

# SMALL TOWN & RURAL PLANNING



American Planning Association  
Small Town and  
Rural Planning Division

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Small Town And Rural Planning Division  
of the American Planning Association



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*Join STaR as we host a webinar about Economic Development in Small Town America*

*Wednesday, October 25th  
at 11am CST*

*Details Page 12.*

## Meeting the Call for New Ruralism in Northern New England



### New Ruralism

Rural communities across New England are an innovative bunch, and a group of planners led by the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA) is working to share rural success stories to help inspire other

communities. For Northern New England planners, New Ruralism is about rural communities finding new ways and sustainable approaches to create economic opportunities, provide livable-wage jobs, improve access to local foods, offer better aging in place options, expand access to social services, improve access to transportation, grow the local economy, and provide for a number of other basic needs. It is about communities finding creative ways to adapt to and succeed within today's economy without compromising local values and culture. Northern New England is a leader in local food system planning, has growing success in the energy sector, provides countless examples of creative entrepreneurship to grow the local economy, has demonstrated success in balancing preservation of vital natural resources with economic opportunity, and finds innovative ways to address the sometimes unique social services needs in rural communities. New England has stories to share of rural communities that are working hard to meet the needs of their residents, demonstrating leadership with creative approaches to modern challenges.

### Meeting the Challenges of Aging in Place

One of the challenges shared by Northern New England planners is a rapidly aging region. All three states - Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont - have a median age and percentage of residents 65 and older above the national average, and projections show this trend continuing. Wherever they may reside, older Americans face numerous challenges, but those who live in small towns and rural areas face additional challenges to aging in place related to the lack of access to services and poor mobility options. Older rural residents often have long-established ties to the community in which they have lived for several decades, some based on family ties, others to churches and other social and community organizations. Two locally-driven programs in Northern New England provide helpful examples for planners for addressing social services needs in rural communities. For more examples from Northern New England communities, addressing a wide range of issues, please see the [NNECAPA website](#).

### Age-Friendly Bowdoinham, Maine

Maine is the "oldest" state in the nation. Bowdoinham is a rural community of approximately 3,000. Trends suggest that by 2030 approximately half of the town's residents will be 60 years or older. As part of its 2012 Comprehensive Plan



So Royalton, Vermont – a "designated village center" under Vermont's vigorous Downtown Program, is a thriving commercial and social center

-Continued on page 4



## ***STaR Division***

### ***2017 Executive Committee***

#### **Chair**

**Jessica Garrow, AICP**

City of Aspen, Colorado

[jessicagarrowaicp@gmail.com](mailto:jessicagarrowaicp@gmail.com)

#### **Vice Chair – Programs**

**Bill Lavers**

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#### **Vice Chair – Communications**

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Environmental Works, Inc.,  
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#### **Secretary/Treasurer**

**Mary Howard, AICP**

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#### **Immediate Past Chair**

**Chad Nabity, AICP**

Hall County RPC, Grand Island,  
Nebraska

[cnabity@grand-island.com](mailto:cnabity@grand-island.com)

# FROM THE CHAIR

I'll admit, I've struggled writing this particular Letter from the Chair. I like to focus on positives and want to focus on how wonderful it was to see so many of you, our members, at the national conference (it was!), and to honor so many great planners and plans that focus on small town and rural planning at our Business Meeting (see Page 5 for articles about these award winners). But, at the Divisions Council meeting in New York, I and the other Division Chairs learned of some major changes to the makeup of national conference content moving forward that needs to be front and center in this newsletter.

Beginning with the 2018 conference, all by-right sessions, tours, and facilitated discussions, including for all APA Divisions, are being eliminated. This was an incredibly disappointing change for all the divisions, particularly the population-based and geographic-based divisions, like STaR. Our by-right session on New Ruralism was standing room only this year, as was one of our two facilitated discussions. The relevance and importance of our content is critical to the success of the national conference, and the loss of by-rights is distressing.

