

MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

A publication of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association
Massachusetts Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Summer 2024



DCAMM's All-Agency Zero Carbon Initiative

page 3

Plus: *Street Furniture: Making Public Spaces Comfortable and Charming...7 | Distinguished Planner Lecture at UMass Boston...12 | APA-Endorsed Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act...13 | News From CPM...14 | The PDO Corner...16 | Legislative and Policy Report...17*



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Cover: Solar carport installation at Roxbury Community College, part of a recent set of ambitious improvements resulting in energy, water, and greenhouse gas reductions.

From the President



Welcome to another edition of *Massachusetts Planning!*

This quarter has been a busy one for our chapter – we’ve held two movie screenings and discussions, held our annual AICP Prep Course, honored Ralph Willmer as he gave this year’s Distinguished Planner Lecture at UMass Boston, hosted several social events, participated in state and national legislative efforts, kicked SNEAPA 2024 planning efforts into high gear, and participated in both the in person and online National Planning Conferences!

The SNEAPA 2024 Call for Sponsors is live, visit our website (www.sneapa.org) if you’d like to be a sponsor or exhibitor at this year’s conference in Springfield! The Call for Sessions will be distributed soon and we’re excited to announce some of the other conference details over the coming weeks – including the Keynote Speaker and Reception venue. If you haven’t already, hold November 7th & 8th for this year’s conference.

We have recently signed on to an APA National letter supporting the Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act. You can read more about the proposed legislation on [page 11](#) of this magazine.

It wouldn’t be a President’s Message without me reminding you that we’re always looking for volunteers – be in touch if you’d like to work with us!

We’ll be slowing down a bit for the summer months, but will have a few get togethers, social events, and CM opportunities. Make sure to read our biweekly email newsletter for the most up-to-date calendars. Enjoy the summer. We look forward to connecting with many of you this season – hopefully outdoors in some gorgeous weather!

Alison

Alison LeFlore, AICP
president@apa-ma.org



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DCAMM's All-Agency Zero Carbon Initiative

by Adam Baacke, DCAMM

When she announced the appointment of Melissa Hoffer as the first statewide Climate Chief, Governor Healey observed that “The climate crisis is Massachusetts’ greatest challenge, but there is enormous opportunity in our response.”

The Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) owns over 61 million gross square feet of buildings, some dating to the 18th century, and leases another 7.5 million square feet. Building on legislative mandates and the provisions of Executive Order 594, DCAMM has been tasked with reducing carbon emissions from state facilities by 95% by 2050. The impacts of a changing climate on DCAMM’s buildings range from dramatic increases in cooling over-taxing systems that were engineered for the New England climate of several decades ago to significantly greater risk to coastal properties like the Massachusetts Maritime Academy or UMass Boston campuses due to rising seas and more intense and frequent storm events. While the motivation and the commitment are clear, decarbonizing the entire portfolio is a massive

multi-billion-dollar undertaking that requires a comprehensive agency-wide approach.

