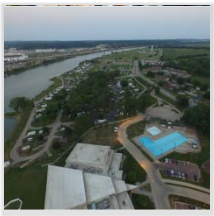
NEBRASKA PLANNING & ZONING ASSOCIATION



NPZA

Newsletter

Pre-Conference 2018

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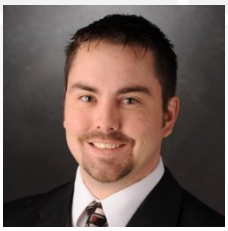
From the President...



As the calendar flips over to 2018, the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association members can look in the review mirror on yet another terrific year of training and networking in the planning and zoning field in Nebraska, before turning their heads forward to welcome the excitement of new opportunities in 2018.

This past September NPZA sponsored our third Fall Workshop that was geared towards land use decision makers from multiple levels of government. This one, based in North Platte, sparked good discussion and overall involvement over the variety of topics offered. Each year, the NPZA Board strives to move this workshop around the state to make it available to those who cannot make it out to Kearney for the annual conference. Keep an eye out for it coming to the northeast in 2018.

We have been working hard with the Nebraska Chapter of the American Planning Association on planning the 2018 Nebraska Planning Conference. This year's conference (March 7-9th) will once again be held in the Younes Conference Center in Kearney and will cover a wide range of topics for those interested in attending. More information regarding the event can be found on our website (http://www.npza.org) including the "save the date" flyer, the conference program, and a link that allows you to register online. Also, check out NPZA's Facebook and Twitter accounts for updates and pictures last year's conference.

The NPZA Board and I are excited about the upcoming conference and we look forward to seeing you there. Until then, stay warm!"

--Christopher Solberg
President-NPZA

Mark Your Calendars

March 7-9, 2018: Nebraska Planning Conference
Younes Center, Kearney, NE
Info on Page 4

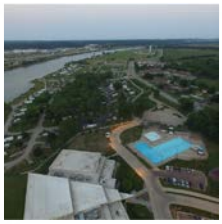
April 21-24, 2018: APA National Planning Conference
New Orleans, LA
Early Bird Rate ends Feb. 22; March 22- Second cutoff

What do we do with all those plans? Success Stories from Chadron

By Deb Cottier, Executive Director; Northwest Nebraska Development Corporation; and Daniel Bennett; Newsletter Editor

There is no lack of 'plans' out there, whether official documents or the unofficial kind that are sometimes little more than scribbles on a napkin. Deb Cottier found early on that plans fell into two categories of 'Unofficial' and 'Official' planning. Before it knew it needed to 'plan' to accomplish something, the community of Chadron, NE, in the Northwest corner of the state, did what it does best and collaborated to make a difference in downtown Chadron by hosting gatherings, creating new reasons for folks to come downtown, and creating better places to hold popular existing events. From this 'unofficial' plan, the city applied for a CDBG downtown improvement grant in 1980, aiming to tackle utility connections, sidewalks, streetlights and street scape. The creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) helped meet required funding match. Deb was the brand new, 20-something year old

See 'Chadron' page 2



'Chadron' (continued from page 1)

Chamber director tasked with pulling off a successful celebration in the middle of downtown construction. "The effort," Cottier says, "was really the beginning of formal planning, from which we have been building ever since." Still, other unplanned events continued to shape the built in environment, such as the 1986 hail storm which caused $100 million in damage and led to the demolition and remodel of dozens of buildings and forever changed the look of the community. It was during this time that it became evident Chadron had a downtown worth preserving and to do so required a more intentional approach, rooted in a vision and facilitated by a persistent planning process. Pieces of the puzzle continued to come together, with the process of listing Chadron's entire commercial district on the Historic Register by the city's 125th anniversary and a study by University of Nebraska students bring a fresh perspective and new design ideas to the community. Even with several successful on-going projects in the works, the community found itself at risk of losing some historic buildings if it did not better coordinate and expand the breadth of various related projects. Chadron responded to this need by applying for a Downtown Revitalization planning grant and subsequent implementation grant in 2013. Through the Downtown Revitalization process, the community was able to identify priorities and provide resources to entice property owners to retain their buildings' historic charm and beauty.

