

YANKEE PLANNER FALL 2022

Contents

President's Update	1
Northern New England Planning Conference.....	3
The Winston Prouty Campus	4
Activating Civic Infrastructure through the Arts	6
Professional Development Officer Report	8
Spring AICP Certification Registration Coming Up!.....	9
Grapevine	9

President's Update

Meagan Tuttle, AICP

Last week's trip to Newry, ME for our annual Northern New England Planning Conference was an excellent opportunity to take in the beauty of our region! I enjoyed the opportunity to arrive in Maine a day early to take in a hike at Sunday River and connect with planners that have become great friends through these conferences.



A huge thanks goes out to everyone who made this year's conference a success, including to all of our members who were able to join us in Maine! It was energizing to welcome a large number—as attendees, speakers, and sponsors—to your first conference with us, and to reconnect with so many of you for another year of learning together. I hope you had the opportunity to meet and connect with others from across the region and to take something back to support your work with and for the communities you serve. If you haven't already, please remember to take the post conference survey so we can use your feedback to continue to build this conference to meet your needs.

DRAFT APA Equity in Zoning Policy Guide- Submit your comments by November 14

At our Annual Business Meeting, I shared a few updates on APA's legislative and advocacy work. One of these initiatives—the Equity in Zoning Guide—is advancing this fall, and we're seeking your input.

Through the hard work of members from across the country, APA prepares policy guides that represent the organization's official position on critical planning issues, and provide tools to planners to guide our

work and advocacy for important policies within our states and communities. You can find APA's adopted policy guides at: <https://planning.org/policy/guides/#adoptedpolicies>

APA is currently soliciting input on the [draft Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#). This guide aims to identify specific ways in which policy makers, together with planners, can dismantle barriers that perpetuate the separation of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities through public engagement and zoning mapping, administration, and enforcement.

Full APA members can download and review the draft guide, and send comments to policyguide@planning.org by November 14. I also welcome your comments directly at president@nnecapa.org as I will be representing our chapter in December for a delegate assembly to debate, amend, and consider adopting this policy guide.

2023 Legislative Summit

Next month I will be representing our chapter in Denver for a two-day training and information sharing summit to prepare for the 2023 legislative season. This session will focus specifically on helping ready chapters to engage discussions about zoning reform and influencing state-level outcomes that support planning. I look forward to connecting directly with peers from other states and bringing back information and ideas that can be shared with the Legislative Committees for our three states.

Chapter Strategic Plan Update

Over the summer, our new Executive Committee held a retreat in New Hampshire to review our [2016-2021 Strategic Plan](#). This plan has been a strong foundation for the work of the Executive Committee members since its creation, and set us on the course for the reorganization that we've implemented over the last five years. Many of the specific actions outlined in that plan have been addressed—either through the reorganization or through the development of a Chapter Policies & Operations manual that guides our ongoing work.

The Executive Committee will be updating this plan in the coming year, with a goal to streamline the plan to focus on our highest priorities and make it more accessible for our membership. We also aim to use the strategic plan as a foundation for developing annual work plans in collaboration with our Sections. In our early discussions, we have identified several areas of priority for this update, including: delivering high value member services and professional development opportunities, expanding and maintaining membership, planning for long-term financial health, and maintaining strong and consistent Chapter operations.

If you have thoughts about high-level priorities for our Chapter for the next five years, or specific ideas for actions in the coming year, please reach out and share at president@nnecapa.org

Northern New England Planning Conference

Carl Eppich and Amanda Bunker, Conference Co-Chairs 2022

Ah, autumn in western Maine's mountains at Sunday River resort, a beautiful place for the annual NNECAPA conference. This year's theme "*Serendipitous Partnerships, Unique Results*", was well received with over 240 attendees for the better part of three days, October 17th to 19th.

The three-day event offered over 20 sessions through 7 concurrent workshop opportunities including mobile workshops near the resort and Greater Bethel area.



The conference kicked off Monday at noon with the opening Keynote by Dr. Cameron Wake, Research Professor at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space from the University of New Hampshire. Cameron set the stage for the conference by delivering an engaging 60-plus minute presentation on local to international examples of collaborations and partnerships that effectively address challenges in implementing sustainability.

On Tuesday, author Susan Clark presented the concept that is the title of the book she co-authored *Slow Democracy: Rediscovering Community, Bringing Decision Making Back Home*. (See <http://slowdemocracy.org/>).

The Annual Awards were presented after Tuesday evening's dinner.

Citizen Planner of the Year went to Charlie King for his decade plus of service to the Town of Farmington, NH which included volunteer work on the Planning Board, Board of Selectman, and numerous other boards, committees, and subcommittees.

