



# The Upstate Planner

*Making Great Communities Happen*

Volume 22

November 2007

Issue 3

## President's Message

*By Mike Long, AICP, RLA*

Thanks to the Southern Tier Section, we have just completed another exceptional annual conference in Binghamton. Frank Evangelista engaged a large group of volunteers who made everything run smoothly.

After discussion over the last year, the Executive Committee is developing a limited part-time consultant position to assist with the daily activities of the chapter. We have approximately 850 members and are considered a medium size chapter. All of the large chapters and many of the medium size ones have some paid support staff. Our needs have exceeded our volunteer executive committee board and it is time that we get some help.

The primary focus for the paid consultant will be to assist the Professional Development Officer with AICP certification maintenance. We look forward to developing an expanded training program with AICP sessions throughout the year. In addition, the annual chapter conference is our largest event and it is put it together with little assistance.

Over the last several years, the Executive Board has worked hard to limit chapter expenses, raise additional revenues through the newsletter advertisers and the annual conference; we are in the best financial position ever. Paid staff support can help us grow.

A request for proposal for the consultant position is being finalized and will be circulated to those interested. There probably is a retired planner, enterprising professional or part-time administrative person that would be a good fit. Please see the chapter web site or

*See Message, continued on page 7*

## Prof to conference: Rethink regionalism

*By George Homsy AICP*

Standing alone the cities and villages of upstate New York are not doing well. And studies strongly link regional cooperation to economic growth.

Planners typically consider a county or the area around a central city as a region. A Cornell professor pushed upstate planners to think about different ideas for considering regions including a grouping of urban centers.

The potential of New York State regions containing multiple cities was unveiled by Cornell University planning professor Rolf Pendall at the chapter conference in Binghamton. He said the most successful cities are large metropolises, something lacking in upstate.

"Many of the problems upstate are because our centers are too small," said Pendall. "There are not enough jobs in any one region to convince workers to move there. And there are not enough workers to convince companies to move there."

The session was the first in a series of presentations arranged by Pendall to explore the idea of polycentric regions in New York. He is bringing in scholars from polycentric regions

*See Regional, continued on page 8*

## An environmental/historic preservation ethic

*By Jayme Breschard*

Pitting environmental protection against historic preservation – the conversation did not start out that way, but participants in a roundtable last spring realized that it is often a problem in upstate New York. A group of planners decided that a new paradigm is needed to put cultural and ecological preservation on the same level.

This discussion took place in March when the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council hosted a Regional Roundtable on Historic Preservation and Public Consensus Building in downtown Rochester. Regional preservation experts from the New York State Historic Preservation Office, Preservation League of New York State and The Landmark Society of

*Think Again is an occasional series in which writers challenge conventional planning wisdom in upstate New York.*



*Upstate planners tour the inside of a building undergoing renovation near Binghamton's arts district during this year's conference. Local planners credit the arts for the city's increased rejuvenation.*

**Conference coverage  
continues on page 3**

Western New York joined county planning directors, planning board chairs, elected officials and members of local historic preservation commissions to discuss the issues and how to effectively demonstrate the need for historic preservation planning.

## Think Again

It started with participants brainstorming ways to connect historic preservation planning with community development. Ideas included tying restoration and maintenance to economic development, encouraging training and education to elected officials, boards, and the public and allaying historic preservation planning with the protection of environmental resources. The interpretation of historic resources as environmental assets tapped into a rather thought-provoking discussion: are historic

*See Think Again, continued on page 9*

## APA names Buffalo's Elmwood a great neighborhood in U.S.

Located at the crossroads of a historically significant parkway system and home to an impressive collection of world-class architecture, Elmwood Village is a premier urban, mixed-use neighborhood that dates back to Joseph Ellicott's 1804 plan for Buffalo.

The American Planning Association named Elmwood Village as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America for its vitality, broad spectrum of cultural and social assets, and its commitment to high community standards while solving real problems.

Tucked inside the City of Buffalo, mixed-use Elmwood Village is a neighborhood where one can find examples of works by renowned landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The village also is home to a prosperous commercial district, primarily along Elmwood Avenue, with more than 200 shops and restaurants.