At STaR's annual business meeting, the membership passed a motion in support of bringing by-right sessions back and doing everything possible to ensure our content remains in the conference. I provided these comments to the leadership of the Division Council. Many other divisions had similar discussions at their Business Meetings. All of these comments and motions were passed on to the APA Board and President. That group has continued to be in open dialogue with the Divisions Council, but we have just learned that there will not be any by-right sessions, facilitated discussions, or mobile tours for divisions (or any other group) at the 2018 Conference.

That said, the Divisions Council has been busy since the conference to work with the APA board on ways to ensure our important voices remain an integral part of the national conference. As part of this on-going dialogue a few key changes to the process for 2018 have already been made:

- Session Tracks have been updated and expanded in an effort to ensure all divisions are represented in the NPC18 program.
- There will be a preference given to division members in the selection of session reviewers.
- Once sessions are selected, divisions will be able to formally endorse ones that would be of interest to or highlight issues that are relevant to the division.
- An updated set of tracks for NPC19 will be sent to division leadership for review and refinement.
- Commitment from the APA Board to continue dialogue for changes to future conferences, including the possibility of bringing by-rights back in some form.

I and the rest of the Executive Committee are committed to continuing to have high quality and relevant content for you at the national conference and throughout the year. Because by-rights are not an option for 2018, we need you now more than ever to submit session proposals relevant to STaR communities and

*-Continued on page 5*

**Follow APA STaR online so you don't miss any important news!**

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[On Twitter: Follow @APA\\_SmallTown](#)



Small Town & Rural Planning  
**STaR Member**

# Join us in New Orleans for #APA18

## National Planning Conference Session Proposals Open Now

### Save the Date

NPC18 | New Orleans | April 21–24, 2018  
Strong roots. Big plans.

Experience the latest in planning with peer-reviewed sessions from experts in the field. Access top continuing education, valuable networking, mobile workshops and more in a city known for its rich history, diverse culture, and big plans.

### Call for Proposals

Play a part in next year's premier planning event by submitting an educational proposal for NPC18. **Submit NPC18 Proposals August 1–29, 2017.**



Award nominations for 2017 are now open! Nominate an outstanding small town or rural project or planner today! Complete details on our website:

<https://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/awards/>

The Small Town and Rural Planning Division invites nominations for its Planning Awards to recognize outstanding individuals and projects for their contribution to planning excellence in small town and rural communities. The program is open to any individual, organization, or consulting firm involved in planning for small town and rural areas. Building off of the Facilitated Discussion at the 2014 National Conference, a small town is not defined by any one characteristic or a specific population number – if you consider your work in a small town or rural area, please apply!

Award recipients will receive the award, a one-year membership in the

STaR Division, and will receive some reimbursement of travel, lodging and/or registration expenses for public sector or academic employees to attend the APA National Planning Conference. The categories are:

#### Small Town & Rural Area Planner

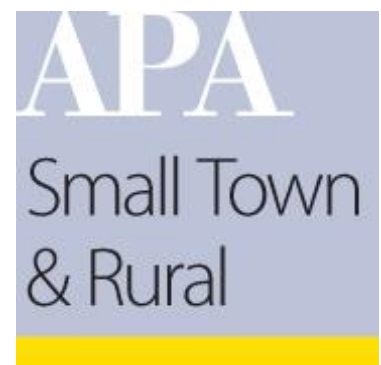
Given to an individual in public service, academia or the private sector that has made an outstanding contribution to planning in their community.

**Comprehensive Plan or Special Project Plan** Given to an outstanding comprehensive plan or special project plan that addressed the development of a neighborhood, community, county or region.

**Planning Initiative** Given to an outstanding initiative or program in public education, workshops, ordinances, or enforcement that promotes planning in small towns and rural areas.

**Student Project** Given to an outstanding project by a graduate or under-graduate class or individual that addresses a planning issue facing small town or rural areas.

Members of the Awards Committee (and their organizations) are not eligible for an award. Nominated plans, projects, programs and studies must have been completed within two years of the nomination submittal date. For Comprehensive Plans and Special Project Plans prepared by consultants, the award recipient shall be the client for whom the planning activity was conducted.