Project of the Year was awarded to Maine's Bill LD 1694 which led to the Creation of the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority. Initiated by a diverse group of partners, this project created the legislation that enables a solution to a statewide problem —how to help communities deal with compromised and abandoned properties and address issues such as our housing crisis. This project was also the topic of the closing lunch Plenary, which focused on the importance of land banks in protecting municipalities and others in the redevelopment of neglected and sometimes hazardous properties.



Credit: Natasha Kypfer

Professional Planner of the Year was awarded to Maine planner Kara Wilbur for her passionate and persistent work in planning at all levels, from innovative projects like the redevelopment of an decaying urban fire

station, to the co-founding of the [Build Maine conference](#), to policy initiatives. Kara was also a key proponent and team leader for Project of the Year, LD 1694, and the importance of Land Bank Authorities.

Plan of the Year went to *Create Vermont, an Action Plan for Vermont's Creative Sector*. This plan envisions arts, culture, and creativity as essential infrastructure for Vermont's communities through creative expression and enterprise. The Plan recognizes that creative enterprises succeed through diverse, equitable, connected, and collaborative environments. For more information see <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/vermont-creative-network/action-plan>.

An additional acknowledgment was made for the 2021 Plan of the Year for *Maine Won't Wait – a 4 Year Plan for Climate Action*, initiated by Governor Janet Mills. A Reliance & Sustainability Award was awarded at the National Conference from the APA—a national award to join its recognitions from the Maine Association of Planners and the Northern New England chapter of the APA.

As the APA puts it, *Maine Won't Wait* “coordinates statewide action that is already seeing results” and helps “move the needle toward a more resilient future.” APA's site provides more information on their national award [here](#).

A huge thank you to all the NNECAPA 2022 conference sponsors, Conference Organizing Committee volunteers, the NNECAPA Executive Committee, Chapter Administrator Nancy Kilbride (of Events Your Way), and to everyone who put together sessions and made this year's conference a huge success.

We hope to see you at next year's conference in New Castle, NH at the Wentworth-by-the Sea Resort (near Portsmouth) November 6th to the 8th.



Credit: Meagan Tuttle

The Winston Prouty Campus

Planning for up to 300 new housing units in Brattleboro, VT

Susan Westa, AICP, Associate Director, Windham Regional Commission

The former Austine School campus in Brattleboro was purchased in 2016 by the Winston Prouty Center after the school went into bankruptcy in 2014. The initial intention was to invite other organizations to invest in the 180+ acre campus and its buildings to make it financially sustainable. A 2019 planning process that included 25 members of the community on a task force to consider the future of the campus resulted in the recommendation for the Prouty Center to continue full ownership and explore how to use this resource to meet community needs such as housing and recreation.

Master planning started in August 2022 and is being led by Mark Westa of Elan Planning Design and Landscape Architecture and Kyle Murphy of KaTO Architecture. The goal is to come up with a design of up to 300 units of a broad diversity of housing, from market rate to affordable to Affordable, and associated amenities. Other important needs that emerged from campus planning include opportunities

for recreation and spaces for the community to come together. The expected timeline for completing the plan is April 2023, and development partners will be sought as the concept becomes more concrete.

The campus currently is home to 36 businesses that bring about 160 people to work each day. Many other groups and organizations use the campus regularly for different activities from soccer to blood drives, from weddings to concerts, and even a Square and Round Dancing Festival. It is a vibrant place where people walk their dogs on the trails, fish in the pond, and enjoy the best local view of the Connecticut River valley from the top of the hill. Public transportation is available, and the campus is within walking distance of the grocery store, pharmacy, hospital, high school, and much more.

The Town of Brattleboro did a housing needs assessment in 2021 that identified the need for 500 units of housing immediately. This project is an incredible opportunity to see if we can make significant progress towards addressing that need.

The Vision:

Transform and expand a treasured community asset to meet Brattleboro's existing and future needs by:

- Building an inclusive, walkable neighborhood for everyone
- Connecting Brattleboro's trails, nature and downtown
- Providing access to services, recreation, amenities, and culture
- Elevating the beauty of a unique and historic place
- Increasing Brattleboro's sustainability, diversity accessibility, economy and vibrancy!



APA provides tools to face the changing world of planning that will help you navigate your career today, and in the future. Are you getting the most out of your membership?

Find professional development opportunities from diverse planning experts worth checking out and bookmarking.

