



ANNUAL REPORT 2005 – 2006

This 2005-2006 Annual Report finds the New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association thriving, growing, providing services and educational activities to its members and continuing to be an important advocate for effective, inclusive and comprehensive planning in the region.

Membership

Our membership continues to increase with the last membership roster showing that we have 1200 members. This roster includes students and retirees and we are delighted to include those groups in all our activities. But, we can also say with pride that this membership growth reflects the continuing increase in the ranks of young and seasoned planners who find it worthwhile to be part of the Chapter.

National Recognition

As you know, we received the Karen B. Smith Award as Best Chapter at the national meetings in San Antonio. This award is terrific recognition by our peers of the great work being done here in New York. It is a great source of pride to us. One of the reasons for this award was the acknowledgement of our collaborations with sister professional organizations and with other groups. These partnerships have made New York Metro Chapter more effective and it helps spread the word about the work and contribution of planners to the political, economic and social life of our city and metro area.

Our Home at Baruch College's Newman Institute

It has been a little over a year since we moved into offices at the Newman Institute. It has been a good move since we have been able to consolidate our activities in a lovely building. This move has enabled our Chapter Administrator, Michael E. Levine, to make our administrative

operations more efficient. Committee meetings, office activities, events, gatherings are all held on 22nd Street and it has been beneficial for the Chapter.

Programs

Our Co-Vice Presidents for Programs Brodie Hefner and Jennifer K. Lindbom organized a provocative and well attended panel discussion on “Eminent Domain and Economic Development: Implications of the Kelo v. City of New London Court Case.” Metro Chapter co-sponsored this event with the APA Planning and Law Division, the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, the NYU Wagner Urban Planning Student Association and the Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute.

The panel of planning and legal experts who discussed the importance of the decision, the sweeping legislative proposals it has provoked, and the potential impacts on planning in the context of New York City and beyond were:

- Susan Fainstein, Professor, Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, Columbia University
- Frank Fish, Founding Principal, Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart Inc.
- Richard M. Landman, Esq. AICP, Professor and Director of Real Estate Development at NYU
- Dwight Merriam, FAICP, CRE, Senior Partner, Robinson & Cole, LLP.
- Jerilyn Perine, Former Commissioner, New York City Housing and Preservation Department; current President, Block by Block, New York USA
- Carol Rosenthal, Partner, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

The lively exchange at this program resulted in the preparation by Metro Chapter of a position paper on eminent domain policy that was distributed widely to the public, elected officials, and the press.

Legislative Activities

Michael A. Levine, our Vice President for Intergovernmental Affairs, attended the annual Legislative & Policy Conference in Washington and met with several congressional representatives on the issues of the Community Development Block Grant program, Hazard Mitigation & Disaster Relief, and transportation funding. He served as a panelist at the APA National training session on legislative issues, and on the chapter conference committee. He also found the time to draft the chapter position paper on eminent domain.

Executive Committee

Charles H. Benson, III, served the Executive Committee well in keeping the database of electronic interest documents, maintaining the leadership contact lists, and recording Executive Committee meeting minutes.

Finances

Our Treasurer Peter Miller had a very busy year. This fiscal year shaped up to be one in which Metro Chapter's finances supported a robust menu of activities and programs for our members and the public, as well as one in which we created reserves that will maximize scarce dollars, protect against future cash-flow problems and allow programs and membership services to grow. One indication of our success is the more than \$3,000 raised for program activities from APA national divisions and other sources. Other revenues are expected to be higher as well, due to increased membership and AICP training material fees. On the expense side, we managed to control costs of the newsletter and holiday party without appreciably hurting services to our members.

This year is also one in which we continued to assist other non-profit activities with fiscal services. The two most significant of these efforts are the Weinberg Student Awards Fund and The Leading Institute. We are also improving our abilities to manage these funds by increasing knowledge and development of financial resources.

Among the things that the Chapters' treasury supported this year, the most successful is the creation of our new offices on a "shoe string budget" with all the benefits the Newman Institute location has brought to our committees and individual members. We can look forward to continuing to get more for our dollars through gains next year particularly in enhanced technology, inter-chapter and division exchanges and community relationships.

Area Representation

We are very proud that New York Metro Chapter has active geographic sections whose representatives accomplished much during this past year.

Alan Sorensen, the Hudson Valley West Director, spoke at a number of conferences including:

- Metro Chapter Conference;
- Adirondack Housing Symposium in Lake Placid;
- NYCOM conference in Lake Placid;
- New York Planning Federation Conference in Saratoga;
- New York Main Street Alliance Conference in Liberty, NY; and other events.