# Meeting the Call for New Ruralism

*-Continued from page 1*

a needs assessment of elders living in the community was carried out. One recommendation of the resulting report was the establishment of an Advisory Council on Aging to guide policy and programs. A next step was a successful application to pilot the World Health Organization's (WHO) Age Friendly Communities Indicator Guide. The criteria to define an age-friendly community included such factors as physical access to public facilities, transportation, health facilities and housing, social and community participation, access to information, inclusion and respect. Among the 15 communities around the world selected to assess the Guide, including such cities as Shanghai, Tehran, Washington, DC, and Nairobi, Bowdoinham was by far the smallest and most rural community chosen.

Bowdoinham has made significant strides in implementation. Buildings and public areas have been made more accessible; an aggressive sidewalk program has been implemented to provide greater safety and access to village areas especially for those requiring wheelchairs and/or walkers; older residents are actively involved in and sought out for participation in local organizations; a program to remove ice from the steps of homes and facilities has been instituted; a "tool table" has been placed in the town office with such items as jar openers, hammers and other devices; and the number of handicapped parking spaces in town has been increased. In addition, a full palate of activities for seniors – kayaking, cribbage games, trips to other communities and cultural institutions, lifelong education opportunities, Tai Chi classes to improve balance, and programs such as mushroom identification and cheese-making. The position of a part-time coordinator has been created and staffed by a licensed social worker who helps to bridge the energy provided by

volunteers and town services, and to act as an advocate within local government for the needs of Bowdoinham elders.



*Town Hall Tool Table*

## **Monadnock at Home, Jaffrey New Hampshire**

Jaffrey is a small community of 5,457 people, with 22% of the population over the age of 60 and that figure expected to increase over the next decade. During the master plan visioning process residents expressed concern about caring for the region's aging residents. Anticipating this growing need, Monadnock at Home was founded by a small group of seniors seeking to create a support network modelled on the Village to Village Network. The model redefines aging by promoting supports for aging in place, providing opportunities to connect socially and remain independent.



Monadnock at Home (MaH) recognized that seniors often live alone, may have difficulty hiring reputable contractors, can be susceptible to fraud, and can be isolated without transportation alternatives. While an assisted living or nursing home may be

expected at some point, delaying that or avoiding the long-term cost is important for many of our senior residents.

The start-up was vigorous with 49 members over 6 neighboring towns in the region, and has now grown to 90 memberships in 10 towns. Membership benefits include a single point of contact at the MaH office to coordinate services, and access to over 100 pre-screened providers who have undergone background checks for many types of services, including transportation to appointments, grocery shopping, home maintenance and computer or technology help. Many of these vendors provide a discounted rate for MaH members. In addition, MaH provides opportunities to participate in the community through social events, exercise programs, the arts, and dining. Members may also volunteer or participate in educational programs through partner organizations.

Through memberships and donations, MaH is led by an Executive Director and a part-time member services coordinator. Their extensive 15-member Board of Directors, representing partner agencies and services, provides guidance and expertise in elder affairs, geriatric medical services and a variety of other community support and caregiving services.

Membership is driven large by word of mouth, through the partner organizations, friends sharing with friends, and agencies that have regular contact with seniors. It is true that Yankees are a stoic group who can be fiercely independent and reluctant to ask for or admit the need for help. Overcoming that reticence is perhaps the greatest challenge.

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# STaR Planning Awards

This year the STaR Awards Committee was presented with an outstanding group of projects. As a result the committee decided to award nine communities for their outstanding work. These communities were recognized and honored with receiving Small Town and Rural Planning Division Awards at the National Planning Conference in May. There were a number of excellent submissions; however, only nine made topped the others for their innovative approaches, high-quality public outreach, and promotion of good planning principles. Below and on the next few pages of this newsletter are short summaries of each awardee's project. Your STaR Nation is working as a division to produce a webinar series for any interested in learning more about these communities' methods, pains, and successes – so stay tuned.

The **Carol Thomas Award for an Outstanding Small Town or Rural Area Planner** was given to First Chief Floyd Green of the Rampart Village Council. Many difficulties have been faced in Rampart such as low population due to a school closure, lack of revenue, and lack of employment opportunities. When Chief Green started as an administrator there were only eight people living in the community. Three years later, Chief Green helped the community to grow to 50 residences and Rampart Village is still continuing to grow.