Despite its many assets, residents left Elmwood Village for suburbia during the latter half of the 20th century. To encourage an economic and cultural renaissance, the nonprofit Elmwood Village Association was formed in 1994. With membership drawn from both the business and residential sectors, the organization used planning to reclaim the neighborhood's former vitality. One of its first successes was narrowing Elmwood Avenue and widening its sidewalks to shift the street's emphasis from cars to pedestrians.

Helping make the neighborhood attractive and comfortable to pedestrians are design guidelines to ensure new development does not detract from the existing architecture and character. These have resulted in new mixed-use structures built up to the street and in character with neighborhood styles rather than single-use buildings set back from the street and surrounded by parking.

Intelligent street design and management has enhanced the visibility of local shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Elmwood Avenue businesses rely heavily on foot traffic, so the streetscape is of prime importance to retailers. Today, Elmwood Avenue is one of Buffalo's busiest commercial districts.

Standards are high in Elmwood Village, but given its proactive, "can-do" attitude, the neighborhood is able to support the needs of today's local businesses and residents without losing sight of its historic past. The result is a lively, walkable, clean, safe, and sustainable district where community spirit is contagious.

*This story comes to the Upstate Planner courtesy of the American Planning Association. To find descriptions of other Great Neighborhoods in America go to [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org).*

## AICP President defends new requirement, claims education raises credential value

The new AICP continuing education requirement is aimed at "significantly elevating the credential of AICP... which is absolutely essential for us to advance" as a profession, AICP president Graham Billingsley told planners at the APA Southern New England Conference in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

"What we want to do is get on par with other professions." He said that AICP will spend \$100,000 a year promoting the credential to outsiders, for example, at International City/County Management Association conferences.

Billingsley sought to blunt criticism by explaining that the Chapter President's Council voted unanimously ten times in favor of the continuing education program.

The program has a \$500,000 annual budget raised from course registration fees. The bulk (45%) will come from the registration of courses by American Planning Association national. Another 25 percent will come from chapter registrations, ten percent from AICP and the rest from outside providers. He explained that this is roughly the same funding distribution found in other continuing education programs, such as the American Institute of Architects.

In addition to promoting the credential, AICP has developed 18 new online courses. Billingsley said it is conceivable that "a planner could get the 32 credits without leaving their computer."

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## Chapter announces awards at Binghamton conference

By Diane Carlton AICP

Each year the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association recognizes outstanding achievements that advance the art and science of planning. This year seven awards were handed out at the Chapter conference in Binghamton.

### *Outstanding Planning Award for a Community Based Plan* **The Jamestown Urban Design Plan**

The Jamestown Urban Design Plan provides a cohesive framework, vision and blueprint for downtown redevelopment. The plan has two parts: Volume I - Shaping Our Downtown's Future and Volume II - Design Guidelines. The 12-month planning process included an extensive public outreach effort, which ensured that a range of perspectives were included.

The Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, a non-profit corporation, was created by the City Council solely to implement the plan. A team of consultants led by Goody Clancy prepared the plan.

### *Outstanding Planning Award for a Regionally Based Plan* **Niagara River Greenway Plan**

The Greenway Plan is a comprehensive roadmap to a linear system of parks and recreation areas linked by trails. It establishes a unified vision, outlines principles and includes strategies for implementation, including funding, identification of operation costs and organizational structures. Despite controversy surrounding several issues addressed in the document, the plan has been endorsed by each of the 13 governing bodies within the Greenway.

The plan was prepared under the direction of the Niagara



*Chapter president Michael Long (right) congratulates winners of the Outstanding Planning Award for a Community-based Plan.*

River Greenway Commission by a team that included Wendel Duchscherer, Ecology & Environment, HOK Group, Advanced Design Group and Synegraphics.

### *Planning Excellence Award for Implementation* **Community of LeRoy**

The town and village of LeRoy adopted separate comprehensive plans in 2001. During the last six years the municipalities partnered to implement various strategies outlined in their respective documents. The communities consolidated their planning and zoning

*See Awards, continued on page 9*



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# Save the Date: 2008 Conference - October 8 - 10

By Jason Haremza

I would like to invite everyone to the 2008 New York Upstate Chapter Conference, which will take place in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, specifically Henrietta and Canandaigua, New York.

