Connecting Communities of Planning and Design Professionals: 2011 Upstate APA / ASLA Conference a Success

By Geoff Milz

A planner, a landscape architect and a historian walk into a park... if you attended the 2011 Upstate New York American Planning Association’s conference you’d know just what they had to say about landscape documentation. This year’s conference was all about connecting communities, the ones we live in and the ones we work in. By partnering with the New York Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, we hoped to develop a conference that provided lasting value to attendees from both communities.

This conference gave us a chance to connect with Utica. A community struggling to move from rust-to-green was the perfect place to air ideas about

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The 2011 State of the Profession

By Andrew Raus, AICP

The 2011 New York Upstate APA Chapter Conference was a wonderful success. Thank you to the Section Committee for the hard work. I was pleased to see the collaboration with the American Society of Landscape Architects Upstate Chapter. I believe this added significant value and cross-disciplinary education opportunities to our members.

On Thursday morning, I moderated our annual State of the Profession discussion with the help of Justin Woods; Michael Haas, RLA, ASLA; Sandy Misiewicz, AICP; and John Behan, AICP. Each person provided a

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By-Laws Amendment Passes 92-11

By Ellen Parker, AICP

Based on ballots received from 103 APA members between December 7th and January 20th, the New York Upstate APA Chapter will establish a Chapter-Only membership. The by-law amendment passed 93-11. The response rate from the Chapter membership was 17%.

The effort to establish a Chapter Only membership is part of the New York Upstate APA Chapter Executive Board’s Development Plan to expand services and increase opportunities for more planners to get involved and participate in APA. The intent of this new category of membership is to reach out to professional planners who are not currently members of APA. We propose to set Chapter-Only dues at $75.

Chapter-Only members will receive many of the benefits of Chapter and Section programming. They will receive the Chapter newsletter and member e-mail communications about upcoming planning programs and training (if they have an email address on file). They will be eligible for “member” rates at the annual Chapter conference and all Chapter and
Congratulations New York Upstate APA Chapter 2011 Award Winners
By Jason Haremza, AICP

The New York Upstate Chapter of the APA presented 12 awards in seven categories, as well as the Michael J. Krasner Memorial Scholarship, at its annual conference in Utica on September 29, 2011. These awards represent the outstanding work that is being done by planners in Upstate New York, providing communities with guidance as they look towards the future. Planning Excellence award winners are:

Comprehensive Planning

This category recognizes plans that advance the science and art of planning.

Chautauqua 20/20, Chautauqua County, New York. The primary purpose of Chautauqua 20/20 is to chart a course that can be used by county government; its partners in the public, private and non-profit/institutional sectors; and by citizens in making decisions that affect the County’s future. The plan was developed by the Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Economic Development with the consulting firm Wallace Roberts and Todd.

Best Practice

This category recognizes a specific planning tool, practice, program, project, or process that is a significant advancement to specific elements of planning.

Chemung County Highway Service Study, Chemung County, New York. The primary objective of the Study was to identify potential areas of cost savings and efficiencies while increasing the quality of common highway services and activities for all municipalities. The plan was developed in partnership with Chemung County and a dozen municipalities. The plan was created by the Laberge Group, Hunt Engineering and the University at Buffalo’s Regional Institute.

Historic Saratoga-Washington on the Hudson Partnership Stewardship Plan. The Stewardship Plan is a framework of strategies that will implement a long-term vision for the 35-mile corridor along the Hudson River from Waterford to Fort Edward. The plan was created for the Historic Saratoga-Washington on the Hudson Partnership by the LA Group, P.C.

Grassroots Initiative

This category recognizes an initiative that illustrates how a community utilized the planning process to address a need that extends beyond the traditional scope of planning.

Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Area Plan. The Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Area Plan embraces the unique characteristics of the Concord Grape Belt Heritage to create a memorable Grape Belt Area experience along Lake Erie and the Allegany Plateau Escarpment. The plan was developed for the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Area Association, in partnership with Chautauqua County, the Town of Westfield and other participating communities. The plan was developed by peter j. smith & company, inc.

Implementation

This category recognizes efforts that demonstrate a significant achievement in accomplishing positive changes as a result of planning.