The **John Keller Merit Award for an Outstanding Planning Initiative (Small Jurisdiction)** was presented to the Tanana Chiefs Conference for the Village-Based Planning and Development Process. The Awards Committee was incredibly impressed with the ongoing work by the Tanana Chiefs Conference and is excited to recognize the Village-Based Planning and Development Program. This program was supported because of its success creating jobs and grant opportunities for the communities in the region.



The Town of Carbondale, Colorado Parks and Design Workshop were presented with the **John Keller Honor Award for an Outstanding Planning Initiative (Small Jurisdiction)** for the Recreation Plan Public Engagement Process. The Awards Committee was impressed with the public engagement strategies for the planning process, particularly the continued recalibration to ensure under-represented groups were engaged. The Committee felt the process is an exemplary example of how to engage a community – large or small.

## MORE FROM THE CHAIR Details Below

↓ Continued from page 2 ↓

issues. What are the great things you are working on right now? What project have you just finished up that you want to tell everyone about? Now is the time to submit proposals for the 2018 Conference in New Orleans. From August 1st through 29th, the online portal for NPC18 session proposals will be open at: <https://planning.org/conference/proposal/>.

All sessions will now be reviewed against relevance to [specific tracks](#). There is not a specific track for our division, as there might be for a topical division such as Transportation, but the following four categories have been identified by APA as tracks associated with STaR: Managing Change in Communities, Planning and Innovative Government, Planning Career Development, and Successful Messaging for Public Engagement. Even though these tracks are identified, submit your proposal under the track you think is most relevant. Let [me](#) or [Bill Lavers](#), Vice Chair for Conferences and Programs, know if you have questions or need help determining which track to submit under, or if you have a great session idea but need help finding co-presenters. Year after year, I am blown away by the incredible talent and exciting planning work going on in small towns and rural areas, and I know NPC18 will be no different!

Finally, our wonderful Secretary/Treasurer Mary Howard is transitioning off the board, so we are looking for volunteers for the position. Please let me know if you are interested in filling this role.

As always, please reach out to me at [JessicaGarrowAICP@gmail.com](mailto:JessicaGarrowAICP@gmail.com) with questions or anything STaR related.

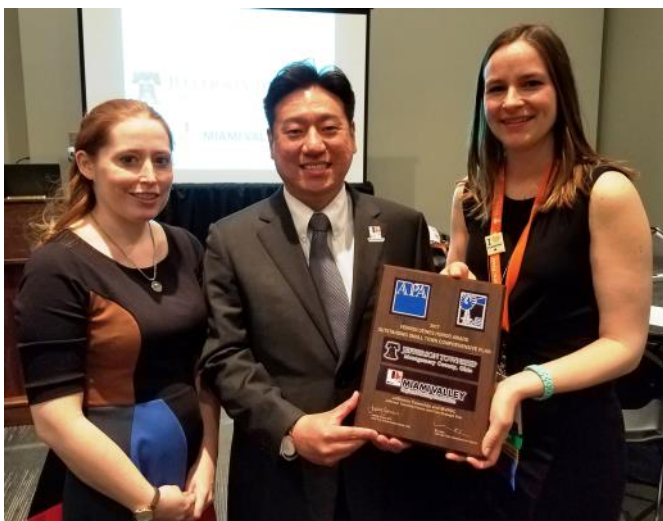


# STaR Planning Awards



The next award was presented to the New Allen Alliance and Sturtz Public Management Group for the New Allen Alliance Strategic Investment Plan and was given the **John Keller Honor Award for an Outstanding Planning Initiative (Large Jurisdiction)**. The Plan is both a collective and individual strategy aimed at retaining and attracting high-quality jobs. The Committee was particularly impressed with the refreshing and innovative approach to economic development on a regional scale that stays true to the unique identities of the individual communities.

