

Northern News

NORTHERN SECTION, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Working Toward a Planners' Symposium on: The Role and Relevancy of Planners

NOVEMBER 1995

The following is a collection of statements written by planners about this topic, with an introduction by Hartmut Gerdes, AICP, Northern Section CCAPA Communications Director.

The sparkplug for some soul-searching among planners (including urban designers) of the Northern Section may be: A waning century, rapid technological change and increasing global interdependence, continued explosive population growth and the specter of global environmental crises and dislocations, perhaps within a matter of decades. Closer to home, planners find themselves accused of wanting to do too much by some – and doing too little by others. Exhausted by a prolonged recession, they are not the only profession revisiting – and re-defining – long-held assumptions. Throughout this century planners took a great interest, and were a leading voice, in setting the agenda for what communities and regions would become. Can we assume that to be true in the future? A small band of planners recently held a lively discussion about that subject at the offices of SPUR in San Francisco. It was instigated by *Northern News* Editor Mark Rhoades, Northern Section Professional Development Director Patti Jeffery and myself. The discussion is reflected in a series of informal statements by participants in this special edition of the *Northern News*.

We intend to expand the discussion, and lead up to a Planners' Symposium in the early part of 1996. Subsequently, we expect to produce a paper for state and national publication. We are inviting all interested members to join us (See insert for more information) on November 14, between 6:30 and 8:00 PM to discuss the Symposium's contents and format. Here is your chance to add your own perspective...

In Planning 101 I learned that planning has a normative and a market aspect. If so, it would seem essential that normative thinking helps inform the market, rather than having the market pull and push planners at whim, as it would appear at times. Considering planning one of the noblest professions, I have come to

look at the very best of planners as teachers and healers. Guiding spirits who can project the big picture, and healers, who can think holistically. However, many planners are, by circumstance or choice, buried by the process, the mechanics or the business of planning, with too limited an involvement in the values discussion and outreach. It has long been assumed that nobody dies from poor (or lack of) planning. However, on a global, national, even regional scale it is becoming ever more obvious that our health as a species and that of our natural environment and natural support system are indeed at stake. So who feels compelled to inspire and influence today's and tomorrow's planning agenda here at home? The Sierra Club? The NHBA? ABAG? The Greenbelt Alliance? Caltrans? Urban Ecology? Politicians? Ad-hoc citizen committees? Planners? A tough call that goes to the heart of our profession. Clearly, there is a diversity of highly competitive voices and agents, and their number is growing. How well do planners' make their voices heard – and understood! – today, and in the future? How effective are they, and will they be tomorrow, in contributing to the shaping of our communities and regions? And, coming back to the larger perspective: What kind of model do planners care to project toward the vast and expanding developing world? Please read on – and join us November 14!

Role and Relevancy of Planners, by Patricia Jeffery, AICP

Planners must take a leadership role in advocating good planning. We must do more to educate the public about what good planning is and why it is important to our communities. As a profession, we must instill in the public an understanding of why it is important to design communities that tie land use to transportation, provide a variety of housing types, stimulate economic opportunity, and create safe and attractive neighborhoods. An awareness of environmental issues has resulted in the public demanding clean air and water and the removal of hazardous materials. Plan-

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NSSCCAPA Holiday Party

This year's APA Northern Section Holiday Party will be held at the Camron-Stanford House, on the shores of Lake Merritt in Oakland. Northern Section CCAPA has rented the house for the evening of Thursday, December 14 and will be holding the holiday party there between 6:00 and 9:00 PM. For more information, please see the Event pull-out page inside.