- [Career Center](#) to help you stay current, perform at your best, or find and get the position you want, no matter your career stage.
- [Research KnowledgeBase](#) is free to members — check out the new [online public engagement collection](#) to help you engage communities and stay connected in today's unprecedented environment.
- Free access to timely articles with publications ranging from [Planning magazine](#) to the [PAS suite](#).

Activating Civic Infrastructure through the Arts

Vermont's Better Places Program and Bennington's Thursday Night Live

Richard Amore, AICP, Vermont DHCD and Jenny Dewar, Better Bennington Corporation

Reprinted from www.nlc.org (National League of Cities)

[Bennington](#), a town of roughly 15,000 in southwestern Vermont, suffered through the pandemic similar to many towns, cities, and communities across the country. While adjusting to a closed world, community members listened to music at home, streamed movies online, and danced in their living rooms via Zoom lessons, knowing that recovery, healing, and some sense of normalcy would have to return one day.



In-person community connection is especially important in small, rural towns. Big cities thrive on a myriad of cultural opportunities and large events. Small towns thrive on running into friends at the country store, seeing neighbors at the local diner, or connecting with other parents at kids sporting events and school performances. Cultural events like street fairs, farmer's markets, and outdoor music performances are key to bringing rural communities together.

The board of the [Better Bennington Corporation](#) understood that events and community gatherings were necessary to bring people back downtown and support community recovery. It was time to go back to restaurants. It was time to stop shopping online and go back to local main street businesses and show them some love and support. It was time to reconnect with one another and be together downtown.

Bennington has a brand-new stage at Merchant's Park, right in the heart of downtown that closed almost immediately after it opened due to the pandemic. The park and downtown had been empty for too long. As the world began to re-open, Merchant's Park provided the perfect opportunity to bring people back together with diverse music performances, restore a sense of community, and support artists while increasing foot traffic and commerce in downtown Bennington. However, this vision needed funding, partnerships, and a lot of elbow grease to make it happen.

Enter, [Better Places Vermont](#), a community grant program and funding partnership from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development that strategically coordinates the efforts of several Vermont funders and partners, including the [Vermont Arts Council](#), who support place-based, people-focused grantmaking and community development. The program is led by the Department of Housing and Community Development in partnership with the Department of Health, the Vermont Community Foundation, and [Patronicity](#), our crowdfunding experts.

With a focus on placemaking, the Better Places program supports vibrant, inclusive, and thriving public spaces in [Vermont communities](#) where creativity, community building, and local economies can flourish.

These place-based investments and local placemaking efforts improve a community's quality of life, promote economic vitality, and offer ways to attract new workers, residents, visitors, and businesses to Vermont and local communities. It's place-based, people-focused economic development that brings Vermonters together to reconnect, build social capital, and advance main street recovery efforts.

Traditionally, funders have invested capital into physical infrastructure that gives little thought to whether they are investing in community building or civic infrastructure. **Civic infrastructure is our physical places where community-building occurs, like parks and village greens, libraries, schools, recreation, art, and senior centers, farmer's markets, main streets, and other community gathering spaces.** The Better Places program provides funding to build this essential civic infrastructure that empowers local leaders to be part of the solution, advancing local recovery efforts, and strengthening community pride.

Better Places uses a "crowdgranting" model to leverage state dollars with local fundraising efforts to help communities invest in themselves. Crowdgranting combines crowdfunding – the practice of funding a project with small donations from a large number of people – paired with a 2:1 matching grant from the State of Vermont. Bennington was the first [Better Places project](#) to launch a crowdfunding campaign and is using the Better Places grant to bring people back downtown on Thursday evenings all summer long with a robust music series, cultural events, and kid activities. By reaching their \$5,000 crowdfunding goal, Bennington received a Better Places 2:1 matching grant of \$10,000 to bring music and entertainment back to the main street.



Vermont's Better Places program is not just the act of building a park, creating public art, or fixing up a public space; it is also the community-led process that builds connections and relationships, as well as fosters the attachment to place, building local pride where people feel a strong stake in their communities and commitment to making things better. These local placemaking efforts bring residents together from diverse backgrounds, building community connections, and social capital. Building social capital means creating opportunities for people to develop trusting relationships and shared experiences. These connections are critically important to our personal well-being and health, but also for ensuring strong social connections, building resilient communities, and creating vibrant and inclusive local economies.

These small and creative investments in local communities, public spaces, the arts, and downtowns matter because place matters and because people matter. Place determines people's health, wealth, and happiness more than anything else. Building community pride and social capital, along with fostering attachment to place, are key to community revitalization and rural economic development. And that's what creative placemaking can do!

