarts, a nonprofit arts organization created to foster and present a spectrum of art and technology projects, including the Boston Cyberarts Gallery at the MBTA Green Street station on the Orange Line in Jamaica Plain. One of the notable art and technology installations that George Fifiel and Boston Cyberarts have developed include the Art on the Marquee on the 80-foot video marquee on Summer Street at the Boston Convention Center. In 2017, Fifiel curated The Augmented Landscape, which featured large, augmented reality sculptures at the Salem Maritime National Historic Site. In 2019, an augmented reality program was set up for the villages in Newton. Boston Cyberarts was the recipient of the Commonwealth Award in 2007 for contributions to the Creative Economy.

Celebrate the holidays with friends and colleagues and learn more about Boston Cyberarts with George Fifiel, at the Cyberarts Gallery in Jamaica Plain at the Green Street Orange Line MBTA station, corner of Amory and Green Streets on Thursday, December 15th from 6 to 9 p.m. Register at www.consultingplanners.org.



ALPHA 60, Boston Cyberarts exhibition on display through September 30, 2022.

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Can't make it to SNEAPA? For those of you looking for an escape to Maine for peak leaf-peeping season, the **Northern New England Planning Conference will be held at Sunday River Resort on October 17-19! Catch up with your weathered, bearded counterparts in the highlands of New England and get lots of CM Credits while you're at it.**

100% FAICP Planners at Devens

Earlier this year Neil Angus was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners, joining DEC Director Peter Lowitt as a Fellow. By the time this issue is published the Devens Enterprise Commission who employs Neil will have hired another staff planner. Over the balance of 2022 the Devens Enterprise Commission may very well have been the only multi-person municipal (quasi-municipal like everything else at Devens) planning department in which the entire planning staff are Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Commission Chair William P. Marshall noted: "the Commission has high expectations for its workforce and Peter and Neil have set a standard of excellence for the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone and the Commonwealth."

Educating the Next Generation of Planners

In July, Rudy Bruner Award director **Anne-Marie Lubenau** joined the faculty of **Harvard Graduate School of Design** as a Lecturer in Urban Planning. Anne-Marie will draw upon her more than three decades of experience as an architect and planner leading projects and programs that engage people and communities in design to foster more beautiful, inclusive, and resilient cities.

Anne-Marie will teach the **First-Semester Core Urban Planning Studio** which introduces students to the fundamental knowledge and skills of planning and its role in addressing equity, access, health, and climate challenges. The 2022 studio will focus on the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury, home to RBA medalists **Southwest Corridor** (1989 Silver Medalist), **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative** (1996 Silver Medalist), and the Bruce C. **Bolling Municipal Building** (2017 Silver Medalist).

Check out the **educator resources** on the Rudy Bruner Award website to learn more about using RBA in the classroom and studio.

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