

# NEBRASKA PLANNING & ZONING ASSOCIATION



Archive Yesterday,  
Action Today,  
Achieve Tomorrow

## Newsletter

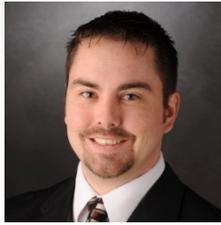
Post-Conference 2017

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## From the President...

Wow! A simple, single-word statement that summarizes this year's Nebraska Planning Conference. Once again we had over 200 registrants attend the conference. Once again we had a wide variety of sessions that hopefully covered every subject you are interested in. And once again, we had some great speakers. How about Ron Sims? If his speech didn't ignite the fire in your soul, you might want to check your pulse.



This edition of the NPZA Newsletter will look back on the sessions provided at the conference and provide some follow-up information and further discussion on the session topics.

As I announced at the conference, we have signed contracts that will keep the Nebraska Planning Conference at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney through 2021. The Younes facility and staff has provided an exceptional home to the conference and a perfect environment for learning our craft.

This fall NPZA will once again co-sponsor a Fall Workshop with the Nebraska Chapter of the American Planning Association. In an ongoing effort to bring together the land use decision makers from multiple levels of government, this fall workshop was geared to appeal to more than those who typically attend our annual conference.

For more information on upcoming training opportunities and other NPZA activities, please check out the NPZA website or follow our activities on Facebook and Twitter as well.

--Christopher Solberg  
President-NPZA

Enjoy the conference?  
Become an **NPZA member** today!

[Click here](#) for online registration on npza.org.

Detailed information provided on page 6.

## Mark Your Calendars

**March 7-9, 2018:** Nebraska Planning Conference  
Younes Center, Kearney, NE

## From the Conference: What is Sustainability in Small Towns?

A write-up on facilitated discussions among 85 participants on the topic of sustainability at the Nebraska State Planning Conference in March 2017

Facilitated by Keith Marvin, AICP; Marvin Planning Consultants and Chad Nabity, AICP; Hall County Regional Planning Dept.  
Write-up by Colton Berck, MCRP graduate student, UNL

*The following article was originally published in the Spring 2017 edition of the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the American Planning Association Newsletter and is used with permission.*

“What is Sustainability in Small Towns?” was a facilitated discussion led by APA STaR Division representatives. Participants ranged from private planning/engineering firms, elected officials, undergrad and graduate program students, long time professionals as well as newcomers.

See 'Sustainability' page 2...





## 'Sustainability' (continued from page 1)

Based on the premise that those seated together had arrived together, attendees were encouraged to inter-mingle and were systematically re-dispersed and assigned to the round tables provided in the room. The end result was eleven tables with 7 to 8 people at each table, around 85 participants in total. Facilitators brought forward three questions to initiate conversation within small groups, encouraging the individual table discussions to incorporate their own personal and professional experience. Many of the questions raised left the terms and expectations intentionally vague, leaving each table to define their own interpretations of sustainability. Following is a listed summary of findings and commonalities emergent from the documented ten minute discussions.

### Question 1 How have your communities incorporated sustainability practices into their comprehensive plans?

- Public Transportation was a common factor for many jurisdictions, many of which were interested in encouraging multi-modal programs.
- Hazard mitigation efforts, ranging from floodplain management and hazard mitigation plans were quite frequently discussed for many tables.
- Growth plans, including tiered growth zones and population forecasts, were also quite common.
- A number of tables also included energy considerations, a recent state requirement for comprehensive plans, as well as discussions of future technologies.

### Question 2 What struggles did you have or do you anticipate with including sustainability practices into comprehensive plans for your communities?

- Cooperation between the multiple private and public stakeholders is vital for initiatives, but if there isn't shared "buy-in" it can hinder sustainability practices.

- At times the messaging of projects can be misconstrued by the community, leading to resistance to change based on incomplete assumptions. Clarity on the expectations and plan of implementation is incredibly important to prevent this effect.
- Active participation and engagement of the community members is often lacking, leading to unsure assumptions of what projects will be successful.
- One challenge to the question many tables encountered was differing or unclear interpretations of sustainability. It seems incredibly important for communities to lay a clear foundation for what sustainability entails for them and what role it can serve in the comp plan.

### Question 3 How do sustainability issues in small towns and rural areas differ from the issues faced by more urban communities?

- Many smaller communities often do not include a regional perspective into their focus, including neighboring towns which may share many of the same concerns and goals.
- Personal politics is largely unavoidable for any community, but in many rural areas the "small town politics" can cause long-term stagnation and obstruction without means of facilitation.
- While most urban communities plan for and experience general growth, many small towns and rural areas should instead consider "smart decline" concepts in order to retain population and avoid "throwing good money after bad" to attract growth that may not occur.
- Small towns and rural areas typically depend on a few key businesses and local schools in order to retain populations and jobs, this may lead to less negotiating power towards desired sustainable initiatives.



## Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act to Bring Workforce Housing Boost Across Nebraska

The Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act (LB 518) was signed into law by Governor Ricketts on April 27, 2017 and transfers \$7.3 Million from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to help workforce housing issues across the state. The law comes at a time when many rural communities express a need to update or replace blighted or dilapidated housing units and provide more options for working families desiring to live in their communities. "Housing is one of the top concerns I hear about from Nebraskans as I travel the state," said Governor Ricketts. "This legislation creates an effective tool to assist communities with the development of workforce housing and Grow Nebraska."