Village of Rouses Point Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan, Rouses Point, New York. The Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan, adopted in June 2006, was the blueprint for the Village’s efforts to take stock of its resources and strengths, while addressing those aspects which were in need of improvement. Numerous policies and capital projects have resulted from the implementation of this plan. The plan was developed for the Village of Rouses Point with Melissa McManus, LLC; NYS Department of State; Elan Planning, Design & Landscape Architecture, Hoffman-Villardo Architects, and Bourne Engineering.

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Planners! Save the Date for next year’s New York Upstate APA Chapter Conference, which will be held at the Corning Radisson on September 19-21, 2012. We hope to see you there!
brief overview of what they see as the challenges facing the planning and landscape architectural professions as well as the opportunities for our future growth and advancement. Justin discussed the growing impact of reduced budgets for planning initiatives as well as the opportunity the Regional Economic Development Councils creates for planners to highlight the importance of regional planning. Michael provided insight into the changing roles and opportunities for landscape architects related to green design, higher education clientele and the impending need for services associated with Marcellus Shale. Sandy highlighted the continued reductions in federal funding and the associated impacts on MPO budgets and projects. She stressed concern over our State’s ability to implement new Complete Streets and Smart Growth legislation. John discussed his belief that planners will have a growing level of prominence in the coming years. However, he stressed the need to move licensure forward.

An active roundtable discussion commenced. Many people stressed concern over the accelerated process and associated impact of the Regional Economic Development Councils. In general, attendees felt the limited involvement of professional planners in the process was shortsighted. The current process seems forced with little time to evaluate direction and ensure recommendations are consistent with public sentiment. On a positive note, it was mentioned that in some cases community plans are being used to help guide the Regional Economic Development Councils and that, in the future, we as planners should ensure this becomes common practice.

Another major topic of discussion was how we as planners can increase our visibility. Many felt it was essential to maintain and build stronger relationships with the other design professions. This would increase the likelihood that our ideas and recommendations are heard in Albany and Washington, DC. There was agreement that planners are often the catalyst helping communities envision their future. We bring optimism to the public. We should use this sense of optimism and visionary thinking as a conduit for increasing awareness of our profession.

Finally, the issue of licensure received significant attention. Many people felt the lack of licensure limits the understanding of what we do as professionals, diluting our ability to have a defined niche in the professional services trade. Some felt we could use AICP to help advance awareness of the value of planners. A couple of AICP planners who were also licensed PE’s indicated that when they need to portray a sense of professional qualifications, they use their PE credentials. Based on a straw poll during the meeting, an overwhelming number of those in attendance indicated they support licensure for our profession. I agree with the majority. Our future in this state, as it was in New Jersey and Michigan, depends on becoming a licensed profession.

Big questions need to be answered. What service would we license? How would a planner be qualified to take the test? How does it relate to AICP? Where is Metro in this discussion? How do we deal with other design and legal professions to gain their support? How do we pay for moving the legislation through NYS? This is likely to take some revenue. How should we pay for it as a professional chapter in NYS?

Judy Breselor and I are co-chairing a committee on this very topic. Many of you signed up at the Conference requesting to be involved or kept informed of our progress. Please contact me if you were unable to attend the conference but would like to be involved or kept apprised of our progress. Let me know if you are in support or if you do not support the idea of licensure.

Raus is a Principal at Bergmann Associates and the Education Officer for the New York Upstate APA Chapter.

By-law Amendment

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Section sponsored events, educational seminars and meetings. Chapter-Only members can vote in Section and Chapter elections and participate in all activities.

Chapter-Only memberships, however, are limited. Chapter-Only members cannot be officers of either the local Section or the Chapter. They are not members of the American Planning Association, and are not eligible for any of the benefits exclusive to APA members, such as Planning magazine, national communications (e.g. Interact), access to all areas of the APA website, or member rates at the national APA conference. All AICP planners must be full members of APA, not Chapter-Only members.