The first Bennington Better Places performance occurred on June 2. After worrying all day about a rain storm keeping people away—about five minutes before it began—in came the people from all directions. The fourth performance is coming up at the time of this writing and will include some of Vermont's top storytellers. There are now Thursday Night Live "regulars." People are excited to know

who or what is coming up next and to be back together with their neighbors and friends. The community is back downtown and Bennington is a better place because of it.

Learn more about Bennington's Thursday Night Live event series [online](#) and Vermont's Better Places program on their [program website](#) and supporting [placemaking toolkit](#).

Professional Development Officer Report

Sarah Marchant, AICP

The US Department of Transportation has a new One Stop Shop for Technical Assistance Resources called the DOT Navigator. The Navigator is a new resource designed to help communities apply for grants, and provide the assistance to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services. As programs become available from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) or Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) information will be provided via the Navigator.

It's also a great one stop shop for several funding programs administered by DOT including:

- [THE THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM \(TCP\)](#)

This program will support community planning and project development of transformative infrastructure projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

- [RURAL OPPORTUNITIES TO USE TRANSPORTATION FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS \(ROUTES\)](#)

ROUTES is an initiative to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure by developing user-friendly tools and information, aggregating DOT resources, and providing technical assistance.

- [BUILD AMERICA BUREAU](#)

In 2022, the Build America Bureau will launch several new technical assistance programs to support innovative finance for Tribal, rural, and regional projects.

For more information check out www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator

Finally, congratulations to planners from Northern New England who passed their AICP exams in May!

- Michael Asciola
 - Linda Blasch
 - Alexander Mello
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Spring AICP Certification Registration Coming Up!

While registration to take the November AICP Certification Exam closes October 28th, the spring registration is coming right up in April 2023. APA members can check out the AICP [Pre-Check Resources](#) to help prepare and assess readiness.



Grapevine

✦ Elena Piekut from the City of Ellsworth (ME) reports that she welcomed a brand-new Assistant Planner. Matthew Williams comes to Maine looking to turn his winter hiking adventures into a year-round pursuit, having just graduated with a JD from the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. He also holds a BS in Family and Human Services from Towson University.



- ✦ Ross Moldoff will retire at the end of this year after serving as Planning Director in Salem, NH for 39 years. Ross reports: "Salem has seen a staggering amount of development in that time: 700 major projects, 12 million sq. ft. of commercial-industrial uses, including the Mall at Rockingham Park and Tuscan Village, and 4400 residential units. I reviewed all those plans, set up and attended Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Conservation Commission meetings, proposed regulations to manage growth, met with property owners and businesses, worked on 4 Master Plans, and reviewed building permits. There were lots of challenges, some disappointments, but many accomplishments. It was an honor to serve the people of Salem." Assistant Planner Jacob LaFontaine will fill the position in January.
- ✦ Dawn Emerson has left the Town of Falmouth. Nicholas King has joined the Town of Falmouth as Land Use Planner.

- ✦ Theo Holtwijk, Director of Long-Range Planning and Economic Development for the Town of Falmouth, Maine retired. Besides Falmouth, he also worked for the Town of Brunswick and City of Sanford - a combined 30 years in public service. He taught at Maine College of Art, University of Southern Maine, and Bates College, and started out in 1985 in Portland as a planner and landscape architect in private practice. He can be reached at tholtwijk@myfairpoint.net. Adam Causey will be replacing him, previously with the Town of Kittery, ME.
- ✦ Juli Beth Hinds, Birchline Planning LLC, reports in that she is about to start work on US EPA's [Closing the Wastewater Gap initiative](#), "proving she remains #1 in #2." JB will be working along with Mary Clark, formerly of Vermont DEC and Stone Environmental, on an effort to bring functional wastewater management to communities in Appalachia, on tribal lands in the Southwest, and in the Deep South that have struggled for years with lack of capacity and funding access. JB is sorry to miss everyone at NNECAPA this year but will be around VT working on projects in Westford and Northfield, along with checking on her brother-in-law's family compound in Westminster. And rumors of available guest rooms and beach privileges in San Diego for visiting planner friends are all true!
- ✦ The Windham Regional Commission's long time Senior Planner and Associate Director John Bennett retired in September. Susan Westa, AICP will be stepping up to fill the role of Associate Director. WRC also welcomed a new Senior Planner, Mike McConnell who is coming to us from Helena Montana.
- ✦ Darren Schibler will be leaving his Town Planner position with the Town of Essex for a new role as Senior Planner at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Though Essex has been a great place to work (and I would highly recommend it to anyone looking), he says he is excited to shift his focus to county-wide initiatives, having spent the last 5 years "in the trenches" doing development review and direct support to municipal committees.



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