

MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

A publication of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association
Massachusetts Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Fall 2023

A photograph of a person from behind, walking across a crosswalk. They are wearing a dark suit, a dark backpack, and dark sneakers with green accents. They are holding a cane in their right hand. The background shows a city street with a sign for a food stand and a building.

Understanding the New Public Right-of-Way Guidelines

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From the President

Hello again, everyone. It's our very favorite time of year here at APA-MA – SNEAPA season! We are excited to be heading to a new city, New Haven, on October 5-6. There are a lot of exciting sessions, mobile workshops, and networking opportunities. Attending the whole conference will get you eight CM, including opportunities to meet the requirements each of the four specific CM categories. If you haven't registered yet, please do so as soon as you can (www.sneapa.org). Registration closes on September 29th, and due to space constraints, we cannot guarantee that onsite registration will be available (so...hurry!).



While you're in New Haven, please make sure to come to the APA-MA Chapter Breakfast at 8:45 on Friday and visit us at our booth in the exhibitors' area.

Looking ahead to next SNEAPA season, it's our turn to host. Let me know if you want to join the conference planning committee. We'll be kicking off early in the new year.

In this edition of *Massachusetts Planning* you can find a SNEAPA welcome from this year's conference chair, Marek Kozikowski, as well as articles about the new public right-of-way rule, public art, reflections on DEI, and Part 2 of editor Peter Lowitt's "Lessons Learned Over a Career in Planning." We hope you find it all to be an engaging read.

As always, reach me at president@apa-ma.org with any questions or feedback. I'd love to hear from you. See you in New Haven!

Alison

Alison LeFlore, AICP
president@apa-ma.org

Promoting Water Sustainability by Enabling Water Neutral Development



October 6, 2023 | 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET
CM TBA
Guest Host: APA ENRE Division

The lack of availability of water supply often constrains the ability of water-scarce communities to approve new development. But a solution is at hand. A template program called Net Blue can be deployed by communities wishing to require offsets to the new water demand that accompanies new development projects. These offsets can be customized to local conditions and thus make new development water-sustainable. This webinar will present various strategies that have been implemented, using case studies from New Mexico and California, and will provide access to free tools to help communities plan for water-neutral or even water-positive new development.

Learn more about this and other upcoming webinars at:
https://ohioplanning.org/aws/APAOH/pt/sp/webcast_home_page

Understanding the Public Right-of-Way Rule

by Steve Dering, Direct Access Consultancy LLC

This summer the U.S. Access Board has published its final rule for public rights-of-way accessibility guidelines (PROWAG) under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) that inform federal, state, and local government agencies on how to make their pedestrian facilities – such as sidewalks, crosswalks, shared use paths, and on-street parking – accessible to people with disabilities.

This will have a significant impact on planning, as master plans will need to incorporate the guidelines. Without final technical requirements for accessibility of pedestrian facilities, state and local governments have had to determine on their own how to comply with the ADA's existing mandate to make public pedestrian transportation facilities accessible.

These guidelines have been long-awaited – the 1991 ADA and the 2004 ADA and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines focused on buildings or did not cover issues in detail that are specific to sidewalks and crosswalks. ADA Title II applies to local and state governments while the ABA is applicable to facilities constructed or altered by or on behalf of the federal government, or built with federal funds.

Why are minimum guidelines required?

Pedestrian travel is the principal means of independent transportation for many persons with disabilities. This also includes the “first or final mile” from home or place of work to access public transportation services. Without accessible features, people may be confined to areas closest to home unable to access community facilities or programs, access work, education, or social activities.



The new public rights-of-way accessibility rule will have a significant impact on planning, as master plans will need to incorporate the guidelines.

The guidelines will enable planners, engineers, landscape designers and architects to integrate accessible facilities with the means of navigating to and from.

Applicability

The final rule states that newly constructed right-of-way facilities must meet the full requirements, while any change to or addition of a pedestrian facility in an existing developed public right-of-way that affects or could affect pedestrian access, circulation, or usability must comply to the maximum extent practicable.

Where roads are being resurfaced, the DOJ and USDOT have clear guidance on surfaces that are considered as maintenance and those that are considered alterations – any that fall into the alterations category will come under the new guidelines.

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WHAT COULD
WE CREATE IF WE
WORKED TOGETHER?

Right of Way Rule *cont'd*

Accessible pedestrian signals are to be installed wherever new pedestrian signals are provided, and whenever pedestrian signals are altered. The benefit of signals will assist blind and low-vision pedestrians to navigate to destinations independently. The U.S. Access Board recognized that this element would be the most significant financial impact from the final rule as a key public-right-of-way feature that has not been uniformly adopted across the U.S. Yet, it would provide the greatest advance in equity for persons who are blind or have low vision.

Other key accessible features

■ Pedestrian Access Routes

Sidewalks, shared-use paths and other pedestrian circulation paths must contain a "pedestrian access route," which is required to be accessible for individuals with disabilities. The sections of these sidewalks and

The final rule states that newly constructed right-of-way facilities must meet the full requirements, while any change to or addition of a pedestrian facility in an existing developed public right-of-way that affects access, circulation, or usability must comply to the maximum extent practicable.

paths that comprise the pedestrian access route must be wide enough to minimize the possibility of a pedestrian using a mobility device falling into a roadway when passed by another pedestrian.

Pedestrian access routes have specified cross slopes and running

slopes so that they are usable by pedestrians using manual wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Surfaces of paths in the pedestrian access route must be firm, stable, and slip-resistant, without large openings or abrupt changes in level. Objects may not hazardously protrude onto sidewalks, shared use paths, or other pedestrian circulation paths. Sidewalks, particularly in downtown areas, are susceptible to a proliferation of A-boards and exterior café seating which can impede both wheelchair navigation and blind persons.

■ Alternate Pedestrian Access Routes

When pedestrian access routes are closed for construction purposes, the responsible entity must provide an alternate pedestrian access route with basic accessible features including curb ramps at the start and end of the alternate route. Pictorial signage would be beneficial for

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Right of Way Rule *cont'd*

neurodiverse individuals to understand the temporary diversion route.

■ Accessible Pedestrian Signals

All new and altered pedestrian signal heads installed at crosswalks must include “accessible pedestrian signals” (APS), which have audible and vibrotactile features indicating the walk interval so that a pedestrian who is blind or has low vision will know when to cross the street. Pedestrian push buttons must be located within a reach range such that a person seated in a wheelchair can reach them. The ADA currently specifies where a forward reach is unobstructed, the high forward reach shall be 48 inches (1220 mm) maximum and the low forward reach shall be 15 inches (380 mm) minimum above the finish floor or ground.