The City of Plymouth, Wisconsin and MSA Professional Services for the Mullett River Corridor Study were presented with the **Vernon Deines Merit Award for an Outstanding Small Town Special Project Plan**. The City of Plymouth approached planners from MSA Professional Services, Inc. regarding three separate planning issues facing the community. The Committee was impressed with the community's willingness to take a broader look at the river corridor following a directive from the state to update or remove the dam and coordinate planning with planning efforts to update Strayer Park and the adjacent trail network.



The City of Jefferson Township, Ohio, and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission were presented with the **Vernon Deines Honor Award for an Outstanding Comprehensive Plan**. Jefferson Township, located in Montgomery County, OH, encompasses 25.5 square miles and largely consists of

agricultural areas with a few well-established neighborhoods. It is home to 7,000 residents and about 400 jobs. The Jefferson Township Future Land Use Strategic Plan is the outcome of a year-long community wide dialogue aimed at finding solutions to address challenges now and into the future. The Awards Committee was incredibly impressed with the plan's emphasis on a results-oriented process, Implementation task forces, and the overall outreach.

The **Vernon Deines Merit Award for an Outstanding Comprehensive Plan** was presented to City of Webster, Florida and Hoke Design for their Master Plan. Webster is located in Central Florida and has a population of approximately 900. The Awards Committee was impressed with the



plan's innovation, quality, and forward thinking. The unique approach of re-imagining property into tiny homes with an equestrian component provides a model for other small towns to use their unique history and community character to provide housing and economic development opportunities.

The City of Clawson, Michigan was presented with the **Vernon Deines Honor Award for an Outstanding Small Town Special Project Plan**. The Awards Committee was incredibly impressed with this plan, and feel it embodies the best of small town planning. The breadth of community outreach techniques, particularly the awareness walks and built-form

## LINKS TO PLANS/ STUDIES/WEBSITES

City of Plymouth, Wisconsin and MSA Professional Services, [Mullett River Corridor Study](#).

New Allen Alliance and Sturtz Public Management Group, [New Allen Alliance Strategic Investment Plan](#).

City of Jefferson Township, Ohio, and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, [Future Land Use Strategic Plan](#).

City of Webster, Florida and Hoke Design, [Master Plan](#).

City of Clawson, Michigan, [Special Project Plan](#).

Tanana Chiefs Conference for their [Village-Based Planning and Development Process](#).

Town of Carbondale, Colorado Parks and Design Workshop for their [Recreation Plan Public Engagement Process](#).

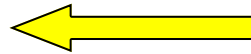
University of Utah's, [Listening to Bluff Plan](#).

First Chief Floyd Green of the [Rampart Village Council](#).

## STaR Planning Awards

studies, as well as the overall support for the plan, provides a model for communities of all sizes.

Lastly, the University of Utah's Listening to Bluff Plan was presented with the **James A. Segedy Award for an Outstanding Student Project**. The Award Committee was incredibly impressed with the professionalism of the plan and the planning process. The plan not only included extensive analysis but is based on broad citizen input, something that is not often seen in student projects.



**CHECK OUT THE GOOD WORK STaR IS DOING!!!**



## Meeting the Call for New Ruralism

*-Continued from page 4*

### Lessons Learned

While challenges continue to exist in Bowdoinham and Jaffrey-area communities, what is happening in these rural communities strongly suggests that a positive attitude and an aggressive approach can make a real difference in providing the possibility of "aging in place." Strategies such as those adopted by Bowdoinham and Monadnock at Home can go a long way toward ensuring that elders continue to have a vital place in the very communities that they have helped to build. The active encouragement of town officials, together with the harnessing of volunteers within and without the senior population, can create a climate in which a sustaining place for elders within the larger community can be achieved.



American Planning Association  
**Northern New England Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*



## Trees: The Original Green Infrastructure

Fri, Aug 4, 2017 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM CDT

Communities everywhere are recognizing a greater value in how trees serve their areas well beyond beautification. This webinar will focus on trees as green infrastructure and will briefly take the viewer through the many benefits of urban tree canopy and how small investments in planning for, planting and maintaining trees can lead to impactful rewards. A majority of the webinar will then explore a few different green infrastructure planning case studies in South Carolina and Virginia. The case studies will range from projects already complete and well into successful implementation plans and adopting new codes, all the way to a project currently in process that is also grappling with sea level rise. This session is worth 1.5 CM credits for live viewing only.