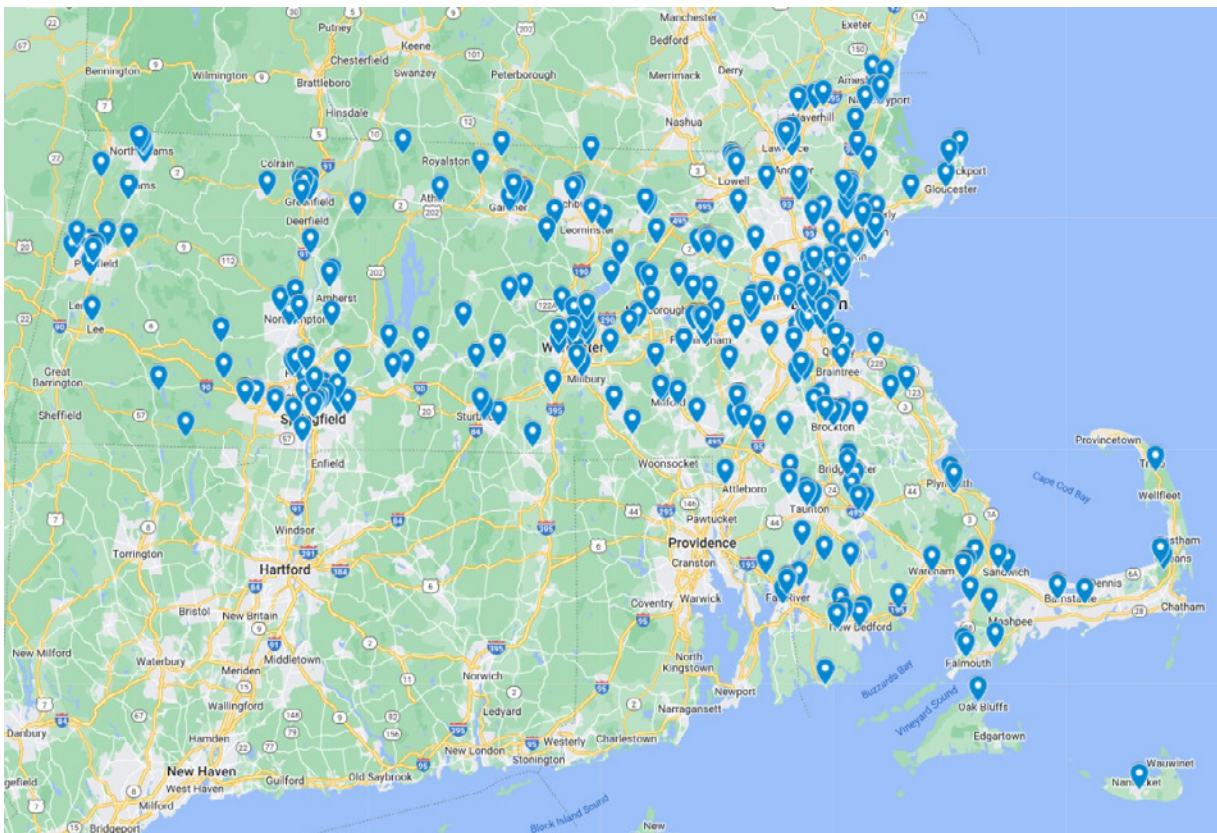
Fortunately, the work has begun with 2.2 million square feet already fossil-fuel free and another million square feet under-way. DCAMM-owned properties also generate over 20,000 MWh of renewable energy annually. Flexible work has reduced the state’s office footprint considerably and changing demands for state services – from reduced higher education enrollments to lower populations in correctional institutions and state hospitals – have led to numerous buildings and entire campuses being declared surplus.

DCAMM now monitors energy consumption at most state properties in real time through its Commonwealth Energy Intelligence system, helping identify and prioritize locations for energy efficiency measures. The agency and its partners have also completed or will soon



Adam Baacke

continued next page



DCAMM’s Energy Team has completed more than 500 energy and sustainability projects over the last 20 years.

Zero Carbon Initiative *cont'd*

complete decarbonization road maps for the campuses that make up more than half of its building inventory. These studies look at existing systems and building performance and develop a clear strategy for eliminating fossil fuels at scale, often in phases.

These plans help inform implementation efforts which take multiple forms. At several locations, including Salem State University and the Old Colony Correctional Center in Bridgewater, DCAMM is managing projects to decarbonize campuses by replacing central utility plants with geo-exchange HVAC systems. In Fall 2023, the agency distributed \$50 million in formula decarbonization grants to all 29 higher education institutions, enabling a variety of campus projects across the sector that represents half of the state's building square footage and more than two-thirds of its carbon emissions.

DCAMM's Energy Team has also implemented more than 450 energy efficiency and decarbonization projects at state facilities throughout the Commonwealth over the past two decades. Much of this work has been implemented under the progressive provisions of 2008 Green Communities Act which allow state agencies, building authorities, or local governments to contract directly with utility-managed MassSave vendors for energy conservation projects under \$300,000. Combined with larger comprehensive energy efficiency and decarbonization

While the motivation and the commitment are clear, decarbonizing the entire DCAMM portfolio is a massive multi-billion-dollar undertaking that requires a comprehensive agency-wide approach. Fortunately, the work has begun...

measures, these projects are saving 926,000 million BTUs of energy annually, enough to heat and power approximately 10,000 Massachusetts homes, and have eliminated over 79,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases annually, equivalent to taking 17,000 gas-powered cars off the road.