■ Crosswalks

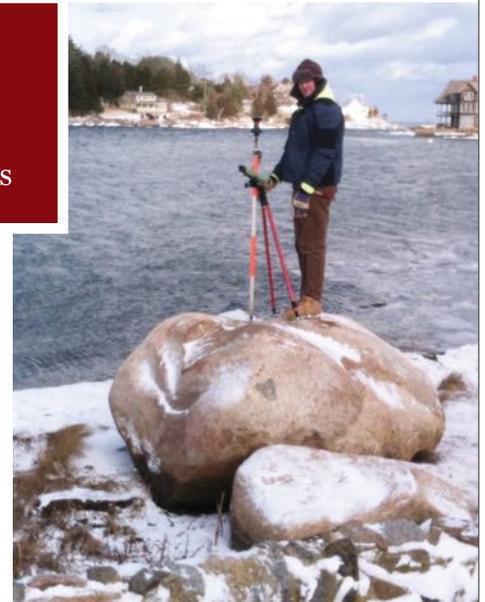
Curb ramps and detectable warning surfaces are required where a

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Right of Way Rule *cont'd*

pedestrian circulation path meets a vehicular way. Crosswalks at multi-lane roundabouts and channelized turn lanes must have additional treatments that alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians or slow or stop traffic at those crosswalks. Ramps should be flush with the crossing surface for ease of manual wheelchair movement.

■ Transit Stops

Boarding and alighting areas at sidewalk or street level, as well as elevated boarding platforms, must be sized and situated such that a person with a disability can board and alight buses and rail cars, with suitable contrasting colors to aid low-vision persons. Pedestrian access routes must connect boarding and alighting areas and boarding platforms to other pedestrian facilities. Transit shelters must have clear space for use by a person in a wheelchair.

■ On-Street Parking

On-street non-residential parking must have designated accessible parking spaces sized so that a person with a disability may exit a parked vehicle and maneuver to the sidewalk without entering a vehicular way. Standard size designated accessible on-street parking spaces must be situated near an existing crosswalk with curb ramps.

— Steve Dering joined Boston-based accessibility and inclusion consultancy *Direct Access* in 2017, working on a diverse range of public realm accessibility projects, from auditing public rights-of-way to developing new master plans for transportation infrastructure and downtown areas. Profoundly deaf since birth, Steve is a certified Access Professional (Built Environment) and is working on his PhD thesis on Accessibility of Cities post-COVID. He can be reached at sdering@directaccess.group.



Barrier assessments identify opportunities to improve accessibility for people with disabilities to access bus, rail, and metro services. *Direct Access's* Steve Dering is sharing U.S. PROW expertise in Lyon, France.

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A Welcome Message from the SNEAPA 2023 Chair

by Marek Kozikowski, AICP, MPA, Conference Chair

On behalf of the SNEAPA 2023 Conference Committee, we invite you to explore this 2023 SNEAPA Conference edition of Connecticut Planning. The Connecticut Chapter of APA (CCAPA) has the pleasure of hosting our fellow chapters from Massachusetts (APA-MA) and Rhode Island (APA-RI), welcoming nearly 500 planners and allied professionals to the City of New Haven on October 5-6, 2023.

The SNEAPA 2023 Conference will feel like a new experience compared to what perennial conference attendees may expect. The conference returns to New Haven after a 17-year hiatus, representing the first time in nearly as long that it will not be held in a large convention center. The Omni Hotel will provide an intimate conference experience. The hotel has recently updated its conference space with a renovated ballroom, breakout rooms, and other common spaces. Hotel rooms are also renovated and

will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

The 2023 SNEAPA Conference will offer a program with an array of opportunities for attendees to undergo professional development and for certified planners to earn AICP continuing education credits. The conference will kick off with our keynote speaker, Rodney Harrell, PhD, Vice President for Home, Family and Community at AARP, who will discuss housing in an aging America. The regular program boasts breakout room sessions covering topics like housing, economic development, community engagement, placemaking, and much more. Additional sessions will satisfy the new-ish credit requirements covering the areas of equity, ethics, law, and sustainability and resilience. Many mobile workshop will serve as opportunities to visit unique places within the city.

Beyond education opportunities, the conference offers time to network and socialize with fellow planners and other professionals. Long breaks between sessions and daily

lunches permit attendees to both expand their networks by meeting new people and catch up with old friends. The Thursday evening reception offers hours of socializing with food and drinks

at the beautiful Boathouse at Canal Dock, with waterfront views of New Haven Harbor. Additional accommodations will be made for students and emerging professionals including a mentor lunch and a dedicated gathering space at the facility.

I would like to thank the Conference Committee for all its hard work and contributions towards planning a successful conference. See you all in October!



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Reflecting on Lessons Learned Over a Career in Planning (Part 2):

by Peter Lowitt, FAICP



A brief summary of my career in planning

After attending Brown University I started *Living Alternatives Magazine*, a journal of appropriate technology and renewable energy, and then worked for the Town of Watertown's Community Development Department as its energy coordinator and became interested in planning.

I went to Tufts UEP, got married and worked for a year in Waltham as a Junior Planner before working for Acton as its junior planner. I then went to Grafton, where I worked some magic and had a portion of the former Grafton State Hospital land declared surplus and started what became Centech Park and helped locate a commuter rail stop in Grafton at the park and adjacent to the Tufts Vet School. I then went north to Londonderry, New Hampshire as their Economic Development and Planning Director, where I got to implement my thesis and put in place a development impact fee program. After starting the Stonyfield Londonderry Eco-Industrial Park, I was recruited to Devens where I have been working to redevelop the base as a

model of Sustainable Development for the past 24 years. When I left Londonderry the Londonderry Business Council gave me an apple sculpture with the saying, "Without vision, the people will perish." So, I guess I'm a big-picture vision type of planner.

Education is a large part of what a planner does

We need to make our decisions and recommendations understandable by lay people. As a citizen once told me, if you can't explain why you want to deploy this regulation, why should I support it? Whenever we have an ice storm and limbs come down, we get requests to remove trees from properties. The Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) developed a handout, the triple bottom line benefits of street trees which we use to remind people of the value those trees bring to their property. There is a difference between protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare and wanting to remove a tree that may or may not pose a problem. We evaluate these requests on a case by case basis but the folks requesting the tree to come down may not know the benefits associated with them. Hence our handout and the need for ongoing education.