A suburban location in Henrietta, New York was chosen for much of the 2008 Conference because it was felt that it was time to look at the issues and challenges that our suburban municipalities face. Many of us planners, it seems, have a natural bias towards more traditional community forms (cities and small towns). Many of us spend a lot of time working on, or being curious about, redevelopment of urban places. But what about the development of suburban places?

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I wish I could say that our upstate cities have had the levels of new investment that some urban places

around the nation have seen in recent decades. However, with a tepid economy across upstate, the development that has occurred has largely occurred in the suburbs. For example, of the 24,361 permits issued for new housing units in Monroe County between 1993 and 2006, only 785 (3.2%) were in the City of Rochester.

One of the questions we face as a planning profession in upstate New York, I believe, is whether there is enough focus on the issues and challenges of this suburban growth. How does the suburban growth, and the plans and projects we all

work on in suburban areas, relate to the loss of farmland and the continuing population losses in the cities? Does all this development occurring in the suburbs represent our best planning practices in terms of design, environmental and economic sustainability, balanced transportation systems, and housing options? Or are we perpetuating the mistakes of the past?

I hope that these and many other questions, issues, concerns, and ideas will be raised and discussed at the 2008 Conference. The urbanists among us need not fear- there will be excursions to the City of Rochester and City of Canandaigua. On behalf of the section, I extend to all of you a warm invitation to come to Henrietta and the entire Genesee-Finger Lakes region next October 8 through 10. Consider staying after the conference and enjoying an autumn weekend in the Finger Lakes!

*Haremza is a planner with the City of Rochester. He is also director of the Genesee-Finger Lakes section.*

## Log your AICP Cert. Main. Credits

As you know by now, AICP members must engage in continuing education in order to maintain certification. By ensuring that members have up-to-date skills and training in best practices, certification maintenance enhances the credibility of the planning profession and increases the value of your AICP credential. For more information about this new requirement, including how to track and log your continuing education credits check out the chapter website:

<http://www.nyupstateplanning.org/PDO.htm>

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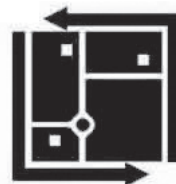
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## My View from the Board

By David W. Woods AICP, Director, Region 1

I have had the honor of serving on the APA Board of Directors for just over a year. During this time, I have been struck by the many ways that we as planners can serve the public and the profession while realizing professional and personal growth. In short, it is an exciting time to be a planner.

One of my main priorities is to provide professional development for members. During my first year, one of the Board's committees I served on was the Education Committee, and I advocated for APA to assist in developing programs that local chapters are able to administer that are affordable to both the participant and the chapter.

As most of you know, last year the AICP Commission instituted its Certification Maintenance program. While this program only affects those who are also members of the Institute, it offers opportunities to provide programs for planners no matter where they are professionally (entry, mid-level or senior), geographically, or by discipline. My advice to all of you is to give this program a chance now that it is instituted.

One of my other priorities is to provide opportunities to communicate with the region's membership. To this end, it is a goal that all board members attend (usually through invitation by the leadership) as many of the chapter conferences during their four-year term as possible. I will continue to write these articles for chapter newsletters. To get an even better handle on member's concerns, I invite each of you to either email me at dwoods@brookhaven.org or call me at 631.451.6370.

One of the elements of serving on the board that I enjoy

## NY Land Use Law Blog

A new land use law blog provides a forum for discussion of current laws, policies and decisions. The blog, maintained by Albany Law School Associate Dean and Professor Patricia Salkin, highlights new court decisions, new state and federal laws and policies, and actions at the local government level that guide and/or impact land use and community development. The blog address is [www.lawoftheland.wordpress.com](http://www.lawoftheland.wordpress.com)

Readers may use this blog to keep current on trends in land use law by subscribing to the daily email to bring news of the "case or development of the day," and readers may also watch developments in specific areas of the law by using the categorical tags to review all recent posting relating to a particular topic. All views and opinions are welcome in the form of comments to individual postings. Check back periodically to see whether others have posted comments to cases of interest to you and/or your clients.

is the ability to understand the phenomenal levels of planning that are taking place across this nation, and the impact that our growing organization is having on all levels of government, communities and the individuals who share their knowledge and skills in enhancing the quality of life for all the citizens.