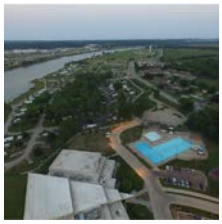
Complicating matters was multiple other needs needing to be addressed simultaneously, including a complete rebuilt of the downtown storm water runoff system, a complete rebuild of US Highway 20 all the way through town, recruiting another motel, and raising money to create an Aquatics Center. With many initiatives going on and community members and leaders splitting their time and attention among the various projects, building on results, goals, and findings of plans and studies that had been previously completed was essential for moving forward efficiently. Integrating the goals and results of years of work and thousands of dollars in plans and studies helped the community be prepared to make the most of opportunities that came up. The city's comprehensive plan

Above: Downtown Chadron revitalizaiton was a part of a larger integrated approach to planning and implementation

helped tie multiple initiatives into one context and direction for the future, the blighted and substandard study helped the community be prepared for TIF to assist with motel development, a citizen planning group's efforts helped the aquatic center gain the momentum it needed to pass a community sales tax ballot initiative and become a reality, and the community's forward thinking and planning downtown led to façade and streetscape improvements.
When all was said and done, the community had seen investments of $75 million dollars over five years, with successes which included a new aquatics center, the building of a new hotel, 18 new businesses and 17 business expansions with 140 new or retained jobs, and numerous façade improvements downtown restoring an attractive historic look.

Cottier says the success in Chadron underscores the importance of keeping track of the goals, priorities, and information of the planning initiatives communities undergo. Forward progress requires a healthy base of institutional knowledge and engaged citizen and formal leadership in the community to work from the plans that have been created to move them to implementation. She also noted that it is important once in a while to look back and celebrate what's been accomplished and use those successes to move into the next task at hand.

Deb Cottier is the executive director of Northwest Nebraska Development Corporation and longtime resident of Chadron, NE. Deb serves as the current president of the Nebraska Economic Development Association (NEDA) and was the NEDA 2017 'Professional of the Year' award recipient.



Right- The South Sioux City Riverfront was the recipient of the inaugural 'Great Places Award' in 2017.

Great Places Award Gaining Momentum

By Jesse Poore, AICP, CFM; Senior Planner- Felsburg Holt & Ullevig

In 2017, a new award category was created and issued to recognize Great Places in Nebraska. The award is modeled to match the same national award issued by APA to recognize and celebrate great urban and rural places of exemplary character, quality, and planning. These areas represent the gold standard in terms of having a true sense of place, culture and historic interest, community involvement and a vision for tomorrow. The Nebraska APA Emerging Planners Group was responsible for creating the award criteria, producing the nomination packet and getting the word out to prospective Great Places representatives. Because of their intentional efforts, the award will be issued for many years to come.

The inaugural award was given to South Sioux Cities Riverfront Park in 2017. When laying out an urban recreational area of this size (224 acres), planning and design are often a fluid process. The South Sioux City riverfront is a perfect illustration of this. Throughout the process, as property was acquired, the projects were laid out commencing at the boat ramp traveling south to Freedom Park. Innovative building and landscaping practices were a critical part of the development process. Emphasis was placed on the use of architecture students to incorporate sustainability into the design methodologies and building practices of many of the structures. Structures like the cabins in the campground, the campground office made from straw bales, the movie wall and stage, the gasifier that generates electricity from wood waste or the future orchard building design are evidences of these sustainable practices. However, beyond sustainability, the premise behind all design components was the desire to offer recreational and outdoor experiences that enhanced the quality of life for our residents, yet offered a pleasing aesthetic nature when viewed from Interstate 29, along the Iowa side of the Missouri River. The South Sioux City Riverfront has become a gateway to "The Good Life" and a great place to see in Nebraska.

In 2018, the Great Places in Nebraska award will be issued for another inspiring location. Award nomination requests are sent out each Winter and awarded at the Nebraska Planning Conference. The Nebraska APA Emerging Planners Group encourages you to get inspired by this award and look for Great Places in your communities. Contact any of the APA Board members or Emerging Planners Group leaders to start talking about nominating your Great Places. There are many places and spaces that we want to celebrate and we hope to carry some of the awarded Great Places in Nebraska forward for recognition at the APA National Conference.

Slate of Officers: 2018-19 NPZA Board

The following slate of officers will be considered by the membership for the 2018-19 NPZA board.