In addition, all capital projects that DCAMM manages or funds are decarbonization projects. New buildings are fossil-fuel free, LEED silver or higher, and perform at least 20% better than base energy code requirements. DCAMM is required by law to certify studies for all renovation and construction projects impacting state buildings that cost more than \$300,000. As part of that process, every study must identify and give priority to opportunities to reduce energy consumption, electrify buildings, and meet Executive Order 594 requirements for existing buildings.

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Zero Carbon Initiative *cont'd*

The agency's decarbonization initiative extends well beyond capital projects. DCAMM is responsible for space planning for most executive and judicial branch agencies. In this capacity, the agency has implemented Future of Work standards which take advantage of hybrid and remote delivery of services and work practices to dramatically reduce space demand, lessening the need for any energy use, with or without fossil fuels. Leading by example, DCAMM has reduced its own central office footprint by more than 60% relative to 2020 levels.

The Future of Work standards are used to develop space programs for leasing solicitations. These requests for proposals also routinely include location criteria that favor walkable and transit-served sites and encourage private landlords to incorporate efficiency and decarbonization measures, from EV charging facilities to fully electrified heating and cooling systems, into buildings leased to the Commonwealth.

As the agency responsible for disposing of surplus state real property, DCAMM also uses that process to strongly encourage private redevelopment teams to employ the same rigorous climate standards the agency applies to its own projects. Examples of this include the redevelopment of the Chelsea Veterans' Home Dormitory and the upcoming public-private partnership to

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Zero Carbon Initiative *cont'd*

redevelop the Bunker Hill Community College campus.

Agency operations are also focused on eliminating fossil fuel use. The agency is leading a statewide effort to install charging infrastructure across the Commonwealth to support the electrification of the state's vehicle fleet. DCAMM's operations and maintenance team has been converting their powered maintenance equipment to battery electric wherever possible.

Of course, it is also important to preserve the natural environment across the state as both a community asset and for carbon absorption. As the agency responsible for facilitating real estate acquisitions, DCAMM helps conserve hundreds of acres of land for recreation and agricultural purposes annually.

The agency has embraced Governor Healey's challenge and looks forward to achieving ambitious decarbonization goals in the coming years.

– Adam Baacke is Commissioner of the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). He brings more than 25 years of experience with planning, design, capital project management, real estate, community development, and public administration, most recently serving as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Development at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.



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Street Furniture: Making Public Spaces Comfortable and Charming



by Mark Favermann

One of three "Cat Benches" at the City of Cambridge's Valenti Branch Library by Judy McKie (2004).

They add comfort and sometimes even charm. When not there, there certainly seems to be something missing. Though the term sounds like no longer used, broken, overused and/or out of style stuff you put out on the curb to be picked up by trash services, junk removers, roadside pickers, or even needy neighbors, *street furniture* actually includes gateways, benches, light posts, planters, transit stops, bike racks, informational signs, and kiosks, etc., set in public space. *Street Furniture* is a collective term for functional objects and equipment that are installed along streets and roads for various purposes. Seasonal banners and Christmas decorations all fit in here as well. *Street Furniture* is a collective term for functional objects and technical elements that are installed along streets, pathways, and roads for various purposes. The best street furniture embraces aesthetics, visual identity, function, pedestrian accessibility, and road safety. Design and placement inevitably should follow form and function.

The best street furniture embraces aesthetics, visual identity, function, pedestrian accessibility, and road safety. Design and placement inevitably should follow form and function.

A distinction used to be made between street furniture and street hardware with the latter including utility boxes, fire hydrants, tree grates, tree guards, low fencing, and bollards. Today, the term *street furniture* is applied to both categories as street hardware can often be beautified by decorative painting and other hardware elements can be sculpturally enhanced. But they all fit as part of the public streetscape, enriching threads of our urban fabric.

A major component of the city or town's circulation, totally democratic, universally shared, and generationally diverse, *sidewalks* are a human-scale zone of serious walking,

continued next page

Street Furniture *cont'd*

pleasurable strolling, casual stopping and starting, window shopping and significant social interaction. These pedestrian pathways should be clear of obstructions and barriers. Dangerous and disorienting, self-entitled bicyclists and scooter riders sometimes breach these concrete paths but should be totally verboten.