Thank you for giving me this space to provide my view from the Board of Directors. I look forward to meeting with as many of you as possible during the next three years. Happy planning.

*Woods, Region 1 director for the APA, is the commissioner of planning, environment and land management in the Town of Brookhaven.*



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## Planning Federation keynote: Downtowns key to community revitalization

By Nicole McGowen

"Every community that has seen revitalization in the Northeast has two things in common: they have great schools, and they have downtowns." While John R. Mullin did not set out a plan of attack to improve a community's school system, he did provide countless tips and techniques on successfully transforming downtowns into great Main Streets.

Mullin directs the Center for Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts, where he is a professor of regional planning. He was the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the New York Planning Federation in Saratoga Springs.

Mullin described practices that communities use to revitalize their Main Streets. These include dealing with vacancy, parking issues, and security, as well as capturing business. For example, vacant lots in downtown can be transformed into a farmers market, a place to sell Christmas trees, or a location for an arts and craft fair. Something is always better than nothing. Mullin went on to say that parking issues are often never really issues at all. He gave an example of how retailers can team up with churches that usually only require parking on Sundays. Or, a community can double up on the number of permitted parking spaces – for residents at night and for shoppers and employees during the day.

Security can be strengthened by "safescaping" downtown. Safety, or the perception of safety, is a major factor when deciding



*Revitalizing a Main Street is crucial to turning an entire community around. It simply takes creative planning.*

to walk downtown, especially at night. This sense of safety can be improved by installing appropriately scaled street lighting, hiring retired police officers to walk the streets and maintaining landscaping. Landscaping not only provides a sense of safety, studies have shown it also adds 20 to 25 percent to the value of Main Street.

Perhaps Mullin's driving point was that thriving downtowns must function 16 hours a day and they must appeal to multiple audiences. Construction workers need a convenience store to get their morning coffee; businessmen want a restaurant to entertain their potential clients; retired folks want a variety of shops for afternoon browsing; and students and young professionals seek a pub or a coffee shop to relax and catch up in the evening. Successful downtowns cater to each of these diverse populations.

Shopping patterns have drastically changed over the past several decades. While downtowns were once the place to be, they gave way to the suburban mall over the 1970s and 1980s. However, the tables have turned. Recent studies have shown that trips to the mall have declined by 50 percent since the early 1990s. Now, more than ever, communities need to strategize how to capture shoppers for their downtowns – and this requires careful analysis.

All too often, communities feel they must compete with the big box stores in order to attract business to Main Street. This often proves impossible. Instead, communities must evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and assess their opportunities and threats to determine their competitive advantage. Rather than compete, it is best for communities to try to complement and supplement.

In short, Mullin says, "Main Streets are special places. They reflect a community's values and they provide a sense of place." Mullin suggests that no matter how big or small the revitalization tool used, use what resources you've got and then celebrate success. Festivals, parades, community BBQs and other events geared at gathering the masses present a great opportunity to show residents and visitors alike, what your community is made of – including a great downtown.

*McGowen is a planner with Saratoga Associates in Saratoga Springs, New York.*

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## New York lawmakers track planning issues

by Mark Castiglione

While the NYS Legislature is in recess, it is a good time to provide an overview of the bills that have been introduced during the previous session and that will be on the agenda when the Legislature formally reconvenes in January.

From smart growth bills like the Community Preservation Act to the proposed Eminent Domain amendment, the last legislative session included numerous bills that could in some way transform the practice of planning in New York State. The following bills highlight some of the issues up for consideration before the New York State Legislature. For a full legislative update visit the Upstate Chapter's website [www.nyupstateplanning.org](http://www.nyupstateplanning.org).

### **Vested Rights (S.3852a, A.6023)**

An act to amend the general municipal law, in relation to vested rights relating to land development.

*Summary:* This bill would amend Article 7B of the General Municipal Law by adding a new section 150 relative to the ability of a property owner to develop or alter his/her property under local codes, laws, ordinances, rules and regulations which are in existence at the time of filing of the application for approval of the improvement, development or addition with an Environmental Assessment Form, or alternatively, at the discretion of the applicant upon the filing of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The bill states there shall be a rebuttable presumption that municipal zoning, planning and environmental enactments by a Village, Town or City regulating the development of land as of the filing date of a complete application for a project shall remain applicable to the proposed project for a period of no less than six years as long as it is being pursued with due diligence by the applicant.