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by Wendy Cosin, AICP

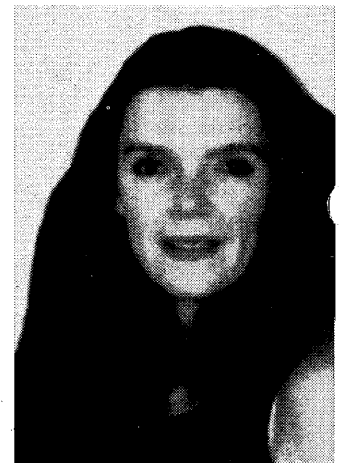
The recent State APA Conference in Santa Barbara was well-attended and successful. One of its interesting features was devotion of an entire day to an interactive forum called "Redefining Paradise: Creating the Preferred Future". The event began with remarks from futurist Glen Hiemstra who offered an historical perspective of visions of the future and predictions of key trends. In short, he suggested that most people will no longer work 8 - 5 for someone else, that people will not retire, that home will become more than a place to store belongings, that government will not be the first place people look for solutions, and that the isolated nuclear family will change. The remainder of the morning session included speakers who commented on specific trends in land use, environment, social policy, technology and economic development. After this barrage of facts and ideas, Mr. Hiemstra spoke about how to "leverage change". Rather than managing change, he suggested that individuals can become catalysts for societal change by looking at our past, conceptualizing potential futures, and avoiding the pitfall of vision - IFD disease. Idealization, frustration, and disappointment can be avoided by focusing on small victories and by developing a compelling vision of a preferred future and powerful images of the unknown. The afternoon was spent in a group process of identifying the driving forces that change planning, outlining specific trends, and developing a common vision for the future and critical strategies to get us there. More will undoubtedly be written on the experience and outcome of the day's exercise. It offered an interesting opportunity to listen to ideas about other ways of seeing things and talk about how our jobs and profession might change.



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**Patricia Jeffery, AICP,
Professional Development Director**

Patricia was born in Seattle and came to the Bay Area because she was attracted to San Francisco. She received a B.A. in Urban Studies from SF State, and then went back to Washington for her M.U.P. at the University of Washington. After returning to the Bay Area Patricia worked for several planning consulting firms before starting her own firm, Placemakers, in 1990. Patricia's goals as Professional Development Director include: offering programs and events responsive to the interests of the membership; expanding the NSCCAPA's public outreach efforts to stimulate community interest in planning issues; and, to continue and strengthen our collaborative relationships with groups such as AIA, ASLA, and AEP.



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in the Northern News is
the 16th day of the month
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Role and Relevancy... (continued from p. 1)

ners contributed to this educational process and are instrumental in ensuring that our air, water and land remain clean. Planners must now facilitate a public awareness of the need to have well-planned communities and identify the linkage between well-planned communities and a clean environment. It is our responsibility to work with the public to advance the fundamental principles that establish good planning. An understanding of such principles will, hopefully, lead to the public demanding well-planned communities just as they now demand a clean environment.

Planners and Planning, by Mark Rhoades

My study of political science taught me a great deal about participation in the political process. One of the greatest lessons that I learned was that if people expect results from this process, energy has to be devoted to participating in it. Conversely, political inactivity generally results in a lack of recognition at best, and potentially negative consequences at worst. I entered this profession five years ago for two reasons. First, I was interested in the built environment and the effects that it has on people. Second, I was interested in the processes and formulation of policies that create the built environment. A big part of planning is the political framework around which we can educate and influence decision makers relevant to sound planning policy and the importance of planning as a discipline.

Education and influence are important words. For either to occur planners must become involved not only in their professional organizations, but also in local, regional, state, national, and even international political arenas. Planning is not just a job. In order for planners to be effective both now and in the future, we need to realize that participating in the processes that shape our profession and our environment is crucial. Don't just sit there and expect someone else to advocate your profession or espouse your ideas – each of us must play a role in doing it ourselves.

The Future Role and Relevancy of Planning and Planners: Leadership, Public Relations, and Education, by Scott Edmondson

Planners' and planning's response to twin challenges will shape their future role and relevancy. The first challenge is to realize the potential that is latent in the very idea of planning itself by undertaking the larger normative role of

societal guidance. The second challenge is responding effectively to the decline of planning's historic partner – liberalism. Planning's normative function arose from liberalism, and liberal reform politics energized and legitimized it. Where will the changing political tide to the New Right leave planning and planners? It will leave them without a sympathetic political base to guide and fuel the normative function. In response, planning must take back the normative function from the political arena. If successful, planning would provide society with the leadership required to address and resolve the most pressing problems of our day: those of sustainable development.