A street furniture list could include gateways, benches, bollards, kiosks, street signs, litter bins, traffic barriers, streetlights, bus shelters, fountains, public lavatories, bicycle racks, tree guards, tree grates, public clocks, memorials and historical markers, fences and railings, sidewalk pavers, transit entrances, crosswalks, utility boxes, planters, and even traffic and directional signs. Public art can also be considered part of street furniture.

Creative approaches by artists, architects, and designers should be encouraged by the powers-that-be in cities and towns. Several Massachusetts communities have realized this, such as Cambridge, Somerville, Wakefield, Chelmsford, Springfield, Easthampton, Greenfield, and Natick. Examples of refusal to be functionally creative in public spaces can be seen in the overly long administration of the City of Boston's former Mayor Thomas Menino. Several thoughtfully proposed projects for various city neighborhoods were consistently spurned approval and assistance. There was this nonsensical fear

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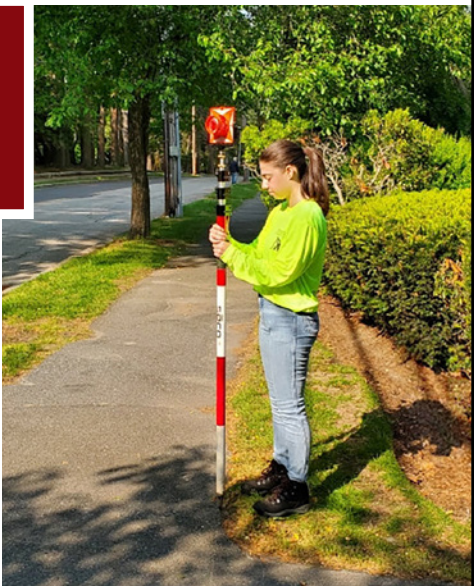
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Street Furniture *cont'd*

factor embedded into the mayor and his cronies regarding the supposed shock of the new for his constituents.

Street Furniture can be instituted and commissioned by several institutions, agencies and departments including Art Commissions, Parks and Recreation Departments, public libraries, public schools, independent nonprofit organizations, etc. However, in every case a local Department of Public Works (DPW) needs to be involved. DPWs are notorious for saying “no.” Overworked, indifferent, or just change adverse, like your bank or insurance company, they are rarely your friends.

To celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Fenway Park in 2012, a plan for specially designed temporary crosswalks was submitted to the then Boston Redevelopment Authority (now Boston Planning and Development Agency). The colorful designs were approved by the then BRA staff, but the project needed to be signed-off on by Boston’s Department of Public Works. Usually this is perfunctory, but the DPW turned down the request, arguing that the BRA was not a real City agency and couldn’t institute crosswalk changes. The folks who oversee potholes, street cleaning, and streetlight repair saw themselves as authorities for making aesthetic decisions. Opportunity was lost.

An imaginative outdoor seating program for Boston Public Library branches was also nixed during the Menino regime. The project was to have Boston-area



Sculptural Bike Rack, Washington Gateway Main Street in Boston’s South End, by Artists for Humanity (2018).

artists create a series of outside benches for reading and conversation. The BPL hierarchy liked the idea, but this project was considered too innovative by the Menino administration, which feared public art. Perhaps some Philistine voters would have been offended by them?

Several years ago, the Longwood Medical Area planning council, which is made up of 43 institutions, museums, hospitals, and schools (Children’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, The Gardner Museum, etc.) rejected DNA outdoor furniture – benches, bike racks, drinking fountains – that had been suggested to enhance

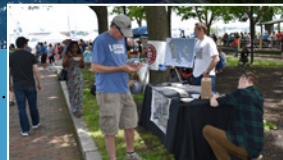
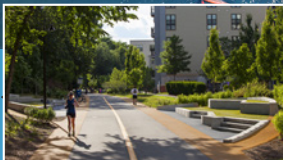
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Street Furniture *cont'd*

boring, monolithic Life Science towers. The mostly medically trained and academic types felt that custom designed elements would be too costly and untested. An example of being smart in one important area doesn't mean that you are knowledgeable in another, they were unaware that even designs from catalogues took the same time to fabricate and install. In other words, if Johnson & Johnson, Merck, or Pfizer didn't make it, they didn't want it.

After the MBTA contracted with the worldwide company of JC Decaux for a percentage of the advertising

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(Clockwise from top) Adorned Jersey Barriers, Brookline, MA (2021); Zigzag Benches at Boston HarborArts, East Boston, by Mark Favermann (2012); Enhanced Utility Box, Newton Center, Newton, MA (2015); Bus Shelter in Bucharest, Romania (2020).