## A New Tool for Tracking Home and Rental Values in TODs

Fri, Aug 11, 2017 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM CDT

Theory, research and practice suggest that rental rates and home values in TOD locations have historically experienced greater capital appreciation during periods of economic growth and less downside depreciation during recessionary periods of the market cycle. Until now, homebuyers, real estate investors, asset managers, developers, planners and economic development professionals have experienced difficulty accessing a comprehensive database in a simple, standardized methodology to benchmark month-to-month changes in home values and rental rates in TOD locations. The Renne-Greschner TOD Index solves this problem by offering the ability to view trends in TODs at the national, regional and station-area levels. This webcast is worth 1.5 CM credits for live viewing only.

## Finding Common Ground When Regulating Electronic Message Centers

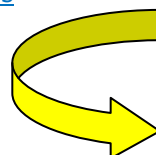
Fri, Aug 25, 2017 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM CDT

On-premise digital signs have demonstrated a proven ability to increase results for those that utilize them for commercial and community-oriented purposes. However, many communities are relatively unfamiliar with this rapidly evolving technology, and have concerns that these kinds of signs will create aesthetic, safety and enforcement problems for their communities. Nearly all stakeholders struggling with digital signs and their regulation often have the same questions, such as: • What really are these digital signs and how do they work? • How is electronic technology evolving? • Is there any way for the community-at-large to actually benefit from them? • How can we strike a balance between allowing businesses to use digital signs without creating aesthetic concerns? • How do we allow them without looking like Las Vegas, or negatively impacting community safety? • How do we regulate them in ways that are understandable and enforceable, without having to hire additional staff? Moderated by James Carpentier, AICP, and presented by Mike Freeborg, principal at Freeborg LLC, the presentation provides practical, solution-focused guidance that can set the foundation for regulations that allow for the opportunity to leverage this technology while protecting community aesthetic values and safety concerns. This webcast is worth 1.5 CM credits for live viewing only.

Check back on the [Planning Webcast Website](#) for more information.

## 2017 Planning Webcast Presentations PDFs

- 04.07.17 | [BikeShare: Beyond the Plan](#)
- 04.17.17 | [The Comprehensive Planner: Taking a Systems Perspective](#)
- 05.12.17 | [The Next Disruptive Technology: Autonomous Vehicles](#)
- 06.02.17 | [Women in Planning: Leadership & Empowerment](#)
- 06.16.17 | [A Road Map for Age-Friendly Communities](#)
- 06.23.17 | [Economic Development for Everyone](#)
- 06.30.17 | [Images, Creative Commons and Copyright](#)



Click on the icons and get connected to STaR.  
#SmallTownsRural



# ***STaR gets Social (Media, that is!)***

## ***Selections from our Twitter Feed***

With over 2,687 Tweets in just four years the APA Small Town & Rural Planning Division Twitter feed is catching on. We need your help to grow and spread the word that **#SmallTownsRural**.

[@APA\\_SmallTown](#) now has over 1,100 followers—now double the amount of our registered (paid) membership. While our paid members do receive this handy newsletter quarterly, there's no reason to wait to pose your questions on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

190 new Followers since **#APA17**. STaR helped the NPC17 in trending on Day 2.

Don't forget to mention us.  
Don't forget to retweet.

Give us a shout and we'll follow you too.

@boothy443 Apr 8

"I must be a sign of me coming up in the world when an @APA\_Planning division follows you. Danke @APA\_SmallTown!!!" [Link](#)

Jessica Garrow @GarrowJessica May 4

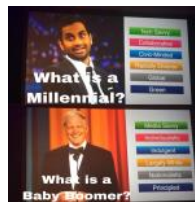
"Made it to #NYC for #NPC17 Excited to represent @APA\_SmallTown at our leadership meetings! #small towns #planning #timessquare" [Link](#)

Rodney Harrell, PhD  
@DrUrbanPolicy May 7

"NYC may be our largest city, but the @APA\_SmallTown awards at #NPC17 reminds us that we are made of communities of all sizes." [Link](#)

