



The Sustainability Committee

The Emerging Sustainability Planning “Pivot”

Sustainability Session Highlights from the California APA Conference 2015

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More than 30 sessions at the 2015 APA California Conference 2015 will present best practices in sustainability planning. The range of topics include water reuse, urban food, GHG cap & trade, green infrastructure, makers spaces, health, ecological city design, turn-key integrated utility systems for restorative urbanism, district innovation, “wicked” problem conflict resolution, and resilience (the *new* sustainability). Together, these innovative techniques and policy trends across the planning-design-build professions indicate an emerging sustainability planning ‘pivot’ – the shift from a net-negative, “do-less-harm” mitigation approach to a net-positive, “do-good,” regenerative-city approach; the latter is required for success ([see summary](#)).

In light of the San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose Bay Area being an innovation hub for sustainability even prior to the [1987 Brundtland Report](#), which first advanced the concept, and the [1992 UN Earth Summit](#), which put sustainability on the world development agenda, what more appropriate place to hold this year’s APA California conference than the City of Oakland? Key Bay Area sustainability planning innovations include:

1. [Joint Venture Silicon Valley Indicators](#) (annual, since 1995)
2. [Blue Print for a Sustainable Bay Area](#), Urban Ecology (1996)
3. [Sustainable Oakland Program](#), City Council (1997)
4. [Sustainability Plan](#) for the City and County of San Francisco and a new [Commission on the Environment](#) (1997)
5. [Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities Regional Initiative](#) and the [Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area](#) (1998-9)
6. Marin Countywide Plan: [Sustainable Marin – Nature, Built Environment & People General Plan](#) (2007)
7. San Jose’s [Envision 2040 General Plan](#) & [Green Vision](#) (2007)
8. [Plan Bay Area 2040](#) (2013)
9. Palo Alto Forward: [Sustainability + Mobility As A Service](#) (2015)

In recent years, APA National has strongly embraced sustainability with powerful initiatives:

1. [Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability](#) (2000)
2. [Sustaining Places Initiative](#) (2010)
3. [Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan](#) (PAS 567, 2012)
4. [Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places](#) (2013+)
5. [Sustainable Communities Division](#) (SCD; 2013)

APA California supports sustainability not only through its annual conference but also through local Section-level initiatives. The Northern Section formed a Sustainability Committee in January 2011 to advance sustainability planning best practices and establish a [learning/practice network](#). As of 2013, it was one of [only five APA State Chapter sustainability committees nationally](#). Recently, the California Chapter began with the APA Sustainable Communities Division (SCD) local Sustainability Champion to accelerate and deepen sustainability planning in California ([summary post](#) and [SCD Newsletter Article, p 4](#)). The Chapter's upcoming Oakland conference continues the Chapter's tradition of innovation with a rich set of sustainability sessions and workshops.

Three sessions encouraged by the Northern Section's Sustainability Committee were accepted. They will present key ideas of the emerging, next-generation approach to sustainability planning. This innovative ecosystems approach to regenerative city planning promises to deliver higher value and multiple benefits compared to traditional "silo" approaches, including methods to address the "wicked" problems of sustainability, as follows.

- ***The Ecological City: A Design Workshop, SUN, Oct 3rd, 1:15 pm - 2:45 pm.*** Explore the challenges, opportunities, and a framework to apply ecological ideas to city planning around three goals: (1) connecting humans to nature; (2) connecting sites to ecosystems; and (3) integrating systemic impacts into decision-making.
- ***Bay Area Sustainability: Wicked Planning and Conflict Identification at Local and Regional Scales, SUN, Oct 3rd, 1:15 pm - 2:45 pm.*** Climate change and sustainability are "wicked" problems representing conflicts over the greater good. Using the *Plan Bay Area* and sustainability plans of 11 cities across the region, this session will provide tools for conflict identification and methods for planners to help adversarial stakeholders find common ground while retaining their core values.
- ***Utilizing Integrated Utility Systems to Deliver Restorative City Goals, MON, Oct 5th, 1:15-2:45pm.*** This interactive session will present a pioneering restorative city framework and an Integrated Utility System (IUS) model that planners can use to unlock new levels of environmental, social, and economic sustainability performance. It will also outline a "turnkey" approach to assessing, designing, financing, and delivering an IUS at no cost to cities.

In addition, the Northern Section's Sustainability Committee will host a pre-conference meet-up social (complimentary wine/appetizers) and then tour of Swan's Market and Co-housing followed by dinner at Swan's Market (5:30-8:30pm FRI Oct 2nd; [details here](#)).

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