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Street Furniture *cont'd*

garnered by free but boring bus shelters, slick huge nondescript kiosks and even a few public toilets set throughout the region, the Menino and Walsh administrations saw these free (but money-making) structures as a no-brainer, and they were put everywhere. Where is Boston's brand on these? They would look the same in Boise or Bayonne – and probably do. European cities do a much better job of creatively connecting function and form. A sense of place should supersede repetitive uniformity.

To be fair, everything about street furniture is not soft puppies, pink clouds, and marshmallows. To ward off homelessness, physical abuse and vandalism, different tactics of *defensive architecture* often include metal spikes on flat surfaces, bus shelter seats that uncomfortably shift forward, water sprinklers, intrusive bollards and metal, temperature indifferent benches. But the positives greatly outweigh the negatives.

Adding personality, character, and even familial presence, creatively inspired street furniture enhances our environment, our sense of place, and even our public health. It also strengthens our sense of the community's social and historical value. Each community needs to think seriously about maintaining and building its distinctive charm, and even uniqueness. And street furniture is a powerful tool to that end, when strategically applied.

Street furniture can make compelling contributions to our public spaces. The data-driven obsession with efficiency, lower cost, and homogeneity blocks what is needed now – thoughtful creativity and imagination. Our communities need to meet these new challenges. We all deserve it.

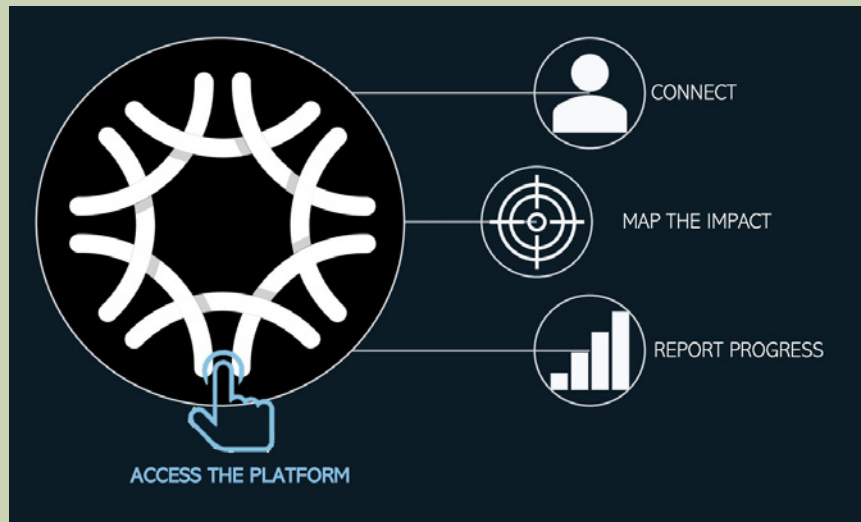
– Mark Favermann is principal of Boston-based Favermann Design, a creative urban design and planning practice involved in community branding, way-finding, strategic placemaking, storefront and façade enhancement, streetscapes, and public art.

The Planning2050 Platform Has Arrived!

Planning2050 is an Initiative that will help transform planning practice to ensure positive outcomes when planning for social equity, resilience, and climate change. It also aims to accelerate data analysis and systems thinking in Urban & Community Planning, while aligning planning practice with global UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Any user of this platform will be contributing to making planning a high-performing profession, aligning new technologies with our daily decision-making and adaptation. As a final product of APA's Division Council Grant, the Planning Guide is also available to every planner in the world who wishes to get involved with the transformational PLG2050 initiative!

Access the platform at planningcommitment.org or download the [Planning2050 Guide](#).



AICP BYLAW AMENDMENTS

The AICP Commission is proposing amendments to the AICP Bylaws including improved consistency in terminology, editorial changes, clarifications to existing policies, and updates to others to reflect modern business practice.

You can learn more about the proposed amendments and corresponding rationale at www.planning.org/leadership/bylaws/revisions/aicp.

AICP members are invited to review the proposed amendments and submit comments by Friday July 5 at 11:59 p.m. PT.