Furthermore, planning may be uniquely qualified as a profession for this role. It is the only profession: dedicated to the health of society as a whole (system); whose method is democratic decision process and consensual problem solving; whose function is integration within an interdisciplinary domain; and, whose product is a systemic, integrated understanding of the relevant interconnected components of any single issue and an effective response. To provide such leadership, planning must switch masters, from political to the public. It must undertake a massive public relations and educational campaign to illuminate the contributions of and potential of planning and explain its capabilities.

Without illuminating the invisible, planning will lack the legitimacy to lead effectively. If successful, the role of planning and planners will expand and their relevancy will increase.

The Role and Relevancy of Planners, by Ed Helfeld

Profession Planning is a profession with the characteristics common to other recognized professions. These include: a unique body of knowledge; special education; service to society; an ethical base; demonstrated competence by passing a test; and, they are organized and represented by an association.

Role Planners seek to improve, preserve, and refurbish the natural and built environment in physical, economical, social and cultural terms for a time frame encompassing both the short and long range. Whether a planning generalist or specialist, unique to the profession is the notion of

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Role and Relevancy... (continued from p. 3)

comprehensives. Also essential is the planner's commitment to issues of equity.

Relevance The planning profession is relevant only with positive and practical consequences for the society resulting from its efforts. Preparing creative and sophisticated plans with appropriate involvement and support by a range of citizen and governmental entities is not enough, there must be tangible improvements in the society from planning.

Note: In the recent CCAPA honor awards, more than 3/4 of the awards appeared to be for plan documents, the planning process or education/public information. Less than 1/4 of the awards went for success in implementation.

The Role and Relevancy of Planners in the Future, by Michael J. Smiley

The question of planner's future role and relevancy has two parts, with two different answers: One part is "What is (or should be) the role of planners, as individuals professionals? Is that role adequate today? Are the prospects bright for the future?" Like most opportunities, planning practice is what you make of it. Planning is a diverse field. Opportunities abound, particularly as we embark on an era of new technologies which are likely to once again radically alter the way we shape and live in our environment. Some planners, such as New Urbanists (yes, I consider them planners) provide bold visions for the future. Others are important "gatekeepers" of the environment to assure that the visionaries, futurists, and plain old developers don't get out of hand. Planners' roles are today widely varied and highly relevant. What makes planners unique are the ISSUES we deal with and the manner (or "process") in which we deal with them. Unlike many other professions, in such a role there are seldom "right" or "wrong" answers.

The second part of the question is "What is (or should be) the role of the planning profession (and organizations such the APA) as a whole? The profession as a whole should focus on two primary roles:

- 1) Advancing public awareness of the need for planning and the ISSUES of societal concern. In this regard, the profession has done a poor job.
- 2) Advancing awareness of the efforts of individual practitioners who are addressing the issues. The profession has done a poor job of this, often feeding professional jealousies supporting

"old school" ideas rather than providing a forum to advance creative thinking.

In other words, it should be the role of the planning profession, and its membership organization, to create a stimulating forum for planning discussion, not set prescriptive guidelines or principles for "good" planning.

The "identity crisis" that the planning professions is currently feeling is not shared by all practitioners, particularly those who are having considerable success in advancing their ideas. If the profession is to be more "relevant", then it must take on a broader profile as a public forum for contemporary issues, rather than leaving that task to Time and Newsweek magazines.