President: Chris Solberg
Vice President: Judy Clark
2nd Vice President: Dan Gittinger

New district level officers will also be elected at district meetings.

2018 Nebraska Annual Planning Conference

March 7th-9th • Younes Conference Center • Kearney, NE

2.5 days
30+ Presenters

Full Conference……$190
Wednesday Only……$105
Thursday & Friday Only …...$105

This year's conference promises to be special with a full slate of tremendous speakers from throughout the state and region and abundant networking opportunities. Included in the event is an opening reception, lunch keynote, and group social at Thunderhead Brewery. Conference registration, scholarship, sponsor, and membership forms available at npza.org.

Schedule at a Glance

Wednesday, March 07

7:00 AM	Registration
8:45 AM	Welcome
9:00 AM - 4:15 PM	Institutes & Sessions
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM	Ethics

Thursday, March 08

7:00 AM	Registration
8:00 AM - 9:15 PM	General Sessions
9:30 AM - 4:30 PM	Sessions
6:30 PM	Awards Banquet

Friday, March 09

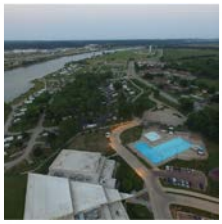
8:00 AM - 12:15 PM	Sessions
12:15 PM -12:30 PM	Conference Closing
12:45 PM	NPZA Board Meeting

Lodging is the registrant's responsibility

"It's All Your Fault!" Interview with Nebraska Planning Conference Keynote Speaker Aimee Nassif

NPZA: *Your presentation titled "It's all your fault! You're the planner!" is about dealing with the negative emotions and even outrage that is sometimes (or frequently) directed at planners. What was so compelling for you about this topic that it drew you to develop a session about it?*

NASSIF: We all deal with negative comments, feedback and upset individuals often. But over the last few years I have experienced a trend in which the negativity is just growing and growing and people are treating planners and others in public service with a lot more hostility than in previous years. After some time, I started getting calls from colleagues in other cities experiencing the same issues and started speaking to them (as well as my own team) about ways to navigate this and not let it get to you. Then one day one of my staff told me how helpful my ideas were and how much it



Nassif (continued from page 3)

helped them, and after hearing from a few others I really wanted to share these ideas and experiences so people realize that they weren't alone in this because it's really unfair and not everyone is equipped to know how to handle it.

NPZA: *Your presentation explores coping tools and ways to handle hostile meetings. Were these tools the inevitable product of years of experience or did you intentionally search for better ways to manage the emotional side of the job?*

NASSIF: The tools in the presentation were a product of years of experience, from things I did wrong and things I did right and from speaking to others about what helped them in the same situation.

NPZA: *Do you feel any change in recent years in the general demeanor with which people in the public engage with local government officials and staff? Have any of your tools evolved in recent years to fit new insights or realities?*

NASSIF: Yes! Great question. There seems to be a trend in which people (the public) feel more "entitled" in a sense to unleash on the planner. We are almost losing a sense of respect or decency in how we all speak with and treat others that we do not agree with which I think is derived from larger issues in the world today.

NPZA: 'Burn-out' is a problem a lot of planners might worry about for themselves and fellow community leaders, and citizen hostility may contribute to this. What's the most important thing you hope those worried about 'burn-out' can come away with from your presentation?

NASSIF: I hope people realize that yes there is some bad out there, but there is also some good. We do make a difference and we do have awesome jobs which give us the ability to impact people's lives. That is pretty cool right there. Make time for yourself, make time to "recharge your batteries" and that will help when you do run into the negativity. But for the most part, people are just scared of what they don't understand and what they don't know. And at the end of the day, they just want to be heard.

Aimee Nassif is the chief planning and development officer for the City of Olathe and has over 20 years of public service experience. Aimee oversees current and long range planning for Olathe and oversees Olathe's Healthy neighborhoods initiative program, the Board of Zoning Appeals, Historic Preservation Board, and Planning Commission. She will be presenting a keynote presentation at the Nebraska Planning Conference in Kearney, NE March 7-9.

Please submit any questions, comments, concerns, or ideas regarding the newsletter to Daniel Bennett at danielb@nepadd.com