Distinguished Planner Lecture at UMass Boston on April 4, 2024

by Ralph Willmer, FAICP

I was honored to have been chosen to give the second annual Distinguished Planner Lecture, following the lecture presented by Peter Lowitt, FAICP in 2023. I figured that at worst, my lecture would be the second best ever given...I was asked to provide a summary of the lecture.

I spent most of my career as planning consultant—first working as a planner in an environmental and land use law firm (McGregor & Associates), and then as a planner in a multi-disciplinary firm that was founded as a transportation engineering and design firm (VHB). I ended my career at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), which was my only public sector job, and my only job with an organization whose primary function was land use planning. It was great to work with people that spoke the same language as me (i.e., planning)!

I wanted to talk about the challenges and opportunities of pursuing a career in planning. My hope was to inspire the future planners coming out of the five accredited planning schools in MA. Planning can be hard work, but good work.

In no particular order, here are some of the points I wanted to emphasize:

- Think about what you would like to do in your career. I started as a consultant, but many planners tend to start in the public sector. Make sure you learn the planning and zoning laws in the state where you like to find work (especially in MA with its quirky and archaic statutes). Take advantage of opportunities in school to work on projects where you may learn these things because it may not always be taught in the classroom. You want to be able to hit the ground running when you start your new job.

- Recognize that as you start out, you may be given specific tasks that may not be as “exciting” as you hoped, such as permit reviews, writing staff reports, staffing board and commission meetings.

- Planning is a transformational vocation. Eventually, you will be given the opportunity to work on projects that can result in long-lasting changes to a community such as comprehensive planning, zoning, plan implementation, etc.

- The planning field has grown and expanded over the course of my career. It is more than simply preparing plans and zoning codes. Planning now encompasses public health, arts and culture, energy, food, sustainability, and many other related topics. You can find positions

that are more of a land use generalist, or you can develop a more specific expertise.

- You need to develop a thick skin in this line of work and understand that you cannot take things personally. Planning involves lots of interactions with the public beyond just public meetings and hearings. The acrimony that can sometimes be experienced will be disheartening, but there are many positive interactions when dealing with the public as well. Just don't let it get you down. I have been thrown under the bus by clients and have the tire track scars to prove it, but I also have great memories of successful meetings and positive feedback. A sense of humor also helps.

- Expect the unexpected and learn the art of compromise. Be prepared to handle last-minute changes and be able to adapt at a moment's notice. For example, I had to change meeting plans on site when participants thought they had a better idea as to how a meeting should be conducted.

- Learn as you go. Attend meetings, lunch-n-learns, conferences, and webinars. And then, share your expertise when given the chance.

- Get involved with the American Planning Association (APA). I have made life-long friends, learned so much from colleagues, and felt like I made solid contributions to the profession. Also volunteer in your community. That can be rewarding, and give you great insight into how municipalities deal with planning issues.

- Pursue your American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification. APA/AICP has now created the AICP Candidate program so you can take the exam at any time, even if you are just coming out of school. There are many advantages and benefits to the AICP certification including better salaries, qualifications for career advancement, and project management opportunities, among others.

- As AICP Ethics Officer, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Aspirational Principles in the AICP Code of Ethics. Read them and you will see what a planning career really entails.



Ralph Willmer, FAICP

APA-Endorsed Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act

Leaders in the U.S. House and Senate have introduced a new APA-endorsed bill that would add one more tool to planners' toolbox for advancing local and regional housing reform. This bill would make HUD a better policy partner to communities embracing housing reform by providing ideas and information that leverage federal expertise, increase transparency through new tools like a national zoning atlas, and spur local innovation. This legislation was directly influenced and shaped by APA and aligns with this year's policy priority focus on housing supply and zoning reform.

More information:

www.planning.org/blog/9291964/making-hud-a-better-partner-for-local-zoning-reform/

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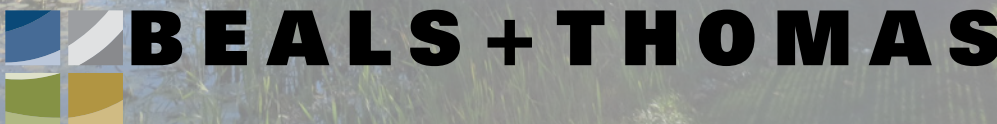
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Lessons from the Housing Crisis

Fifty-five years ago in 1969, as Massachusetts was tackling the challenges of siting affordable housing and what was termed as a housing crisis at the time, the legislature enacted the Comprehensive Permitting Act (at the time called anti-snob zoning) or 40B. 40B requires all municipalities to have at least 10% of the local housing inventory as protected affordable housing (as listed on DHLC's subsidized housing inventory (SHI)). Today, over five decades later, only 20% of communities are 40B compliant with ten percent or more of their housing stock restricted as affordable housing. Nearly half—48% of the cities and towns in the Commonwealth have less than five percent of their housing stock designated as affordable and protected. Because of low compliance, statewide only 9.68% of all housing units are protected affordable housing units.