Jeremy S. Snow @jssnow3 May 6

"@peteleyden delivering an amazing opener!!!! #NPC17 #planning"



APA STaR @APA\_SmallTown May 16

"Neighborhoods in big cities are like small towns. We have to protect them and plan for them." says citizen planner. Thoughts?!" [Link](#)

APA STaR @APA\_SmallTown May 16

@APA\_Planning President @\_CynthiaBowen of @REA\_site claiming her prize from our 1,000th follower contest w/ @jssnow3 of @EnvironWorks #NPC17 [Link](#)

Alan Morgan @Amorganrural Jun 9

How does the media cover @ruralhealth? I'm speaking today on that topic at the AHCJ conference. Great opportunity.- go rural! [Link](#)

Andy Boenau@Boenau Jun 28

Planners & Engineers: you love case studies and you love webinars. Enjoy [bit.ly/2tYplyu](http://bit.ly/2tYplyu) @APA\_SmallTown @ITEcsc @altaplanning #aec" [Link](#)

APA President, Cynthia Bowen receiving her prize Starbucks with STaR Vice Chair of Communications, Jeremy S. Snow at NPC17.



# Member Spotlight:

## Alex Gelpi Carter, AICP

**Name:** Alexandra (Alex) Gelpi Carter, AICP

**Position:** Planning, Zoning, and Code Enforcement Director, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana

**Education:** Bachelor of Fine Arts, Loyola University New Orleans (2009) and Masters in Urban and Regional Planning, University of New Orleans (UNO) (2011)

**APA Involvement:** APA LA Metro New Orleans Section Director

### How did you become interested in planning?

As a freshman art major, my student orientation was literally scheduled the same week that Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans; so throughout the next 4 years, I would create art work during a time when New Orleans was experiencing significant tragedy and reconstruction. In my senior year, I looked back and discovered common themes of community, problem solving, redevelopment, and a strong instinct to take things apart, understand their components, and put them back together in creative, but different ways. At a cross-road, I realized that my enthusiastic, problem-solving instincts would be better spent impacting the built environment directly, rather than creating work meant to inspire others to take up the mantle of public service. In my part-time job at an engineering firm, a friend of mine and long-time member of APA, Tim Jackson, mentioned the

planning profession as an alternative to art. He continues to be a steady figure and mentor to me in my career. Before graduating with a Bachelor degree in Fine Arts from Loyola University in New Orleans, I secured a 2-year academic scholarship to attend the University of New Orleans' Urban and Regional Planning Master's Program and never looked back: it was a perfect fit.

### How did you get involved in APA?

As a student at UNO, I became a member of APA and attended lunch and learns, volunteered for conferences, 'got the coffee,' etc. It wasn't until I became the Director of Planning and Zoning in a more rural, growing, suburban parish that I decided to volunteer as the APA LA Metro New Orleans Section Director. This decision came from a desire to stay connected with developments in planning throughout the State, to better share St. John's planning successes, and to increase opportunities to partner and learn from other communities in our region. Meeting new planners and finding creative ways to collaborate has and continues to be a fantastic experience.

### What is the most interesting project you're working on?

Small, rural lot and subdivision design: This has been a painstaking issue within the Parish, as only suburban subdivision development is permitted. The Department has been setting aside creative



alternatives that preserve rural settings in a manner that also increases housing affordability. As we work on this very exciting project... I welcome input and advice for fellow STaR members!

### What is one of your biggest successes?

Within the last year, we have (in-house) drafted and received approval of new or significantly amended standards re: content neutral sign codes, nonconforming uses and sites, junked vehicles, trash and debris, as well as set up a local Administrative Hearing procedure to process unaddressed code violations more swiftly. These changes have improved the perception of our office and built public trust in planning, zoning, and code enforcement. This public trust enabled the Department to take on a stronger role and bolster support for the simultaneous establishment of four Cultural Districts and four Historic Preservation Districts. Members of Louisiana's Office of Cultural Development have enthusiastically advised that this type of simultaneous approval of eight separate districts by application of a local government has never been done before. To manage and maintain collaboration between the



districts, we've set up a Cultural District Coalition of civic and business leaders, representatives from Parish Administration, cultural nonprofits, and groups with an interest in tourism and building St. John's cultural economy. This has been an incredible experience and a significant success for the entire Parish of St. John and I look forward to seeing it work to preserve and build upon the community's unique cultural identity in the years to come.