Exceptions would be made for changes to federal and state law or if a municipality could show by clear and convincing evidence that due to newly discovered information or change in circumstances it is likely that harm to the public or environment would result if the exception was not made.

*Analysis:* Developers desire predictability. Having to redraw plans and redo studies associated with development can be costly and time consuming. This bill, however, would tie the hands of many communities ill equipped to marshal the appropriate information to justify an exception or the monetary resources to support such a position. There are better ways to ensure the planning process is proactive and responsive to the desires of the community while remaining fair and economical to the developer.

*Status:* Committed to Rules.

### **Smart Growth for the New Century Act (S.4338a, A.7271a)**

An act to amend the general municipal law, the environmental conservation law, the public authorities law, the agriculture and markets law, the real property tax law, the state finance law and the executive law, in relation to enacting the "Smart Growth for the New Century Act"

*Summary:* The Smart Growth for the New Century Act would promote a voluntary smart growth planning process that communities could undertake individually or jointly. Projects consistent with the smart growth plans would be eligible for low interest loans through a smart growth revolving loan fund (established by the bill

as well) and for other incentives like real property tax exemptions and priority for state financial assistance.

The bill also established a "smart growth compact" so that communities can work together. Community compact councils would be empowered to create these compacts. Projects that are inconsistent with an area's compact plan will not be approved by any government entity or supported by state financial assistance. This bill also creates an office of local assistance within the Department of State to provide technical, scientific and financial assistance to localities that undertake smart growth planning.

*Analysis:* The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm that reforming state legislation is necessary to implement Smart Growth. This bill, coupled with the "State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act," will enable the State to take an appropriate leadership role in advancing sustainable growth. While land use decisions will still remain local, these bills will provide the leadership and regulatory incentives at the state level and the tools necessary for communities to implement smart growth priorities at the local level. See APAs Smart Growth Policy Guide for further information [www.planning.org/policyguides/smartgrowth.htm](http://www.planning.org/policyguides/smartgrowth.htm).

*Status:* In committee.

### **Tax rebate for infrastructure improvements (S. 1483, A. 871)**

An Act to amend the general municipal law, in relation to authorizing municipalities to re-direct a portion of the real property taxes made by certain project occupants.

*Summary:* Authorizes municipalities to re-direct real property tax payments made by project occupants which agree to invest in or construct infrastructure improvements for any economic development projects; such re-directed payments shall be used to retire any debt incurred for the construction and development of such infrastructure.

*Analysis:* This bill allows municipalities to give a 100 percent credit to developers on property taxes to defray the cost of infrastructure improvements, including construction costs and interest paid, up to the value of the improvement. Upstate New York is facing a daunting paradox: sprawl without growth. The cost of infrastructure that supports sprawl development is seen by many as environmentally destructive and a serious misallocation of resources. This bill could potentially provide a subsidy for developers to build infrastructure and could alter the economics of development in favor of sprawl.

*Status:* Passed the Senate.

*Mark Castiglione is a senior planner for Hudson River Greenway and is the director of legislative affairs for Upstate Chapter of the APA.*

## President's Message

*Message, continued from page 1*

contact me at [mlong@ci.auburn.ny.us](mailto:mlong@ci.auburn.ny.us) if you or someone you know would like to be considered. Hopefully some time early next year we will get this new person on board.

Remember to check our APA Chapter website at: [www.NYUpstateplanning.org](http://www.NYUpstateplanning.org). If you have changed your e-mail address or other information, remember to update your information through the National APA web site, as they are the official keeper of the information.



## Krasner Scholarship Essay: Planning, upstate and Mike Krasner

By Arlene Rodriguez

Buffalo - the city of 'good neighbors'. I am sure there are a lot of cities that describe themselves that way, but Buffalo is really the city of good neighbors. I cherish the city, not only because I was born here but because of the history and the memories made here.

As a child I lived in Buffalo near Dunn Tire Park. I grew up in a low income neighborhood, but absolutely loved it. My favorite part was walking down to Main Street and getting on the light rail transit to our favorite restaurant, shopping and watching people. That is how I will always remember downtown Buffalo: the fun train rides the people and the shopping.

