

Upcoming membership survey

The Northern Section Board is preparing for its January 2011 Strategy Retreat where it will consider ways to improve membership services and section operation. In advance, we would like to hear what you think the Board should be doing more of, less of, or continue at the same level. In addition, the Board's newly formed Sustainability Committee would like to know what knowledge, skills, and training (or other support) would help you respond effectively to sustainability challenges in your jurisdiction or practice. Some of the survey questions will address this topic.

Please watch for an email announcing the survey. ■

Sustainability Planning accelerates

Scott T. Edmondson, AICP

Sustainability challenges are expanding and accelerating. These challenges include extreme weather events, shifting hydrological regimes, ecosystem destabilization, species extinction, pollution, biotoxicity, a fraying social fabric, and ongoing sprawl and auto-dependent development. As a result, planners are recognizing the urgent need for an effective response; the pace of innovation in the APA is quickening (<http://bit.ly/cukifT>); and there are legitimate moves toward sustainable zoning. (See "Sustainable Community Development Code" at <http://bit.ly/ddtjbn>. Scroll down to "Sustainable Zoning, A New Imperative.") Further, the nature and expertise of our profession, with its interdisciplinary and whole-systems focus, suggests a unique leadership role for planners in society's response (see "Planning is Essential," at <http://bit.ly/9ouZiw>).

Are individual planning departments and planners sufficiently equipped for this role? If not, what additional knowledge, skills, and approaches would be required?

Part of the dilemma is that the emerging arena of sustainability contains many options and tools, but little guidance on how to proceed. In addition, the issues and the demands are expanding. In this context, how can planners proceed effectively, particularly in the face of scarce resources (time, staff, and budget)?

Beyond a single-issue tactical approach, success may require reinventing planning—as APA's Chief Executive Officer, W. Paul Farmer, FAICP, suggests. (See "APA Is a Leader of Global Planning" at <http://bit.ly/9ouZiw> and Farmer's co-authored position paper. (Go to <http://bit.ly/9qjpVL> and scroll down to "Reinventing Planning: A New Governance Paradigm for Managing Human Settlements.") The challenge of proceeding effectively is best approached through professional learning networks. Such a network for sustainability planning is emerging within the APA through the Sustaining Places Initiative and Task Force, recently announced by APA President Bruce Knight, FAICP (see <http://bit.ly/9ouZiw>, "Godschalk and Anderson to Co-chair") and the newly formed APA-Sustainable Community Planning Interest Group, <http://bit.ly/bRT511>.

The APA California Chapter Northern Board is also responding. As part of developing next year's work program, the Board authorized a proposal at the September Board meeting to form a small temporary committee of six members. The committee will evaluate the best way the Board can support membership in responding effectively to the sustainability challenge. The committee will propose a program for consideration at the January 2011 Board retreat.

The Northern Section program will augment—not duplicate—existing resources and initiatives. Its purpose will be to support the continued expansion, amplification, and effectiveness of sustainability planning in northern California. Key functions will be integration, synthesis, education, and innovation. The program will likely have two components: (1) a web-based learning and professional practice resource providing online access to key resources, initiatives, training, and knowledge sharing; and (2) a workshop series.

Fellow planners, Northern Section's Sustainability Committee would like to consider your ideas. What do you need to respond effectively to sustainability challenges in your jurisdiction or practice? Please see the announcement on **this page** of the "Upcoming Membership Survey" and be sure to take the survey in November and December. You may also email me your thoughts and/or join the Committee's email list (scott-e@sustainability2030.com).

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