**Have you had any projects that didn't work out? What did you learn from that experience?**

Yes - and it all comes down to not taking on something that is impossible to deliver. When I started as a Zoning Regulatory Administrator in St. John, I was the first planner to ever work in the parish. At the time, the University of New Orleans was in the process of closing out a project to update the entire zoning code for the parish, which had never been updated comprehensively (original adoption in '86). Arriving in the 11th hour, I reviewed the document and had many concerns. These concerns arose because it was clear there was a communication issue and that--for this to successfully work--the University needed another planner (that spoke the same language) to translate issues on the ground into real solutions in the proposed Code. In a herculean effort, I worked nights reviewing and editing the document in attempt to make it ready for adoption. After weeks of working late into the evening, I came to the conclusion that it simply would not work. The truth was, I needed more time to get to know the Parish, it's people, and the issues with planning and zoning before amendments to the zoning code could truly be adopted in the public's interest. Ultimately, this is happening now...we continue to incrementally update sections of the Code with special attention given to each issue and its effect on the public.

**Advice for planners just starting out?**

In municipal government these days everybody is tired, overworked and feeling a bit underappreciated. In many instances - these feelings are totally justifiable, but be careful not to wear them on your sleeve or 'buddy up' to someone of this nature and take on these characteristics. Be a professional at all times; don't lose steam; and (to the very best of your ability) keep a positive, productive attitude; i.e. be the person you imagine you are in your best job interview.

**What is the best part of working in small towns & rural areas?**

It is the very real, local knowledge of the public and its effect on implementation. It's truly amazing to experience how quickly public issues, projects, and solutions get addressed, completed, and put into action when you have a small number of dedicated people at the helm and a very interactive and involved public.







On May 9, STaR held its facilitated discussion on Economic Development in Small Town America. This session focused on several questions:

- 1) How does your (the) comprehensive plan facilitate economic development in your community?
- 2) What successful and unsuccessful economic development initiatives has your community undertaken in the last 5 years?"
- 3) What did you learn from these initiatives or would you have done differently in hindsight?
- 4) What have you done to increase/expand your workforce?
- 5) What have you done to increase/expand workforce housing?

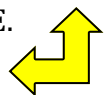
Stay tuned to the Fall Newsletter for a full analysis of this discussion. As you can see from the picture above, we had a full house in New York for this session. STaR wants to keep this discussion going and would love to hear your thoughts about the above questions. Please send any response to Vice Chair of Communications, Jeremy Snow at [jsnow@environmentalworks.com](mailto:jsnow@environmentalworks.com) or [smalltownplanners@gmail.com](mailto:smalltownplanners@gmail.com).

We will be hosting a **webinar** on Economic Development in Small Town America on **October 25, 2017 at 11 am (CST)**.



A SPECIAL REMINDER EMAIL WILL BE SENT TO OUR MEMBERS AT A LATER DATE.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**



## **A Message From The STaR Communication Center**

Your new Vice Chair of Communications, Jeremy Snow wants to hear from you. Please find time over the next quarter to reach out to me. Tell me who you are, where you are, what you do, and who you do it for.

Over this next quarter I challenge all STaR Members to help educate me on what your cities, towns, villages, counties, and companies are doing for Star Communities. My role is to inform our STaR Nation on what works and what does not. It's a hard job for one and I need your help. I also challenge you to extend your support in making this newsletter even better than it already is. I am constantly on the hunt for content. If you are interested in writing, have a topic you want explored or featured, or any other ideas send them my way. Your STaR Executive Committee wants and needs to hear from you. Make your voice be heard.

Find me on LinkedIn [@jeremysnow](#) | Instagram [@jssnow3](#) | Twitter [@jssnow3](#) | Facebook [@jssnow3](#)