Some tips for new planners (with a nod to Bob Mitchell who shared similar information with young planners early in my career)

- **Create a daily to-do list** and try and cross at least one item off it each day.
- **Return your calls and emails.** Even after hours, as if there is such a thing these days. It's a lot easier to remain connected today than when I started out as a planner. Keep connected.
- **Build on your strengths.** Assess your communities' strengths and weaknesses
- **Remember each community is unique.** For example, Marblehead has an archaic law against feeding your servants lobster more than four days a week.

For another example: Londonderry had five orchards. We developed the Londonderry Orchard Preservation Plan using agricultural preservation rights, hiring UNH grad students to assess the international apple market and

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A Congressional selfie: Peter with Senator Markey at Commonwealth Fusion Systems, 2023.

Lessons Learned *cont'd*

interview our farmers as part of their market study, and developed the Apple Way Scenic Byway, complete with historic ovals denoting important historic information about street names in town. It gives low-hanging fruit a new meaning. Statistics would tell you Londonderry, NH is a suburban metro community. But that doesn't tell the whole picture. It's like living on an island, everyone wants to know how the fish are running. In Londonderry, everyone wants to believe they live in a rural agricultural community. It's a myth that people want to believe in. Hence the Apple Way.

Working with the historic commission I learned that flax, a wetlands plant, was an important asset as it was woven into Londonderry Linen, and Congress gave George Washington two shirts of Londonderry Linen on his retirement from the presidency. Yet another argument for protecting wetlands.

Who knew they had economic value in addition to their environmental benefits? The Londonderry Historic Commission hired a local farmer to grow flax for their museum.

Get involved, make friends, give back

I have read widely on military history and strategy and applied some of those lessons to the field of planning. One comes from BH Liddell-Hart's book, *Strategy*. It's called the indirect approach. My example is how I joined APA leadership using this strategy. I helped the Economic Development Division when the national Conference came to Boston in 1998. I joined the Division board, then was elected Chair of the ED Division, and moved onto the Divisions Council, became treasurer to Divisions Council. Then I joined the APA-MA Board and became President and joined the Chapter President's Council...where I rose to Vice Chair.

What I'm trying to say here is go to the National Planning Conference,

get involved in leadership at the local or national level, learn about cool stuff and incorporate it into your work. Make friends. Give back to the profession.

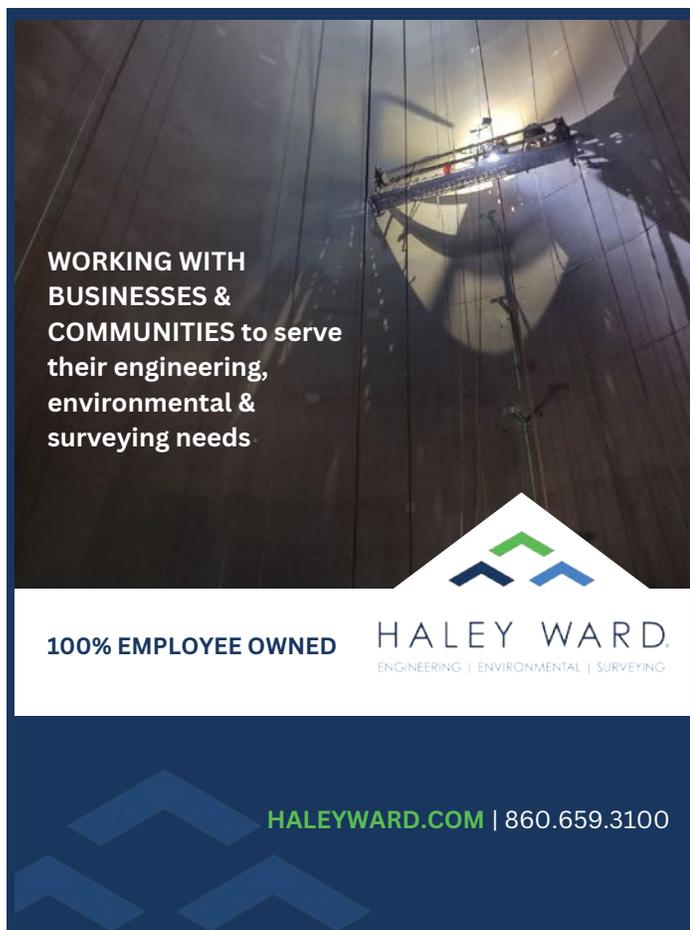
Having worked as an economic development director and a planning director, people ask me, what is the difference between an economic developer and a planner? One of us has a code of ethics.

Planners do cool stuff

Going to regional and national conferences exposed me to really cool stuff like vegetated roofs (aka green roofs) and interesting people. I became chair of Green Roofs for Healthy Cities because I had served on the board of the Canadian Eco Industrial Network and met Steven Peck before he dropped EIPs and focused on the green roof industry.

We can make an impact on the communities we represent, and those communities can make an impact on the world. Devens being an

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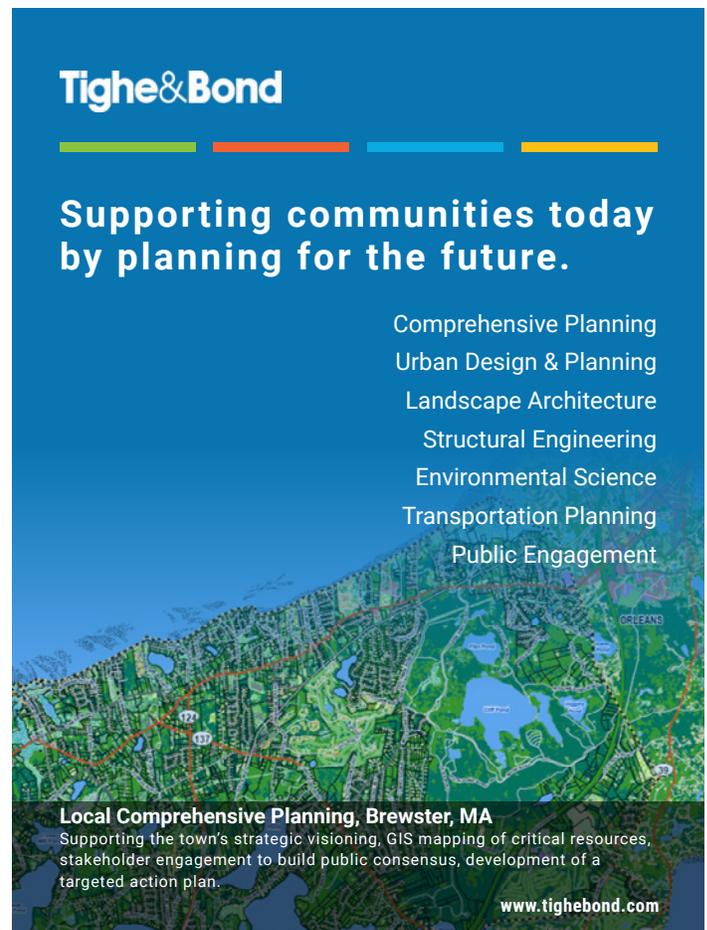