Parker, AICP, is a planner at Wendel and the President of the New York Upstate APA Chapter.
Chapter President’s Message
By Ellen Parker, AICP

Happy New Year! It is an interesting and challenging time to be a planner. Compared to when I first started in this field, there is much greater awareness of what we do and its importance to creating a healthy, attractive environment. The federal government is making strides in emphasizing sustainability. While funding was cut to the HUD-EPA-DOT Sustainable Communities coalition, the concept is gaining traction, and the Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development program is the newest agency to join in the conversation. A recent Executive Order directs all federal agencies to consider sustainability, including an explicit directive to “advance regional and local integrated planning.” New York State passed the “Smart Growth” law and other planner friendly legislation in 2011. The Regional Economic Development Council process, while somewhat chaotic, was premised on the concept of regional planning. In Erie County, while we did not get a professional planner as head of the Department of Environment and Planning, Maria Whyte’s involvement with the local regional plan was given as a primary reason for her appointment to the post.

At the same time, planners from both the public and private sectors face an increasingly competitive and challenging job environment. But in difficult times, the need for and value of planning is greater than ever, and I would argue that the communities that weathered the “Great Recession” the best were those with good planning. APA is starting an effort to communicate the value of planning. The “Planner’s Boot Camp” series of webcasts is designed to give planners tools to explain what we do and why it is important. These webcasts are available for download on the national website. APA national will be placing ads in national magazines, such as Governing, explaining the value of the AICP credential. If you have any suggestions or comments on how APA can better serve our members, please let me know.

At the Chapter level, thank you to everyone who voted on the by-law changes. We know there are many planners in New York who are not members of APA, and we hope the new Chapter-Only membership option will encourage more of our colleagues to get involved, at least at the state level.

The planners in the Southern Tier are already hard at work planning a great conference in Corning this year. Please save the dates: September 19-21, 2012.

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In closing, I’d like to thank my fellow Chapter Board members, the Sections’ leadership and our Chapter administrator, Tanya Zwahlen, for all their work over the past year. It is only through their hard work and effort that we are able to offer our programs: the newsletter, the website, the lunches, dinners, lectures, tours, affordable continuing education opportunities, legislative advocacy, student mentoring, the annual conference, the awards program, etc. This year is an election year for our Chapter, and if you are interested in getting more involved, let us know.

Best wishes for a great 2012!

Parker, AICP, is a planner at Wendel and is based in the Buffalo office.
Conesus Lake Watershed Management Plan, Livingston County, New York. Since the Plan was created in 2003, the Conesus Lake Watershed Council and watershed communities has leveraged $1.8 million in State funding for over $4 million for projects in the Conesus Lake watershed. The level of cooperation within and partnerships among the Watershed Management Plan committees and between agencies has been heralded as a successful example of watershed-wide planning and implementation.

Innovation in Sustaining Places

This category recognizes plans that demonstrate how sustainability practices are being used and how places are planned, designed, built, used, and maintained at all scales.

Confederation Park Master Plan Review and Update, Hamilton, Ontario. The plan created both an environmentally and economically sustainable future for Confederation Park. The plan was developed by McKibbon Wakefield Inc.; G.O. Connor Consultants Inc.; Hamilton Conservation Authority; City of Hamilton; Forrec Ltd.; and Insyght Systems.

Outstanding Student Project

This category recognizes outstanding projects developed by accredited graduate planning programs at colleges and universities within the Upstate Chapter Area.

Kinderhook, Stockport, Stuyvesant Intermunicipal Trail Feasibility Study. The study adapted planning and visioning principles to a rural setting, integrating and emphasizing the unique cultural, historic, and agricultural traits of this region to ensure a result that both introduced a new resource to the communities but also reinforced their preexisting character. The plan was created by the University at Albany’s Fall 2010 Graduate Planning Studio lead by Faculty Advisor Jeff Olson, RA. Partners included Kinderhook-Stuyvesant-Stockport Trails Committee, Columbia Land Conservancy, the National Park Service: Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, and Hudson River Valley Greenway.

Fruit Belt: A Conservation District. The plan proposes using a “conservation district” to revitalize the Fruit Belt neighborhood in Buffalo. A Conservation District is intended to be crafted by the residents of the neighborhood to meet the designated needs, goals, and outcomes of the neighborhood in terms of the level of preservation/conservation of existing historic fabric and provide guidelines to inform infill development. The plan was created but the University at Buffalo’s Fall 2010 Graduate Planning Studio lead by Adjunct Professor Kerry Traynor.