I lived in the city of Buffalo until I was five years old then I moved to North Tonawanda, lived there until I was thirteen and then moved to Franklinville. I lived in Franklinville until I went to college at the University at Buffalo.

My interest while growing up was architecture. I love old architecture and growing up in Buffalo and going downtown almost every day made me appreciate the architecture today.

I started in architecture but soon realized that it was not what I wanted to focus on. I did not want to just focus on great buildings, but I wanted to see it the way it used to be while growing up. As we know, the development of the light rail system on Main Street eventually destroyed Downtown. I felt the need to get into planning and revitalize the old buildings before they were torn down and replaced with modern buildings with no character. Buffalo meant more to me then just building new structures. I want to see it thrive with people and businesses just like it once was.

During my undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to take Professor Michael Krasner's class, "perceptive on land use and development" and enjoyed the class. Not only did I enjoy the class but I was inspired by Professor Krasner. I felt his main interest was to educate us in the true meaning of planning. He would bring guest speakers to class which helped us understand what planning was really about.



Gary Palumbo introduces Krasner scholarship winner Arlene Rodriguez.

The last time I saw Professor Krasner, I went to his office to hand in our semester final project. At that time he had an intern, but instead of asking that person to show me around, he took the time to educate me. He showed me the different maps and advised me if I ever needed any information to contact him.

When I found out that Professor Krasner passed away I was stunned. I could not believe that the professor I grew to admire and developed a relationship with would not be there for professional advice. To this day, I think of the last time I saw Professor Krasner and his excitement and hope one day I will have that same excitement about planning.

Overall, I would like to see the city of Buffalo boom to what it once was. It may seem far-fetched to a lot of people but if people who are willing to bring the city back then it can be done. I want to take what I learned throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies and apply it to the city I cherish - Buffalo, New York, the true city of 'good neighbors'.

*Rodriguez received the 2007 Michael J. Krasner Memorial Scholarship. The University of Buffalo student is specializing in environmental land use planning and GIS.*

## Rethinking regionalism: trying to band our upstate cities together

*Regionalism, continued from page 1*

around the world for a short series of lectures exploring whether the concept makes sense in upstate New York.

In Binghamton, Larry Orman opened the session by introducing the planners in attendance to California's Bay Area - a vibrant polycentric region. Orman is the executive director of GreenInfo Network.

Over time, Orman explained that the 150 by 50 mile region, comprising nine counties and over 100 municipalities, developed multiple job centers so that "people have many places to go to work. They can change jobs frequently" without having to change housing - making the Bay Area an attractive place to work and do business.

However, Orman explained, the growing strength of different jobs centers makes it difficult for the public transit system, designed to move people into and out of San Francisco, to service the multiple job centers.

Following Orman, Pendall drew a comparison to upstate

New York. "Our regional centers are too small, we are not well-connected to each other," he said. "Globally, the megacities are the centers of creativity. People have a lot of jobs. When you graduate you move to such a place where you and your partner will have a greater range of jobs."

Together, Pendall theorized, upstate cities might have the critical mass needed for economic development. He demonstrated, for example, that Rochester, Syracuse and Ithaca have similar kinds of occupations, even if the industries are different.

However, commuting distances between urban centers is a big hurdle to reframing upstate regions this way, explained Pendall. Rochester and Buffalo are the closest. Even if you live between the two, Pendall maintained, "it is too far apart to drive."

Pendall is still looking into ways to link the jobs centers so that the job pool and the employee pool will be large enough to attract new companies and therefore new workers. The state should find a way, he said to "make these individual job centers relate to one another."



## APA Awards

*Awards, continued from page 3*

boards, developed a single land use map and adopted a joint zoning code. A town hall was built on Main Street in the Village and the communities received a grant to rehabilitate 12 buildings.

The Steinmetz Planning Group and Clark Patterson Associates provided technical support including planning and grant writing services. Implementation occurred between village and town governing bodies with support from a newly-formed Leadership Group, Main Street Advisory Committee, LeRoy Business Council and agricultural community.

*Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach*

### **Stream Processes: A Guide to Living in Harmony with Streams**

This easy to read guide outlines how streams work, how to assess their condition and it offers solutions for stream management. The graphics, photos and diagrams explain complex natural processes in hydrology. The publication is an excellent resource for those interested in improving water quality and protecting the natural and built environment.