The Role And Relevancy of Planners, by Rick Wiederhorn

In the mid 1980's journalist Bill Moyers was commenting on an upcoming election. He was lamenting that the mayoral candidates, who were boasting about their leadership capabilities and promising to deliver more efficient government, didn't understand the differences between leadership and management. Using a maritime analogy, he explained the difference thusly: "... (sic) ...excellence in management is evidenced in the engine room; Excellence in leadership is evidenced in the log...". My appreciation of Moyers' analogy is not accidental. In addition to working at the Port of Oakland, I am an avid sailor, having spent most of my life "...messing around in boats...". Aboard ship, the captain's word is law, but he/she has little control over the elements he/she faces. In this environment, having the title and barking out the orders does not make the captain a leader. The captain's authority to act and the actions taken must be bound together by sound decision-making that accounts for all relevant factors. Among sailors, it is a measure of seamanship to understand a situation, and then apply correct judgment and technical skills to get you where you want to go. When people ask me what I do as a planner, I often use my sailing experiences to illustrate my perception of my role. Keeping a city vigorous is a lot like sailing. Sailing needs a 'navigator': someone close at hand who knows where the city is, and direction in which we're heading; who knows where we want to go; who has a eye on the horizon for fresh breezes, storms or pirates; who can recommend both long-range strategies plus

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Senior Planner

City of Petaluma

\$3,856 - \$4,687/mo.

The City of Petaluma is seeking a qualified professional to perform complex planning studies related to review of development applications and comprehensive capital improvement programs, under direction of the Planning Director. In addition, the Senior Planner will be responsible for compiling and analyzing data on economic, social and physical factors affecting land use and circulation. The Senior Planner will also be responsible for developing recommendations, and preparing or overseeing graphics, narrative reports, and related duties. Interested applicants must apply to the City of Petaluma Personnel Department, PO Box 61, Petaluma, CA 94953. Telephone (707) 778-4416. Application deadline is November 28, 1995.

Planner I/II

San Mateo County

\$30,828 - \$45,720/yr.

San Mateo County seeks a professional planner for its Planning Division. Responsibilities include researching and analyzing planning data, conducting planning studies, preparing environmental documents and assisting in land use and zoning administration. The vacancy is in current planning, however, openings could occur in other sections. Experience and a college degree in planning or a closely related field is desirable. For more information and/or an application packet, call San Mateo County Employee and Public Services (415) 363-4343. Application Deadline is November 17, 1995 by 5:00 p.m., or postmarked by midnight on that date. EOE.



It's Holiday Party Time Again!

Camron-Stanford House is back by popular demand

This year's APA Northern Section Holiday Party will be held at the Camron-Stanford House, on the shores of Lake Merritt in Oakland. The 14-room mansion was the site of our very popular 1992 Holiday Party and provides a picturesque setting for the annual festivities. The Camron-Stanford House was built in 1876 and is one of the last of the great Victorian homes in the Lake Merritt area.

answer questions about the house. For those who wish to enjoy twilight over Lake Merritt, the veranda and lawn areas will also be open.

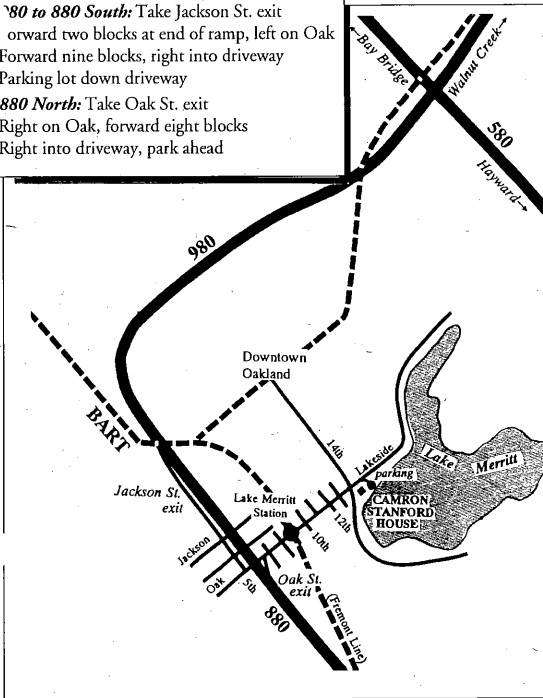
The Holiday Party is traditionally one of the year's most enjoyable Section events. It's a great opportunity to meet other planning professionals, chat with friends after work, and enjoy good food and drink in a beautiful, historic setting. Our caterers are promising a great spread of hors d'oeuvres and snacks. It's an event you won't want to miss!