Distinguished Leadership

This category recognizes three separate yet critical components of successful planning and implementation: elected leadership, engaged citizens, and professional planners.

Elected Official: Former NYS Assemblyman Sam Hoyt. His advocacy for sound planning principles, his tireless efforts on behalf of urban revitalization, and his promotion of smart growth provide planners with the tools we need to foster strong communities.

Sam authored the 2009 New York State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit law, the 2010 Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act, and has

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been the leader on developing land bank legislation for a number of years. This new law has the power to foster economic growth through finding new uses for vacant lots and getting them back on the tax rolls.

After nearly 20 years of service in the New York State Assembly, Sam recently joined Governor Cuomo’s administration serving as Senior Vice President for Regional Economic Development at the Empire State Development Corporation.

Citizen Planner: Aaron Bartley, Executive Director, PUSH Buffalo. The mission of PUSH Buffalo is to mobilize residents to create strong neighborhoods with quality affordable housing, to expand local hiring opportunities and advance economic justice in Buffalo.

Michael J. Krasner Professional Planner Award: Gary Palumbo, AICP, Project Manager, URS Corporation, Buffalo office

Michael J. Krasner Memorial Scholarship. This is a competitive award for a graduate student in the Urban and Regional Planning Program at the University at Buffalo. The $1,500 scholarship is awarded to the student that best exhibits his/her commitment to planning issues in Western and Upstate New York and their intent to practice within Upstate New York and who best reflects the ideals of the late Mike Krasner, who was a planner with Erie County and an adjunct faculty member at UB. Tamara S. Wright, a JD/Master of Urban Planning Candidate, is the 2011 winner.

Jason Haremza, AICP, is a Senior Planner/Urban Designer in the City of Rochester’s Bureau of Planning and Zoning.

Tamara Wright (center) receives the Krasner scholarship award from Chapter President Ellen Parker (left) and Richard Guarino (right). Photo credit: Nick Bruno.

Ellen Parker presents Gary Palumbo with the Distinguished Planner award. Photo credit: Nick Bruno.
This year’s APA Federal Policy and Program Briefing left me very inspired, ready to lead and excited to promote the innovative work that planners do to make great communities. Chock full of programs sessions on jobs and the economy, the future of policy for housing and community development, key economic development strategies, and the status of transportation reauthorization, the briefing reminded me of the ever increasing importance of planning and the role of planners. Some important messages from federal agency representatives and local leaders were provided that I’d like to share in the hopes that we all remember that we are leaders in our communities and region in all aspects of planning:

1. Cultivate long-term relationships with forward thinking CEOs and business organizations. These business leaders are essential stakeholders in creating sustainable local and regional economies. Keep them in the loop: invite them to workshops and economic development meetings, send them relevant newsletter articles about successful projects. They are important partners in our community. Find ways to incorporate them in a meaningful fashion.

2. Develop a solid definition of sustainability. While there is support for sustainable communities in the U.S., there are many definitions floating around. If you have defined sustainable development in your community (congratulations!), promote that definition widely.

3. Frame sustainability in terms of creating jobs and boosting economic prosperity. As mentioned above, there is support in our communities for sustainability. Creating jobs and enhancing our economy are the most important issues for the public.

4. Leverage the power and energy of young planners and citizens. Their energy, commitment to their neighborhoods, and innovative ideas is a breath of fresh air and will inspire us to look outside the box. One way to do this is through the Community Planning Assistance Team projects, but there are lots of opportunities to engage these key players in every day planning and bring new life to our work.

We have an incredible opportunity to be leaders in these tough economic times and to show how planning creates jobs, improves the economy, maintains existing communities, incorporates all sectors of the community in planning for growth, and creates livable walkable places where we can all thrive. It’s time to lead, inspire, and innovate.

Sustaining Places Initiative Report
The Sustaining Places Initiative Report is out! Thanks to the incredible work of David Godschalk, FAICP, and Bill Anderson, FAICP, who co-chaired the Sustaining Places Task Force, the 119-page report outlines the role of the comprehensive plan as the leading policy document and tool to help communities of all sizes achieve sustainability. The final report outlines key strategies and recommendations for a Sustaining Places Agenda. It calls on the APA and AICP to lead this agenda through:

- Establishing a professional culture that recognizes and fosters the growth of sustaining places applications in planning practice and education;
- Conducting research and development aimed at building our repertoire of sustaining places knowledge, concepts and techniques; and
- Developing education and awareness activities aimed at widening public and professional understanding of the potential and importance of sustaining places planning.

