

Guidelines for *Northern News* articles

Article content and length: Our goal is to inform our membership of items of planning interest, in a newsy — not scholarly — style. We prefer articles focusing on Northern Section’s geographic area. Articles should stay in the range of 600 to 1,800 words, but there is no minimum or maximum length. *All articles are edited.* If changes are significant, we return the articles to the authors for review to be sure we haven’t introduced any errors. We discourage articles that promote businesses or individuals. Business ads can be purchased instead.

The American Planning Association, California – Northern offers membership to city and regional planners and associated professionals primarily living or working in California, from Monterey County to Del Norte County, including the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area and Lake and San Benito Counties. APA California – Northern promotes planning-related continuing education and social functions in order to:

- Provide an arena for communication and exchange of information about planning related activities;
- Raise member awareness and involvement in APA affairs;
- Increase public awareness of the importance of planning;
- Encourage professionalism in the conduct of its members; and
- Foster a sense of community among the members.

APA California – Northern publishes *Northern News* online in PDF on the Section’s website, and as a virtual magazine on Issuu.com, 10 times each year as a medium for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. A monthly email notifies 3,500+ potential readers when the newest issue is online.

Northern News welcomes comments. Letters to the editor require the author’s first and last name and home or work street address and phone number (neither of which will be published) All letters are subject to editing. Letters over 250 words are not considered.

The deadline for submitting materials for inclusion in *Northern News* is approximately the 15th day of the month prior to publication. A link to the year’s deadlines at www.norcalapa.org under “News.”

Typography and style: Don’t use an extra paragraph return between paragraphs. Don’t double-space between sentences. Before you send, always search the document globally to find and replace double paragraphs, double spaces, and non-breaking spaces. Check (and if necessary, change) all apostrophes, and quotation marks so that they are in typographer’s [curly] format.

Use caps (Title Case) sparingly. It’s easier to read lowercase. There’s really no point in capitalizing senior planner, director of planning, city council, etc. Never use underscore (underline).

Photographs and artwork: We require JPEGs at a minimum width of 1,200 pixels. Charts, maps, and graphs will be converted to JPEG at that size.

We crop individual portraits (“mugshots”) to 400 pixels wide by 500 pixels high. We request that you send us sharp focus, front-facing images showing head and shoulders, no smaller than 1,200 pixels wide.

We straighten and crop all images and edit for color balance, saturation, brightness, and contrast.

Writing tips for *Northern News*

The following is a digest of “Tips in Planning Journalism,” by Michael Dudley, posted at <http://www.planetizen.com/node/60573> on February 4, 2013. Mr. Dudley is the Community Outreach Librarian at the University of Winnipeg Library, and editor of the ALA Editions book, *Public Libraries and Resilient Cities* (2013).

Much as at *Plan Canada*, *Northern News*:

...seeks evidence-based articles: real-world examples of the ideas you are interested in exploring, rather than merely ‘think pieces’ or editorials. Planning is not just about outcomes, but is keenly concerned with processes: who was involved, what transactions occurred between stakeholders, how these processes were mediated, what conflicts arose, and how they were resolved. What will the magazine’s readership learn from them?

Local context matters

You may be intimately familiar with your community’s planning and policy context, but don’t assume that your readers will be. Set the stage with the relevant local details, including the background on the issues, previous efforts to address them, and the planning environment.

Connect yourself to the case

What role might you have played in the practices under discussion, or what authority do you have to write about them? Were you involved? Was a consultant? State this from the outset rather than letting the reader wonder who was responsible for the actions described.

It’s not about you

Don’t succumb to the temptation to pepper your article with personal reflections. For most purposes, your readers don’t need to hear how you feel about the issue or how fascinated you are by it.

Acknowledge your precedents

Unless you have come up with a unique approach that has occurred to no one else, you should situate the case according to relevant precedents (including literature), and what you, your colleagues, and other stakeholders may have learned from those precedents. Cite sources the reader can explore.

Question your assumptions

Don’t assume that your case represents the best or the only approach to the problem described. Qualify your conclusions and acknowledge any limitations.

Find an editor

Hardly anyone can successfully self-edit. Have a colleague read through your article before you submit it, to make sure that it makes sense, and that any issues with grammar or syntax are corrected. And please give your submission a distinctive file name that includes your surname. We have too many *Northern News* *article.doc* submittals

Northern News Writing Styles — Example Do's & Don'ts

Category	Don't:	Do:	Exceptions or Explanations
City vs. city; State vs. state; County vs. county		The City approved the building plans. The creek runs through the city.	We prefer no capitals, but you may use a capital C (or S) when referring to the government entity. Use lower case c (or s) when the reference is geographic.
Years	1990's	1990s (or sometimes, "during the nineties," ...	Not possessive. Don't use an apostrophe.
Dates	September, 2006	September 2006	No comma when it's just month and the year.
Hyphenation	44 unit 12 acre	44-unit 12-acre	The development has 44 units (no hyphen) on 12 acres. It is a 44-unit, 12-acre development.
Hyphenation	Multi-family Non-residential Non-profit Mixed-use	Multifamily Nonresidential Nonprofit Mixed use	Hyphenate only when used as an adjective ("single-family development"; "mixed-use project").
Numbers		Spell out one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above	Exceptions: always spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence: "Ten times out of 12."
Percent	Use a % in text.	Always use numbers with — and always spell out — "percent."	17 percent; 1.3 percent; 0.5 percent. Try not to start a sentence with a percent (see box above). Okay to use % in tables, but better to use "percent" in the column heading and obviate using the % symbol in the table.
Spacing	Two spaces between sentences.	One space between sentences.	When we flow text for the PDF, the double space creates a problem.
Punctuation with quotation marks and parentheses	Don't put periods and commas outside: He went to the "junkyard". (He wrote a complete sentence).	He went to the "junkyard." (He wrote a complete sentence.)	Put commas and periods within quotes, parentheses, and semi-colons.

Use caps (Title Case) sparingly. It's easier to read lowercase. There's Really No Point in Capitalizing senior planner, director of planning, city council, master of urban planning, etc.

We never use underscore (underline). Use bold or italics or both to distinguish important words, lines, or subheads. We will change fonts and may use bullets for emphasis.

Although many use commas in “a, b and c” format, we prefer (and will change your submittal to) “a, b, and c” format, as it clarifies meaning or understanding.

Note: “e.g.,” and “i.e.,” are always as shown here, with two periods and one comma each. “E.g.” means “for example.” “I.e.” means “that is, ...”

Use em dashes (—) instead of double dashes (--).

To help us when we upload the text to our website, please do not use double paragraph returns between paragraphs. Instead set your paragraph style to add 6 points after each paragraph.

Acceptable abbreviations include sq. ft. and in., but it’s better to spell out short words like feet and miles.

As articles have covered urban planning in the time of Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter, we have adopted the following:

- Covid-19: capitalized, but not UPPERCASE, in keeping with rules for capitalization used by The New York Times.
- Black: capitalized when describing people and cultures of African origin and their formal and informal organizations.
- Native American: capitalized.
- Brown: capitalized only when referring to Black, Brown, or white persons in the same sentence.
- We do not capitalize “people of color.”
- Authors may use BIPOC to refer to Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

—*Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP, July 12, 2020*