Please register early for this event!

The cost of the party is \$10.00 if you pay by December 1, \$12.50 if you pay by December 12, and \$15 at the door. Student admission is \$7.50 if paid in advance. To attend the party, clip the registration form below and mail your check to the address shown. You can also phone in your reservations by calling (510) 845-2404. However, checks must be received before the deadline dates.

The Camron Stanford House is located at 14th and Lakeside, five blocks north of the Lake Merritt BART Station (*see map at left*). Parking is available on the premises.

80 to 880 South: Take Jackson St. exit forward two blocks at end of ramp, left on Oak Forward nine blocks, right into driveway Parking lot down driveway
880 North: Take Oak St. exit Right on Oak, forward eight blocks Right into driveway, park ahead



Northern Section CCAPA has rented the house for the evening of Thursday, December 14 and will be holding the holiday party there between 6:00 and 9:00 PM. The event will feature food, drink, music, and merriment, not to mention an opportunity to browse the home's historic exhibits and period furnishings. Museum exhibits chronicle the history of the house and describe the evolution of Oakland's neighborhoods during the past century. A volunteer docent will be on hand to

YES! I would like to attend the Holiday Party on December 14 at the Camron-Stanford House. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for the following individuals:

Please enclose \$10 per guest for early registration (by December 1); \$12.50 for registration thereafter. Student registration is \$7.50.

Please mail to: APA Holiday Party c/o Barry Miller • 817 Alvarado Road • Berkeley, CA 94705



Urban Design in Indonesia – Jakarta Waterfront Development Plan

Steve Wanat, AICP, will give a presentation on the Jakarta Waterfront Plan which is a multi-billion dollar development in the capitol of Indonesia. Steve, one of the principal authors of the plan, has just spent a year working in Jakarta. The plan will establish a new framework for future development on the waterfront that includes 3,700 hectares, of which 2,700 would be reclaimed land. New development will include a waterfront business district, preservation of historic sites, expansion of Tanjung Priok-Port, and the construction of low-cost and market rate housing.

Date: November 8, 1995

Time: 5:30-6:00, networking and refreshments, 6:00-7:30, presentation

Location: SPUR Office, 312 Sutter Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco

BART- Montgomery Station, Parking-Sutter/Stockton Garage

RSVP: NSCCAPA Voicemail
(415) 281-0195

The Role and Relevancy of Planners

The written work that comprises the bulk of this issue of the Northern News is the result of the first meeting of individuals participating in the Role and Relevancy of Planners discussion group. The next meeting will be held on November 14, at the SPUR offices in San Francisco. The first meeting was attended by a number of individuals who are excited about this topic, and are ready to involve themselves in serious discussion relevant to planning and planners. It is not too late to involve yourself in the discussion, or whatever course of action the group takes. Planners are encouraged to attend this event, and to think about and articulate their ideas about our profession.

Date: November 14, 1995

Time: 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Location: SPUR Office, 312 Sutter Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco

BART- Montgomery Station, Parking-Sutter/Stockton Garage

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Role and Relevancy... (continued from p. 4)

short-range maneuvers which will get us there without hitting the rocks; who understands that the fastest way to where we want to be is not necessarily the most direct route; and, who keeps the log.....At the same time, the navigator's strategies must account for erratic winds and shifting tides (political and otherwise), uncharted reefs, impatient passengers who want a fast, yet pleasant and safe ride, and a ship that has to be constantly be maintained or it won't get there at all. To be sure, navigator/planners don't steer the boat. But, if progress requires leadership, and leadership depends on sound decision-making, do they play a role? Are they relevant? Absolutely. Just ask Christopher Columbus. He was looking for a way to the Orient.

Why Wonder if Planners are Relevant?

by Arun Jain

"Planning" is a commonly used word analogous to "engineering" and "medicine." These general terms represent only broad fields of expertise. Each, while embodying a unique body of knowledge, Comprehensives, some fundamental abilities and a presumed set of goals and purpose, are ostensibly generic when viewed against the finer subsets of expertise they encompass.