This report outlines the core elements a comprehensive plan should have to develop sustaining places and how to measure our progress towards achieving more sustainable communities. It also outlined leading plans from across the U.S. that incorporated sustainability into their comprehensive planning process. Several of those leaders are right here in the Northeast: Burlington, VT; Keene, NH; Philadelphia, PA; and Albany, NY. We look forward to the next steps for activating and embracing the call to action that was made in this report and to taking this opportunity to make a critical difference in the places where people will live in the future. If you would like a copy of this report, please visit: http://www.planning.org/sustainingplaces.

Angela Vincent is the APA Region 1 Director.
Five Great Places Designated in the Northeast
By Angela Vincent

Congratulations to the neighborhoods, streets and places in the Northeast that were designated as Great Places in the United States this year. The following were selected as Great Places:

**Great Neighborhood:**
College Hill (Providence, RI)

**Great Streets:**
U Street, N.W. (Washington D.C.)
Main Street (Nantucket, MA)
Market Square and Market Street (Portsmouth, NH)
Downtown Woodstock Streetscape (Woodstock, VT)

APA leadership was invited to speak at the Nantucket Main Street event on October 8th. This Great Street has balanced the pressures of tourism with the everyday comings and goings of Main Street as the center of Nantucket life and commerce for two centuries. Through strong community leadership, planning and zoning, strategic private investment, and contributions of individuals, families and community groups, Main Street in Nantucket has succeeded at maintaining the quality and character that was recognized as being a true Great Street in the U.S.

Since the Great Places Program’s start in 2007, APA has designated 140 Great Places located in all 50 states and D.C. Great Places are exceptional for many reasons, including creating a sense of place, the leadership of elected officials, the contributions of the businesses and community organizations and the hard work of engaged citizens and planners. Congratulations to Nantucket, Providence, Washington, DC, Portsmouth and Woodstock! For more information on the other Great Places or if you have a place that you’d like to nominate for 2012, please visit this site.

Angela Vincent is the APA Region 1 Director.

Aging and Livable Communities: an APA Division Initiative

APA Divisions are helping to guide the critical conversation on creating communities that are livable for all, especially for a rapidly aging America. Please join us in this transformation by sharing best practices, success stories, tools and other resources available from your communities that can enrich the discussion and be highlighted on the Division Initiative web pages. Email your contributions to ramonamullahey@hawaiiantel.net.
Connecting Communities Conference continued from page 1

connecting planning and urban design to create economic development opportunities. Bleecker Street, Bagg’s Square and Uptown Utica demonstrated that planning and urban design can play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people’s lives and experience. It would be hard to forget how F.X. Matt Brewery in the Varick Street Business District enriched our conference experience. Cheers to the home of Saranac Beer!

Our conference’s keynote speaker, Peter Fleischer of the Empire State Future Coalition, brought us together over lunch with an eloquent argument for smart growth in New York. The Chapter’s awards program highlighted the best of this year’s planning efforts.

Like great communities, great conferences are the result of good planning and this year’s conference planning committee should be proud of their work. The experience and staff support of Tanya Zwahlen of Highland Planning made our job infinitely easier. Now, as the Central New York Section passes the conference baton to the Southern Tier Section, we bid a fond adieu to Utica and the connections we made there. We look forward to reuniting in Corning in 2012.

As is always the case with Upstate Chapter conferences, I continue to be impressed with the range of topics that were presented and the expertise of those who traveled to Central New York to share their thoughts and experience. The Utica Conference left this planner convinced that Upstate has a deep well of quality planning and design professionals to draw from. In 2012, I am hopeful that more of our thirsty communities will take a sip!

Geoff Milz is a Planner for Cayuga County. He was co-chair of the 2011 Chapter conference.

Thank you to our 20 exhibitors! Photo credit: Matt Van Slyke

Planners and landscape architects enjoy a tour of the F.X. Matt Brewery. Photo credit: Michael Haas