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Lessons Learned *cont'd*

Eco-Industrial Park with fast track unified permitting and a commitment to sustainable development helped attract Commonwealth Fusion Systems to Devens. They may be part of the solution to global warming and climate change. Bristol-Myers Squibb has a corporate vision that embraces sustainable development. Today they are producing medicines using a patient's own white blood cells treated at their Clinical Therapy Facility in Devens to weaponize them against the illness that afflicts them. Planners make an impact. Maybe it doesn't occur as quickly in your community as it does at Devens, but we do impact the communities we serve. Most planners grapple with the slow pace of change, or as I term it: glacial swiftness. Things happen much more quickly at Devens, and that is a real advantage.

As part of the 1994 Devens Reuse Plan, development was pro-

Part of being a planner is remembering that we look out for the interests of all the folks in a community, including those not in the room. You will need to learn to assess the political context in which you operate as a planner.

jected to reach 8.5 million square feet over 40 years. In 2022 Devens came up against the 8.5 million square foot development cap set in our Devens Zoning By-laws. Enter the world of politics. The DEC had a staff of three plus consultants. MassDevelopment, the state economic development agency jointly charged with redeveloping the former Fort Devens, has a legislative affairs staff. For some reason, they dropped the ball on addressing this issue, so the DEC

picked it up and pushed it across the finish line, having to ask the legislature to extend the development cap. We collaborated with the three host communities underlying Devens and agreed to some changes proposed by the Town of Harvard to limit the development to 12 million square feet. The legislature passed a bill raising the cap by 12 million square feet. So it goes. It's politics.

Part of being a planner is remembering that we look out for the interests of all the folks in a community, including those not in the room. Especially those not in the room. You will need to learn to assess the political context in which you operate as a planner.

People feel very strongly about development. Especially if it's near their property. It's no wonder, as a person's home is often their largest investment, and they want to protect it. Try and remember this when you are dealing with Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) or supporting

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AT THE SPEED OF...

YES



Left: Peter shows off the green wall at Devens planning HQ. Above: Using cones to prove fire trucks can navigate a proposed green street in Devens, 2022.

Lessons Learned *cont'd*

YesIMBY. Remember there are folks out there who would be happy with BANANA: Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything. Remember, you are a planner and our job is often to represent the unrepresented.

Doing cool stuff at Devens

So I've spent the last 24 years at Devens. I'm nothing if not persistent. But persistence can and often does produce results. Devens is a "quasi," a state agency that operates as a municipality. We're about the size of Watertown, but with a population of only 950 (not counting the Federal Dept. of Corrections Medical

Center/prison). We have over 1,800 acres of open space, with over a third of that land permanently protected open space. Our wetlands community identifier number is 352.

Devens is internationally recognized for its development, with 4,400 acres and 8.5 million square feet, involving over 110 businesses.

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We have a full workload in front of us as planners. Our planet is in peril. We have a tough road ahead of us but have new funding and tools to make a positive impact locally and globally. Let's get to work!

Lessons Learned *cont'd*

A UMass Donohue Institute 2020 report on Devens credits the Commonwealth with creating 7,000+ Jobs with an annual payroll of over \$547 million and an average annual wage of about \$90,000. Devens contributes over 3.8 billion annually to the state economy. We've done pretty well...

Devens is a certified 4STAR community through STAR Community Rating Service as well as a LEED-rated community. We used these sustainable community rating systems as a gap analysis tool to help us assess what we could do to better to fulfill our sustainable development mission and vision. This aided developing our Devens Forward Climate Action and Resilience Plan, developing regulations to assist with the creation of a new urbanist neighborhood, and comparing our small community's efforts to the UN Sustainable Development goals as well as our ongoing eye-tracking work with Professor Hollander.



Peter surrounded by friends and colleagues at his retirement party in July 2023.

Expect change

My wife Marilyn reminded me that before the pandemic our soon-to-be daughter-in-law, Jess, took a job with a growing tech company in the Denver area and was paid partly with stock. She liked the social aspects of working with a like-minded group. Can you say ZOOM? Think how this medium has changed community participation and public meetings! Neil Angus, Bob Mitchell, Ralph Wilmer and I participated in the APA Foundation initiative Futureshape 2019, seeking to forecast trends for planners; then the pandemic hit and our world turned upside down. As Paul Valery, the mid-twentieth-century French author wrote, "the Future isn't what it used to be."

And that is another lesson for planners: the need to be nimble and flexible and to use iterative planning processes, as the only constant is change.

We have a full workload in front of us as planners. Our planet is in peril. As planners we are conversant with the tools and methods for addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation. We have a tough road ahead of us but have new funding and tools to make a positive impact locally and globally. Let's get to work!

— Peter Lowitt, FAICP, former Director of Devens Enterprise Commission, is editor of this magazine.

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Public Art: Opportunity Lost and Found

by Mark Favermann

For many, public art conjures up images of bronze statues of a soldier on horseback, images of historically significant and/or forgotten politicians or leaders, or symbolic (often mythological) figures of metaphoric significance. But these days public art takes on a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and forms. It can be temporary or permanent. Because this kind of art is made to be visually and physically accessible to the public, the artist's goal is to embody universal concepts that should have both aesthetic and contextual value. The responsibility of public art is to encourage us to reflect in ways that will elevate our collective community interaction.