One can reasonably assume that many of the 71 compliant communities would not have enacted the regulations, made the investments, and worked to create affordable housing in their respective municipality if it weren't for the state 40B requirements. The threat of the state superseding local control and zoning has been effective in realizing new affordable housing development.

Fifty-plus years later, there is still an acute need for affordable housing. Over forty percent (41%) of the households in the Commonwealth have incomes below 80% of annual median household income (AMI), and thirty percent of MA families are below 80% AMI. Over one-third (35.6%) of all MA households are housing cost-burdened, including half of all renters.

Since enactment of 40B, the Commonwealth and quasi-public agencies have developed a wide range of housing incentives, financing tools, regulatory tools, as well as planning assistance to help municipalities comply and produce needed affordable housing. MA is a leader in affordable housing finance and CDCs have played a key role in production.

The Commonwealth has experimented using carrots, such as Smart Growth Housing (40R) and the Starter Home Initiative, as well as the Housing Choice program to encourage and reward communities for housing production. These tools have boosted

housing production and enabled housing and mixed-use projects to move forward. However, not enough communities have participated.

In 2020, the Governor and legislature amended state statutes to allow a simple majority of Town Meeting or governing body authorities to adopt local zoning processes governing multi-family housing and mixed-use zoning to be adopted by a simple majority aiming to reduce regulatory hurdles for new housing.

The following year in 2021, the legislature enacted the MBTA Communities Act requiring communities benefiting from major transit investments and services to zone for higher density, multi-family housing. The location and dimensional regulations related to new multi-family housing and its production was left to local control and preferences in each city and town. The MBTA Communities Act requires adoption of zoning not production—that's setting the table. Communities are going to need to take more steps to actually produce housing and work with residents, developers, state, and quasi-agencies to actually construct housing—affordable and market rate—to address the housing crisis.

Only twelve communities have rejected zoning that complies with the MBTA Communities Act, of which ten towns are not compliant with 40B and five towns have less than 5% of their housing stock on the SHI.

Solving the housing crisis is important not just for addressing the critical need for shelter, but overall, for the state's economy and well-being of residents and communities.

There are lessons from our efforts over the past half-century to tackle the need for affordable housing that we as planners should glean and apply to our continuing work addressing housing needs. The lessons should also inform our work on other key, interrelated challenges, such as the climate crisis and transportation funding. Housing, climate, and transport are each complex problems demanding creative and resolute action. We have to do better and learn from our past work because we do not have another fifty years to solve these challenges.

continued next page

Some Lessons:

1. Voluntary participation, although desirable, is insufficient to meet local and statewide goals and needs.
2. A mix of policies, incentives, carrots, and regulations are needed.
3. Clear benchmarks and target goals are needed. The basis for the benchmarks and goals needs to be easily understood and communicated. Benchmarks and goals need to be readily documented, measured, and reported publicly at least annually.
4. Not every housing project is wonderful. Projects need to be reviewed and analyzed. Some may need to be revised and fine-tuned, and others may warrant rejection. But projects often don't need to be perfect.
5. Public input is important and can often yield better projects over time when a spirit of dialogue and collaboration is fostered amongst stakeholders to jointly solve issues.
6. Education and awareness efforts need to be ongoing. Communication is key.

7. The bully pulpit is important. Leaders – state, local, nonprofit – elected and appointed need to be on board and speak out.

8. Collaboration between public, private, and non-profit sectors is needed for complex problem solving. Effective solutions will likely require changes in policy, regulations, permitting processes, financing, project implementation and operations. Each component must be addressed, but we need to start, and sustain chipping and sometimes taking leaps, to solve the problem, whether it is housing, climate, or transportation finance.