Grants will be available to non-profit development organizations in eligible communities. The maximum amount awarded may not exceed \$1 million to any one organization over a two-year period and no more than \$2 million through fiscal year 2020-21. One-to-one matching funds must be provided by applicants to be considered for a grant. Priority will be given to communities that have demonstrated an ongoing need for housing through a housing study, a low unemployment rate, difficulty filling vacancies, a demonstrated commitment to growing their housing markets and potential projects that could be ready for occupancy within two years.

The was introduced by Senator Matt Williams on the premise that the 'limited availability of modern housing units' hindered rural communities' ability to 'recruit and retain a world-class workforce'. The law notes the legislature's findings that the shortage of contractors willing to develop new housing units in rural communities and a perceived higher risk associated with rural housing development are barriers to development which the law hopes to help overcome.

Some regions have already begun preparing for these opportunities and have ideas for how the funds might be

leveraged and put to work in rural communities. West-Central Development District is currently piloting a collaborative project with the Benkelman CRA, where a systems built home is to be built on an in-fill lot within the community's redevelopment area. The organization is also putting into place a building model that can be expanded to include partnerships with LB840 funds as well as other local and state resources.

Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD) executive director, Thomas L. Higginbotham Jr., stated that their sister Non-Profit Development Organization (NDO), Northeast Economic Development, Inc. intend to make an application for the funds, "The goal here is to provide hard working families with good quality, safe, and affordable housing, which in turn helps our communities grow."

Communities can prepare for these opportunities by identifying areas and sites where development could occur. In communities where a decline in population has led to dilapidation, identifying 'infill' lots on which to build provides an opportunity to strengthen existing neighborhoods by replacing blight with attractive housing where utilities and infrastructure already exist. Communities with active Community Redevelopment Authorities or Community Development Agencies and designated blighted areas will be better prepared to identify properties and assist in financing projects through possible use of Tax Increment Financing.

With a one-to-one match of non-public funds required, it will be essential that communities can demonstrate strong financial support to raise or commit private dollars to bring this infusion of funds to their community.

Another bill, LB 496 introduced by Senator Stinner would include the construction of workforce housing as an eligible redevelopment project for Tax Increment Financing under Nebraska Community Development Law. This bill is still under consideration in the Legislature.

*Information for this article was contributed by West Central Nebraska Development District and the Nebraska Regional Official's Council (NROC).*



## NPZA/APA Award Winners

APA Nebraska and NPZA both gave out awards at the March conference. Congratulations to all 2017 award winners!

### APA Awards:

- *Daniel Burnham Award for Comprehensive Plan*- Cozad, NE
- *Award for Implementation*- Downtown Redevelopment Study- Grand Island, NE
- *Award for Implementation*- Downtown Master Plan- Lincoln, NE
- *Award for Implementation*- Downtown Revitalization Plan- Plattsmouth, NE
- *Award for Environmental Planning*- Hazard Mitigation Plan- Beatrice, NE
- *Award for Innovation for Economic Planning and Development*- Creighton University Medical Center/Gifford Park Master Plan
- *Award for Best Practice*- TIF Game, Hall County Regional Planning Commission
- *Award for Public Outreach*- TIF Workshop, Grand Island, NE
- *Charleston-Ptak Planning Advocate Award*- David Levy, Baird Holm
- *Great Places in Nebraska*- South Sioux City, NE

### NPZA Awards:

- *District Professional Award*- Annie Folck, Planner, City of Scottsbluff
- *Mitsuo Kawamoto Excellence in Planning Award*- Daniel Bennett, Panhandle Area Development District
- *Loretta Ludemann Achievement Award- Excellence in Planning by a Woman in the State of Nebraska*- Liz Doerr, Knox and Antelope Counties

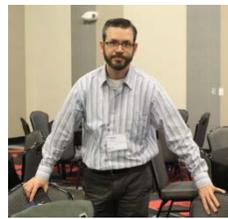




# Nebraska Planning Conference 2017 in Pictures

Photography by Jason Seamann

Special thank you to the Conference Committee and all who made the 2017 conference a success!





# Membership Levels and Benefits

**JOIN TODAY!**

Membership supports NPZA's mission to provide quality education and training opportunities for individuals who make and impact land use decisions across Nebraska. By joining NPZA you join a collaborative and supportive network of people dedicated to making sound decisions and exchanging exciting ideas to create great communities.

NPZA membership also provides the local administrator member access to the Planning Commissioners Journal Web.

[PlannersWeb](#) site will provide you with articles and postings on a wide range of planning issues, as well as a focus on how citizen planners- especially members of planning commissions and boards- can work most effectively.

## Individual Memberships

Student.....	\$ 5.00
Individual.....	\$15.00
Private Planning Consultant.....	\$40.00

## Group Memberships

City or County under 5,000 population.....	\$35.00
City or County over 5,000 population.....	\$40.00
State Planning Agencies.....	\$40.00
Joint Planning Agencies.....	\$50.00

Payment can be made by requesting a billing or online through PayPal.