Contemporary public art takes many forms: Traditional (figurative, heroic, monuments, etc.); abstract (organic, geometric, etc.), site-specific; individual artist-inspired; digital-based art (projections, lighting, augmented reality, virtual reality, etc.); environmental (earthworks, reflections on climate change, etc.); and hybrids of all of these. Add in the various approaches to wall or ground murals and performance art while sprinkling in public or private funding, and there is a bouillabaisse of public art repasts served cold or hot.

Public art causes dialogue. Because that is what artists do with their art to speak, and often without spoken word. The best of art tells a story. The greatest of public art has an authentic narrative, for public art is a major conversationalist. But do we always see what it says?

The best of art tells a story. The greatest of public art has an authentic narrative, for public art is a major conversationalist. But do we always see what it says?



ArtWalk, Town of Hull, MA.



"The Resident," by SmugOne, Beyond Walls, 2019, Lynn, MA.

Unfortunately, some planning professionals and elected politicians discourage it, while others seem to encourage almost anything. At one end of the spectrum, New Urbanists incorrectly consider their housing plans and urban designs sufficiently public art. Walkability maven and urban planner Jeff Speck, a New Urbanist, strategically misunderstands public art only to be wall murals on older, deteriorating buildings. (More about his views later.) At the other end of the spectrum, often contemporary "placemakers" seem to want to incorporate intergenerational hands-on crafts, temporary activities at the expense of contextual aesthetics. In other words, everything is public art.

Others only want blue chip artists' works, whether site-appropriate or not; while still others resent the cost as well as the abstraction of contemporary public art. Aren't there more important things like affordable housing, feeding the hungry, public transportation, or sheltering the homeless? But isn't it true that by art, man (and woman) are nearest to the angels and farthest from the animals?

A positive, strategic, 21st-century approach to public art focuses on themes that embrace and interpret the history of a place and its surrounding population. This is a

continued next page



Public Art *cont'd*

form of community branding. It is sometimes expected to address social and/or environmental issues, ranging from our deteriorating environment to urban blight, including social equity and martyred heroes.

At its best, public art can foster a sense of place that help people make meaning from their surroundings. The actual act of creating artwork can build community relationships, while integrating public art into civic projects can generate community engagement and enrich projects. Incorporating public art into the planning and development process can keep the public engaged and assist with reinforcement of projects and foster community ownership.

A case in point: in his book *Walkable Cities Rules* (Island Press, 2018), urban planner Jeff Speck (lecturer, TED Talks, written several books, etc.) gets many things right in his best practices guidelines for a walkable urban environment. However, the Brookline-based writer goes way off the mark when he argues that “public art should be limited to blank walls.”

This notion reflects Speck’s prejudice against three-dimensional art. He considers most late 20th- and

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Clockwise from top: Assembly Row digital art, Somerville, MA; Birds of Audubon Circle by Mark Favermann; Alexander Calder Stabile at MIT in Cambridge.

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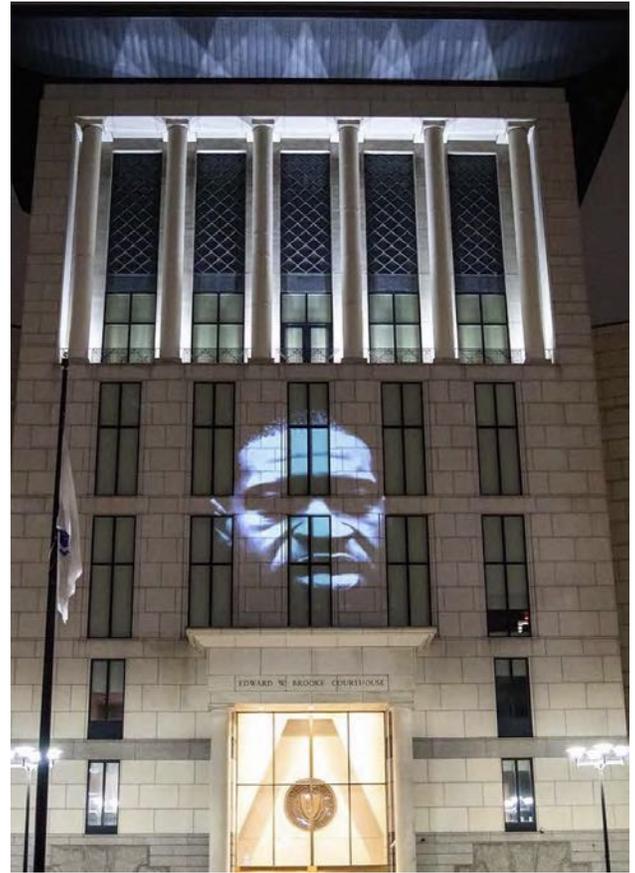
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Incorporating public art into the planning and development process can keep the public engaged and assist with reinforcement of projects and foster community ownership.

21st-century multidimensional public art to be lower budget “plop art” usually set willy-nilly (often distractingly to him) in a civic setting. However, he concedes that earlier large budget federal public art programs, drawing on the work of name-brand artists, were appropriate. According to Speck’s thinking, a community’s limited financial resources should limit attempts at public art. He feels that wall murals are cheap, therefore they are good; sculpture and digital art are expensive and therefore bad.

Though most of his urban philosophy deals beneficially with pedestrian-oriented planning, his major public art pronouncement Rule #93 in *Walkable Cities Rules* that imposing blank walls should be covered with large-scale murals is unimaginative absurdity. Somehow, Speck feels that only murals add to pedestrian comfort. This is ridiculous. Is this the result of personal trauma? Did boy Speck get hurt on his skateboard after trying to ride on a piece of metal sculpture?

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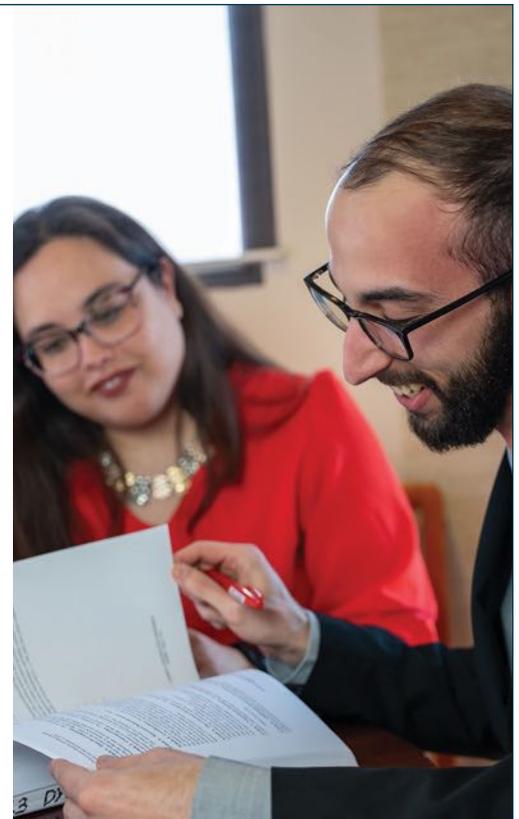


Black Lives Matter projection, Boston, MA.