8. Delay is not our friend.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to CPM member **David Gamble**, who just celebrated 15 years in business as Gamble Associates providing planning, urban design, and architecture services.



The PDO Corner

by Bill Nemser, AICP, MA Chapter PDO



I need help! Yeah, O.K., I can hear the wisecracks already with that opening, but the fact of the matter is, I do need your help identifying topics you want to learn more about.

APA-MA always tries to make sure its local education programs offer AICP CE credits. But while earning AICP CE credits is always great, as a professional planner there is a laundry list of other reasons to broaden your planning horizons by attending educational programs.

To start, there is *always* a lot of stuff going on that we might not know as much about as we probably should; it's a safe bet that learning about some of these topics could help us do our jobs better. But also as planners, we are often expected to be familiar with a wide range of professionally-related issues that could just as easily be in our wheelhouse as not. Nowhere is that more evident than on the [MassPlanners Listserv](#). It only takes a quick perusal of the day's email chains to witness the insane variety of topics that are being discussed, dissected, pondered and hopefully, resolved on a daily basis. But this is good and usually, very helpful stuff!

Well, your friends at APA-MA are trying to ensure you have opportunities to learn about a wide-range of topics and also bring you programming that you think you need; which brings me to why I need YOU to help me! I am asking each of you to dig deep and think about what topics you think we have not addressed adequately or maybe at all. So let's mix it up with some new educational topics! If you think it might help you do your job better, be of interest to your colleagues or just think it is a corking good idea, send it my way at pdo@apa-ma.org. Even better if you can suggest a speaker!

Fall 2024, AICP Exam

A reminder, the November 2024 AICP exam registration window opens on October 1st and closes on October 31st. The exam window is open November 4-30, 2024.

AICP has prepared a useful [Certification Guide](#) that will take you through the process. For more information on the One Path to AICP program, visit: www.planning.org/certification.

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

Cheers,
Bill

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Legislative and Policy Report

by Ralph R. Wilmer, FAICP, Legislative & Policy Officer



The MA Chapter is tracking a number of bills affecting our work as planners and I wanted to provide a quick update. As I mentioned in the last issue, former Chapter President Kristin Kassner, who serves as the Representative from the 2nd Essex District, is a sponsor or co-sponsor of several pieces of legislation of interest to the Chapter. Slowly but surely, we are making progress on several of our priorities.

- **H.3551 – An Act Facilitating Site Plan Review:** This bill would codify site plan review under MGL c. 40A. APA is in favor of this legislation and is working with other allied organizations to clarify and improve upon the original draft language. The bill is currently referred to the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading. This is typically the final step in the legislative process where legislative language is resolved prior to their final reading and corrected as needed.

- **H.3553 – An Act Regarding Mandatory Land Use Board Training:** This bill would require that Planning and Zoning Boards meet and maintain minimum training requirements. The bill has been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

- **H.3555 – An Act Relative to Local Option for Associate Members of Planning Boards:** This bill would codify what numerous cities and towns have done for years – appointing associate members to their Planning Boards. The bill is also in 3rd reading.

- We are also tracking the **Affordable Homes Act** (originally H.4138; now H.4707). A number of amendments are currently being considered.

I will be participating in Planners Day on Capitol Hill along with Jenny Raitt on June 12. We have virtual meetings set up with aides from

the offices of Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, and I will be meeting with and aide to my Representative, Katherine Clark.

The focus of the meetings will be housing and zoning reform. Specifically, APA is supporting the Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Housing Act, introduced into Congress by Senator Fetterman (D-PA) and Representative Blunt Rochester (D-Del). As described on APA's website this bill "would make HUD a better policy partner to communities embracing housing reform by providing ideas and information that leverage federal expertise, increase transparency through new tools like a national zoning atlas, and spur local innovation." The MA Chapter is signing on as a supporter of this legislation.

SNEAPA 2024!

Join your colleagues at SNEAPA 2024! The Southern New England APA Conference (SNEAPA) will be held on Thursday, November 7th and Friday, November 8th at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield Massachusetts. Organized by the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island Chapters of the American Planning Association, more than 500 planners, engineers, architects, students, and other planning professionals in Southern New England will come together to share experiences, collaborate, network, and earn maintenance credits for AICP certification. Learn more at www.sneapa.org, including how your organization can sponsor and support SNEAPA. Registration will begin in August.



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