It is for this reason that efforts to get planners excited about any general discussion on "planning" usually result in tepid and ambivalent responses. Any attempt to debate the possible roles and relevancies of the profession need to be considered in this light.

It would be self to say that planners have no role or relevancy. However, can we, should we, attempt to define these ideals in the same generic terms that the word "Planning" evokes? After all, we all have our own unique, yet possibly valid reasons for why we choose to practice or be called planners. I believe that the real value in this exercise lies in reminding ourselves, outside our present niches, of a larger purpose. I am less convinced that we can use this effort to create a broader appreciation outside the profession as to what planning is. To foster better understanding in this arena, we need each planning specialty to create its own perception of clarity of purpose, relevancy and value.

The Role of Planning Over the Next Decade,

by Paul Sedway, AICP

This colloquy on the role of planning and planners in the future has been prompted by provocative recent pieces, at least one in the form of a letter in the Northern News which suggests that

planners are irrelevant. That letter suggested that planners can be replaced by persons who can convey ideas in graphic and even three dimensional form. Certainly, urban design is flashy and most planners have a pervasive streak of visual interest in their psyches. Yet the physical form of urban areas is one of the least important features of our current and future work.

We must certainly address the "packaging" of urban activity, but like most packaging, it is secondary to what is inside. Worse yet, we have been reduced to addressing one design idiom hubristically called "New Urbanism," which attempts to impose a set of design forms with precious little concern for context. Let's get on with our real work - to devise policy for the role and functioning of urban areas and their interconnection within regions.

Statement of the Role and Relevancy of Planning,

by Donald A. Woolfe AIA, AICP

Nothing much of substance has changed in my 35 years as a planning professional. Today, as in the past, our anecdotal experiences and perceptions reveal an acute concern that planning and planners are becoming increasingly irrelevant. Currently, because of the prevalent "top down" political decision-making model, planners' morale and perceived effectiveness may indeed be diminishing.

All too often a systematic and consistent planning process is perceived by public policy makers as an imposition of an unwanted discipline. Today, as in the past, decision makers want totally flexible options and want to be able to impose (from the "top down.") a solution most often dictated by an interest group constituency. In that way planners often become unwitting handmaidens of polarized interest groups and subsequently lose professional credibility.

Lastly, I believe we may have lost our chance for greater relevance when we (collectively) abdicated our participation in the designed and built environment. We slipped in the eyes of our constituents when we became consummate "regulators" and not "planners." The situation will greatly improve when: we clearly demonstrate that we have an intrinsic value to society, i.e. an intelligent method of giving conscious forethought to the creation of the built environment and management of environmental resources; and we become part of political decision-making; when we have a role in the political agenda.



Editor's Note: The Northern News wishes to thank the individuals who have taken the time thus far to participate in the discussion concerning the role and relevancy of planners. For those who have not involved themselves, it is not too late. See this month's events page for more details.

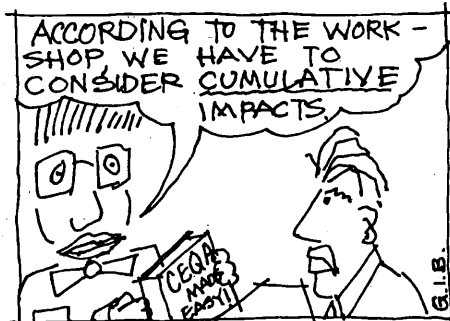
REARVIEW

*"The People Love Me,
The People Love Me Not..."*



from **And On The Eighth Day**, ASPO Press, Chicago

Life at the Counter



Geoff Bradley, City of Sunnyvale

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NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR

November

- 8 Jakarta Waterfront Plan Presentation
- 14 Role and Relevancy of Planners Discussion
- 14 - 16 UC Davis, California Riparian Ecosystems
- 17 UC Berkeley Extension, Easements and Related Land Use Law

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December

- 2 Sonoma State University Seminar
- 14 NSCCAPA Holiday Party

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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