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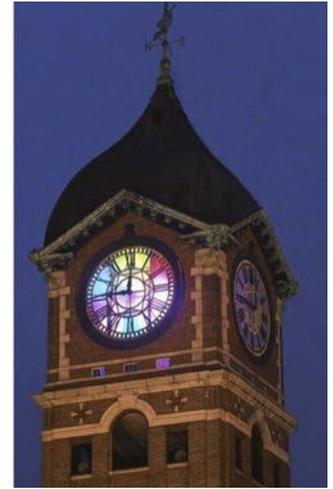
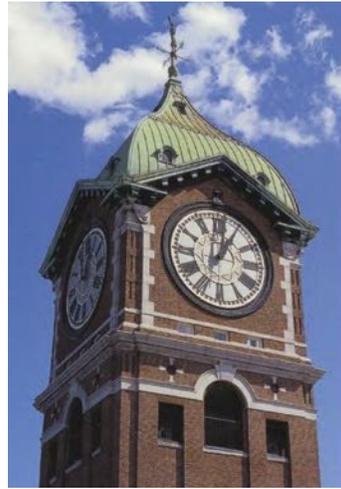


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In contrast, MIT professor Kevin Lynch's seminal *Image of the City* (MIT Press, 1960) argued that in the urban environment, objects made of various materials, of different scales and textures, greatly add to the human experience. According to Lynch, eclectic objects add the kind of visual clarity and legibility that people can immediately grasp, if only as reassuring markers. At the very least, an easily identifiable series of landmarks and markers orient individuals to pathways.

Lynch believed that a hierarchy of visual and other sensory cues offers a form of comforting orientation, an intuitive means of recognizing location. Unlike Speck, Lynch acknowledged the value of visual sensations, including color, shape, motion, and even light variation. Thus, as early as the '50s, Lynch expressed a prescient openness to forms that have evolved half a century later into contemporary public art.

In the last few decades, Boston along with Cambridge and Somerville have developed permanent public art collections and tours. Recent projects in and around the City of Boston include the many directions public art is taking. Major temporary mural efforts include Lynn's Beyond Walls, Worcester Walls, and Salem's Punto Neighborhood Project. Presently, there are many compelling public art programs throughout the Commonwealth including in New Bedford, Lenox, Pittsfield, North Adams, Holyoke,



Ayer Mill Clock Tower, special lighting by John Powell, Lawrence, MA.

Chicopee, Brockton, Springfield, Chelmsford, Newburyport, Hingham, and Hyannis.

Using matching funds from MassDevelopment and the Essex County Community Foundation, Lawrence, MA commissioned the late artist John Powell and others for *Iluminación Lawrence*, a citywide lighting project that created an immersive public art gallery using LED lighting and projections. The Town of Hull also used

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Left: Welcome to Pittsfield, MA mural; sculptured bike racks in Chelmsford, MA. Right: an "oldie but goodie": Civil War Memorial Buglar on Horseback in Brookline, MA.



of temporary public art to help generate a distinctive sense of place. It is an economic yet aesthetically enriching model for other Massachusetts towns and cities.

Public Art *cont'd*

crowdsourcing to have several artists create an ArtWalk of murals and sculpture located across from Nantasket Beach. For the last decade, the City of Easthampton has a vital city arts organization that fosters both functional sculpture and murals.

Underscoring connections between commerce and public art, Natick, MA, has transformed its downtown into a cultural district. The city is using various forms

For misguided urbanist Speck and his followers, walkability is an end rather than a means. But public art is much more than colorful wallpaper pasted over large blank spaces in communities. It is important that we (people, politicians, civic planners, etc.) understand that public art is more than casual environmental punctuation: it should animate and provoke, generate controversy as well as beauty. And it should certainly enlighten.

In *all* its varieties, public art is part of our unifying but stimulating contemporary civic conversation.

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



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Why Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Seems to Not be Working

by Nick Kiser, City of Chicopee

“The discipline itself was not sophisticated enough to be able to use these conditions, it was afraid of them.”

– Dr. Lesley Lokko speaking to Tara Oluwafemi on Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design’s “The Nexus” podcast about architecture and its abilities to handle “otherness.”

Dr. Lokko’s words above illustrate just how ill-equipped she finds the architecture field in being able to bridge the gaps necessary to create a culture of inclusivity.

In planning, we have made strides; but, like many of its predecessor movements, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) has been rendered trivial, often used merely as buzzwords. These processes seem inevitable, as this has followed the natural pattern of sociological behavior that can be observed throughout human history.

It seemed, due to the international necessity to introvert ourselves during the COVID-19 pandemic, that a global swath of people shared in the outrage at what sparked 2020’s

so-called “racial reckoning” after the murder of George Floyd, a result of over-aggressive and racially disproportionate policing that we have been trying to address in the United States (at least) since the establishment of civilian police forces in both the Antebellum and Reconstruction eras. The trendy solution was to make a public call to do hard work toward achieving DEI. Corporate and public entities, alike, sounded the bugle and joined the fray by creating officer positions for a DEI monitor or professional. This idea was inherently well-intentioned; however, sadly, it illuminated another systemic byproduct: the implicit expectation that the oppressed were to act as their own delegates as agents of change.



