

NEWS RELEASE

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Newark-based planning firm Hector Design Service & Newark Planning Office receive National Planning Award

NEWARK, NJ – Hector Design Service, a Newark-based design and planning firm, and the Newark Planning Office will receive the American Planning Association’s 2015 National Planning Excellence Award for the design and implementation of the Newark Zoning Workshop. The award honors an individual, project or program that uses information and education about the value of planning to create greater awareness among citizens or specific segments of the public.

The Newark Zoning Workshop was developed in 2011 in conjunction with the first comprehensive overhaul of Newark’s zoning regulations in 60 years, now adopted into law as Newark Zoning & Land Use Regulations (NZLUR). The workshop uses techniques of popular education as practiced by Septima Clark and Ella Baker to build knowledge of zoning and development to support community-based organizations and their members playing pro-active roles around land use, design and development review. The workshop was designed and produced by Hector principal Damon Rich AICP PP, Newark Planning Director & Chief Urban Designer until earlier this year, with support from Natalia O’Neill Vega, Jae Shin, Perris Straughter AICP PP, and Michele Alonso AICP PP. Newark Community Development Network and community-based organizations interested in zoning across the city helped test the workshop and provided critical guidance.

In the workshop, participants begin from what they know about how the city is developed and quickly move from basics of land use and zoning into nuanced discussions of how competing interests shape development decision-making. The workshop includes three activities: Zoning for Use, where participants lay out a small city and its land uses with a gameboard and blocks; Zoning for Design, where participants create “paper doll” buildings to explore zoning and aesthetics; and The Planning Process, where participants use a refrigerator-friendly diagram to understand how zoning touches the ground and the ongoing role of the public in keeping the system accountable.

“The Newark Zoning Workshop teaches the basics of planning, but also demonstrates how challenging decision-making can be,” said Damon Rich, Hector principal and former Newark Planning Director & Chief Urban Designer.

“Discussions frequently break out about the pros and cons of neighborhood uses like shelters or social services, and stories are often shared about well-remembered

land use controversies. The workshop builds on Newark's strong and proud tradition of neighborhood activism in shaping the city."

To date, community-based organizations in more than half of Newark's neighborhoods have hosted workshops at their meetings. With the support of this constituency for zoning reform created through the Newark Zoning Workshop, the city's new Newark Zoning & Land Use Regulations were unanimously adopted by the Municipal Council in February 2015.

"The workshops make learning about, and participating in planning initiatives easy and understandable," said W. Shedrick Coleman, 2015 APA Awards Jury chair. "The workshop brings planning directly to the residents and demonstrates that civic engagement plays a key role building communities of lasting value."

"The Zoning Workshop uses games that are both educational and fun to illustrate zoning principles and problems," said Renita Aughtburns of Tri-City Peoples Corporation. "The workshop exceeded our expectations through the hands on engagement, question and answer session and the knowledge of the presenters. Attendees have requested more workshops feeling that they gained the information that helps them to make informed decisions."

"The Zoning Workshop has proven to be a powerful public engagement tool that is without precedent in Newark" said Richard Cammarieri, Chairperson of Newark Community Development Network.

"The Zoning Workshop was beyond successful. Each and every person walked away feeling informed," said Tenagne Girma-Jeffries of the Historic Weequahic Neighborhood Association. "We were really given the tools to understand the process of zoning and how it is affecting our community. It highlights the valuable role we can play in shaping this city, especially when we understand how the stages of development work. While our focus tends to be on crime and education, but a major part of what will shape our communities rests in the future model for zoning. It is changing the landscape of our city as we know it."

Newark representatives and additional APA award winners will be honored at the 2015 National Planning Awards luncheon April 20, 2015, at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, Washington. The award winners will also be featured in the April 2015 issue of *Planning* magazine.

For a list of all of the APA 2015 National Planning Excellence and Achievement Award recipients, visit www.planning.org/awards. APA's national awards program, the profession's highest honor, is a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago to recognize outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

The American Planning Association is an independent, not-for-profit educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. For more information, visit www.planning.org.

The Newark Planning Office (NPO) works to make New Jersey's most populous municipality a prosperous, walkable, and environmentally just city. Under the leadership of Planning Director & Chief Urban Designer Damon Rich, NPO's achievements included leading design negotiations on over \$2 billion of real estate development, completing the city's first riverfront parks, launching the Newark Public Art Program, and drafting the first comprehensive update to the city's zoning regulations in 60 years. NPO has completed award-winning planning and urban design projects including Newark's River: Public Access & Redevelopment Plan, awarded a 2014 New Jersey Future Smart Growth Award, The Box & Beyond: Infill Housing for Newark, awarded the 2009 Outstanding Community Engagement and Education Award by the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association, and Newark Riverfront Revival, the recipient of a Our Town award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NPO website is www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us.

Hector Design Service is the partnership of Jae Shin & Damon Rich. We make architecture, plans, exhibitions & publications that use the agency of design to make things happen.
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