Preparation of the plan was a joint effort involving the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development board, Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition.

*Planning Excellence Award for Best Practice*

### **CARE Area Market Study and Revitalization Strategy**

The plan provides a roadmap for the revival of six distressed retail commercial districts in Buffalo. The strategy is to concentrate funding within small geographic areas in order to achieve the critical mass required to encourage private investment and economic sustainability.

The strategy was prepared under the direction of the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation by Peter J. Smith, Inc.

*Distinguished Leadership: Elected Official*

### **Marc R. Smith, Supervisor, Town of Lockport**

Marc Smith has undertaken a leadership position on a number of initiatives designed to enhance the quality of life in Lockport. Chief among his accomplishments are the review and update of the town's master plan and zoning code; development of the town's first active park; a plan for infrastructure maintenance and replacement. He supported the preparation of the Trails, Pathways and Connectivity Plan and the establishment of the Transit Road Corridor Focus Group Committee.

*Michael J. Krasner Distinguished Leadership: Professional Planner*  
**Daniel C. Sitler**

Dan Sitler was president of Saratoga Associates in Saratoga Springs. His projects addressed a range of issues including community planning and downtown revitalization, urban design, economic development, waterfront revitalization and brownfield redevelopment. Dan was a proponent of citizen participation as a critical element in every planning process. His outstanding character and technical skills, coupled with his enthusiasm, are models to be emulated. Dan passed away in January 2007.

*Carlton is the Regional Director for Public Affairs and Education for the New York State Department of Environment Conservation.*

## Historic Preservation Ethic

*Think Again, continued from page 1*

resources given the same weight as wetlands, floodplains, and other natural resources?

Local land use laws commonly protect historic resources by minimizing the negative aesthetic impacts of new development and protecting the positive features of a community. General Municipal Law authorizes municipalities to establish a landmark preservation law, which enables the designation of historic and cultural landmarks and districts and creates a board or commission to regulate new development or the alteration or improvement of historic buildings and landmarks based on design guidelines or standards.

Instead of reviewing only the aesthetics of the built environment, such as roofing, siding and windows - historic preservation efforts should consider the aesthetics of how the land is used. This land use interpretation of historic resources will allow greater flexibility in preserving not only the building and/or structure, but also the natural environment in which it sits.

In many communities, historic resources are the places that the average person calls home. The public does not readily see that their circa 1832 home is a historic resource - nor does the municipality. The structure, often a nonconforming one, is seen as a symbol of how humans adversely impacted the natural environmental - simply because it was built before the environmental regulatory process. Historic preservation issues are therefore forced to compete with aquifers, woodlands, wetlands, watersheds, watercourses, habitats, floodplains, and open spaces.

Individual residential on-site wastewater systems (septic systems) are good examples. Perhaps a community has failing systems near a stream or lake. The local government, continually dealing with inspections, adopts a regulation in a waterfront district that encourages the consolidation of "substandard" lots for new development - thus creating larger lots that are, in theory, more environmentally-friendly and provide for an adequate on-site wastewater system.

However, historic buildings were constructed on what are nonconforming lots today. Real environmental concerns make the historic resource a second priority after the malfunctioning wastewater system.

Instead of zoning that endangers historic structures, perhaps historic buildings could be retained and just the failing system replaced. One way might be through something such as the uniform on-site wastewater law, which provides a thorough inspection of the size and condition systems. When required at the time of property sale, an inspection gives the buyer and seller an accurate evaluation. Thus, only the on-site wastewater system is targeted - not the lot.

While protecting historic and cultural resources through local historic districts and a landmark program may be the best way to regulate exterior alterations, new construction, and demolition, local governments also have the option to use their zoning authority to develop special regulations that recognize an environmental setting - intrinsic to all its resources - and thereby do what is most appropriate for the community's use of its land.

*Breschard is a planner with the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council. For more information on local land use laws that balance historic preservation and environmental protection contact her at (585) 454-0190 x18 or [jbreschard@gflrpc.org](mailto:jbreschard@gflrpc.org).*

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**443 Broadway**  
**Saratoga Springs, NY 12866**

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## Upstate Planner

### Binghamton in pictures - shots from around the conference