Nick Kiser

Historically, it has constantly been the role of the oppressed or marginalized to ignite a spark to enact change and save a society from itself and its oppressive systems. Although an arguably proven solution, it clearly is ineffective in solving the root problems that are so pervasive in society. Frankly, our problem seems to be that we neither think nor behave in meaningfully equitable and inclusive ways. For those in the United States, this has been recently and prominently on display in our quick adoption of tribalism and normalization of populism, favoring dichotomous compartmentalization over the harder task of full and methodic comprehension that consequently could lead to democratic action. What we have done in the wake of the “Post-Racial Reckoning” era reflects this behavior, as we have compartmentalized DEI, going so far as to abstract the concepts and charged an entity with handling all things that fall within the collection of keywords tangential to DEI. Furthermore, it seems to be the expectation that incumbent officers in these resulting positions come from within the communities that are constantly having to argue their worth for the

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City of Chicopee National Night Out, August 2023: Staff from the City of Chicopee Department of Planning & Development, along with their Project Consultant, Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture, Inc., were able to engage a diverse array of resident stakeholders for the “Sزت Park Master Plan Project.” The City, with over 65% of its Block Groups comprised of identified Environmental Justice Neighborhoods, heavily relies on events like this, held in one of its largest EJ Neighborhoods, to engage with its intergenerational, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic population.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion *cont'd*

chance to be equitably included in the various silos that are over-populated with dominant thought, ideology, and individuals who operate on implicit bias and their blind spots.

Planning is no different

It is true that there is no better representative than oneself to present an issue or to serve as a mediator on behalf of another's similar backgrounds, etc.; meanwhile, it is also true that this inherently places the onus upon the individual occupying that position to navigate the problem, thus allowing perpetuation of the perception that there is an absolution of marginalizing parties from having to perform the truly transformative and meaningful work of self-awareness and stewardship, critical elements of self-actualization. Planning, a discursive child to architecture and other disciplines, claims its interdisciplinary nature to render it equipped to address this; how-

ever, its foundation and resulting philosophy have been shaped in the same society with the same systemic pressures. This is a problem...What is the solution?

To clarify, the push for DEI officers to consist of representatives from persistently marginalized communities is not a bad start; however, therein lies a cautionary tale that tells that tokenism is in the wings waiting to arise as a byproduct. This indicates that, still, too few representatives of dominant groups are not putting in the hard work of having deeply personal and introspective analyses of ourselves and our complicity in the perpetuation of the systemic issues we are trying to address.

It is simply not enough to establish committees, boards, hold events, commit to the principles of DEI, etc. Again, this is a great start, but we can be more active. Taking the adage of actions being worth—insert-how-many-number-of words; lip service is exhausted and our actions, includ-

ing inaction, are saying that we are unwilling to do the hard work.

It is not on the marginalized communities to *have to* subvert oppressive systems to keep issues at the forefront of items to address. The remedy for this would be for all of us to take good, honest, hard look at ourselves and make the necessary changes, individually. With each of us living in truth, the specialized system that we recreate will inevitably follow suit.

— Nick Kiser is Associate Planner for the City of Chicopee. His approach to planning has been heavily shaped by both his academic background and his experiences, especially those of his living and working in various urban environments in the U.S. from coast to coast and in between. Due to his own intersectional background, he has grown a strong passion for diversity and inclusion, advocating for the understanding of the concept of equity as a tool to achieve DEI goals.



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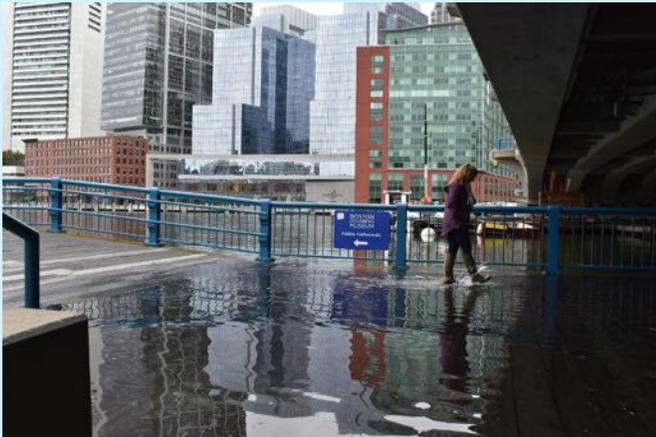
NEWS FROM CPM | Consulting Planners' Perspective

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



Upcoming Programs of Interest

Three programs of interest to planners and private consultants will be offered this fall by Consulting Planners of Massachusetts.



■ King Tide Tour

CPM once again is checking out the water's edge during King Tides to explore how our municipalities and the private sector are taking precautions and implementing resilient measures. Meet on Fort Point Channel HarborWalk near the Lilly genetic medicine institute (under construction) on A Street and learn about resiliency improvements along Fort Point Channel and the Inner Harbor. The tide will be extra high on October 27, which provides a perfect opportunity to see how sea-level rise is a threat to Boston. Walk along HarborWalk to explore different aspects of the resiliency challenges. Group lunch along the route (fee).

Friday, October 27, 2023

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at Fort Point Channel Harbor Walk

Lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Register at: www.consultingplanners.org

CM credits pending

■ Idea City

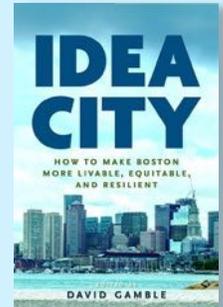
Is Boston the Idea City? How will ideas to make Boston more livable, equitable and resilient drive and change the City and surrounding communities? **David Gamble**, architect and planner, as well as the editor and essayist of *Idea City*, shares his ideas, along with leading real estate attorney **Matt Kieffer** at Goulston Storrs;



David Gamble

architect/planner **David Lee** and winner of the Presidential Design award for the Southwest Corridor transit project and principal at Stull & Lee; planner and CPM member **Daphne Politis, FAICP** and principal of Community Circle; and **Tamara Roy, AIA**, architect/urban design and principal at Stantec.

Kathleen "Kathy" McCabe, FAICP will moderate the discussion. Come to this provocative authors' discussion with respondents.



Tuesday, November 14, 2023 | 5:30 p.m.

Goulston & Storrs, 400 Atlantic Avenue, Boston

Refreshments

Register at: www.consultingplanners.org

CM credits pending.

■ Advocacy Planning, Ethics and the Unfinished Business of Planning

Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM) is sponsoring a session on advocacy planning, its role in the AICP code of ethics, and planners' obligation to serve the public. AICP Ethics credit (1.0) or 2.0 CM credits pending.

The session will feature a panel of four distinguished planners—**Jenn Goldson, AICP, David Lee, FAIA, Ken Reardon, and Pedro Soto**—who have devoted their careers to serving the public. The panelists see planning as one way to address societal problems and to push for changes in policies, design and institutions that work against equitable outcomes. The session will include the history and impact of advocacy planning and the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct as it relates to social justice, equity, interrelatedness of decisions, unconscious bias, and mitigating impacts of discriminatory plans and policies. There will be a substantial question and answer and discussion period.

Thursday, November 30, 2023 | 5:00 p.m.

Roxbury Community College, 1234 Columbus Ave.,

Boston; Accessible by the Orange Line

Refreshments

Register at: www.consultingplanners.org

CM credits pending

Reforming Boston's Zoning

by Kathleen "Kathy" McCabe, FAICP

The need to expedite permitting review and eliminate delays has been a long-time concern in Boston, which has grown more acute with the housing crisis. Time required for permitting and design review – sometimes requiring eighteen or more months – has contributed to increased costs of housing. The increased costs are due not just to the cost of permitting, but also to rising costs of construction due to delays. In many cases over the last couple years, the delays have contributed easily 30 to 50 percent additional costs, further exacerbating the high cost of housing in Boston.

Mayor Michelle Wu announced recently that the City of Boston will tackle overhauling its zoning code, citing the January 2023 report by architect and Cornell professor Sarah Bronin, founder of the National Zoning Atlas. This announcement drew praise from many housing advocates. While reforming zoning is an admirable goal, there are some early action steps that Mayor Wu and the City can take. Here are two steps that could start to make a big difference.

1) Expedite Permitting by Involving All Relevant Departments in a Simultaneous Review. The Mayor and Boston's Planning Development Agency (BPDA) should take a lesson from the many Massachusetts cities and towns who convene representatives from all applicable city and town departments, from the fire and police chiefs to conservation agents, health agents, public works, housing, and transportation planners to work with BPDA planners to review proposed projects. In Boston, this process is still done serially and adds time, sometimes months, to a project review. While some of the departmental silos entailed in design review have been minimized, more work needs to be done to include all relevant departments, not just planners from multiple offices.

2) Make the Zoning Viewer more prominent and complete. Boston should take a look at San Francisco's "Find My Zoning," which enables a resident, business owner, prospective buyer, developer, or curious citizen to look up any address in the city, see a map, get details as to the zoning, names, and links of the applicable plans, as well as the name and email of the planning manager for the area. San Francisco also includes information as to applicable zoning, zoning overlays, historic preservation, environmental, and air pollution regulations, as well as information as to nearby transit and commercial districts. Boston has some of this information already in its Zoning Viewer, but the Viewer could be made information richer and more user-friendly. This can occur incrementally but needs to start. A good place to start would be the name and email of the applicable planning manager.

As part of zoning reform, BPDA needs to begin the hard work of identifying contradictory sections to foster consistency and ease of use. For years, Boston has added layers and chapters (aka articles and sections) to its zoning code. Integrating city-wide plans with neighborhood plans and goals is long overdue. However, neighborhood planning and small area plans remain important, and should not be diminished in the name of zoning reform.

Bronin's report on Boston's zoning includes a rant about its length, citing the 3,791 pages of Boston's code, and recommends targeting a code length of 500 pages. Bronin compares the length of Boston's code with cities with similar populations such as El Paso, Oklahoma City, Nashville, Detroit, while ignoring density. Boston is the 6th most densely populated city over 100,000 by land area in the U.S. One of the purposes of zoning is not just the focus on land and land use, but also the public

health of a community's people – both residents and workers. The need for a finer grain of use regulations is warranted in more densely populated areas, where finding the right balance of uses, impacts, and competing concerns is often more challenging. It's just easier to bump elbows in a compact city, like Boston, and that's not always a good thing. Comparing Boston to El Paso, Oklahoma City, and Nashville is like comparing Boston to the Massachusetts communities of Warren, Spencer, and North Brookfield in terms of density, or Waltham, which has a comparable density to Detroit.

The Bronin report suggests Boston consider form-based zoning. Somerville, the densest city in the Commonwealth, undertook a major update and overhaul of its zoning ordinance within the last decade with extensive neighborhood and community input. Somerville adopted form-based zoning and now has a "new" zoning ordinance consisting of 598 pages, including maps and text. Cambridge, which is also more densely populated than Boston, has a zoning ordinance of 513 pages with recent amendments. New York City, the most densely populated U.S. city, has a zoning ordinance with 3,527 pages. 500 pages is an arbitrary number. What is important is not length, but clarity and ease of use and understanding.

City-wide plans, neighborhood plans, and small-area plans all have value. The City of Boston needs all three, and they need to be integrated and balanced in zoning regulations. This requires planning and discussion at the front end. Boston historically has postponed many of the challenging discussions until a developer makes a specific proposal. The years of avoiding front-end planning discussions has yielded a time-consuming permitting process that is costly and aggravates the housing crisis.

Zoning reform needs to be coupled with good planning and front-end discussions with meaningful participation of residents and all stakeholders. Zoning implements plans – and details make a difference.

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The PDO Corner

by Ralph Willmer, FAICP, MA Chapter PDO

The November 2023 AICP Exam registration window opens on Monday October 2nd and closes on October 31st. AICP has prepared a useful AICP Certification Guide that will take you through the process (see www.planning.org/media/document/9227012). For those who have recently passed the exam, you can submit your experience documentation between December 4th and December 29th. For more information on the One Path to AICP program, see www.planning.org/certification.

The MA Chapter website also has a lot of information on the AICP exam, as well as study resources for the exam at www.apa-ma.org/professional-development/aicp-exam-resources.

If you are interested in taking the AICP exam in 2024, the MA Chapter will again be offering our AICP Exam Prep Class in March/April 2024. Details regarding the class schedule and registration will be available early in the year.

Finally, I want to belatedly congratulate all the Massachusetts Chapter members who passed the AICP exam in November 2022 and this past May:

Adria Boynton

Keith Benoit

Barbara Carboni

Kyle Casiglio

Gary Chan

Nicholas Cohen

Dominique DuTremble

Leah Epstein

Eric Gemperline

Mary Geschwindt

Andrew Graminski

Christopher Hayes

Qingyang Jiang

Joseph King

Daniel Lamere

Alexis Lanzilotta

Lauren Lind

Tyler Maren

Vasso Mathes

Brendan McIntyre

Nicholas Mitch

Shane O'Brien

Gabrielle Queenan

Gabriel Ramos

Kaila Sauer

Patrick Shannon

Noah Slovin

Takashi Tada

Megan Trudel

Wenzheng Wang

Robert Watchilla

Jessica Wilson

Alissa Zimmer

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions to pdo@apa-ma.org.

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