His goals for 2006-2007 are:

- To have Metro Chapter co-sponsor a conference west-of-Hudson involving one of four potential topics: 1) passenger rail expansion west-of-Hudson, 2) planning for the Tappan Zee bridge, 3) regional open space planning, or 4) affordable housing opportunities;
- To re-establish a "Planning Commissioner's Round Table" involving Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties. The round tables would be facilitated by the Hudson Valley West Director with the purpose of getting the County Planning Commissioners to think about regional projects that they could collaborate on to further regional planning efforts west-of-Hudson.

Andrew P. Freleng led an active year in which the Long Island Section held/co-sponsored six continuing education/training seminars including:

- Nassau County Planning Federation/APA conference: “Conducting Effective Site Plan Review and Making SEQRA Work Well”;
- APA Web Conference presentation “Zoning Clinic”;
- APA Web Conference presentation” Safe Growth”;
- Suffolk County Planning Federation/APA “Planning Basic Training” Workshop: including nine classes on basics for planning and zoning boards, Central Pine Barrens, Planning and the Media, GML 239 County Referrals, Source Water Protection, Sign Control, Planning and Zoning Case Law Update, Native Plantings, Mysteries of the Use Variance, & Enforcement of Zoning and Other Local Laws;
- Nassau County Planning Federation/APA training workshop “SEQRA”;
- APA Long Island Section “East End Conference”: including six classes on Planning Board Overview, ZBA Overview, SEQRA, Land Preservation Through Conservation Subdivisions, Traditional Neighborhood Design & Source Water Protection.

The Section was also solicited to write five position statements including:

- a letter to Supervisor John LaValle, Town of Brookhaven, regarding a proposed new composition to the Town Planning Board’;
- a letter to the Suffolk County Executive and members of the Suffolk County Legislature regarding the proposed composition of the Long Island Regional Planning Board;
- a letter to Supervisor Patrick (Skip) Heaney regarding APA support of proposed Local Law mandating continuing education/training for Planning and Zoning Board members;
- a letter to Legislator Michael Caracciolo responding to his request to critique a proposed bill to reconstitute the membership of the Suffolk County Planning Commission;
- a letter to New York State Senate members regarding mandatory training for Planning and Zoning Board members throughout New York State.

The Long Island Section has established the following goals for 2006-2007:

- work with the Suffolk County Executives office/Legislature toward the creation of legislation to formalize (codify) the Suffolk County Planning Federation as an information, education and training arm of the Suffolk County Planning Commission;
- assist with the planning, organizing and execution of the annual Suffolk County Planning Federation conference;
- work with the existing 41 municipalities in Suffolk County and the New Inc. Village of Sagaponack toward codifying mandatory training for Planning and Zoning Board members (less the five municipalities already recognized by the LI Section by Certificate of Accomplishment);
- work with the Nassau County Planning Federation on continuing education/training programs for the ’06-07 planning year...next up in planning stages is for “Green Building Design”;
- seek cataloging funding for the Arthur Kunz Memorial Library;
- make the Section visible and available to provide considered opinion on planning issues in Nassau and Suffolk Counties;
- complete the LI Section By-Laws.

New York Section Representative Donald C. Burns was involved with administrative duties for the chapter through the Executive Committee's sub-committee for Scholarship, which made a recommendation on how to invest our scholarship funds, and the Office Review Committee, which reviewed the chapter office functions. He assisted the Housing Committee to develop the Chapter's response to the APA's Housing Policy Guide. He also assumed the responsibilities of Vice President of Committees to coordinate and communicate committee activities. As a result, each committee posted their yearly meeting schedules on the chapter's website.

Committees

Our committees worked well and hard this past year conducting programs and preparing written reports.

The Environmental Committee, co-chaired by Robert M. White and Stephen Whitehouse, began the year with their annual field trip in the summer of 2005. This was a canoe trip along the Bronx River with The Bronx River Alliance conducting the tour. In summer 2006 they are hoping to organize a joint trip with the waterfront committee. Other activities have included coordination with the urban design, transportation, and waterfront committees in joint programs and activities. They are looking forward to organizing a roundtable discussion in fall 2006.

Transportation Committee chair David Fields took an active interest in current transportation initiatives within the Metro area. Because of his efforts, we heard presentations and debated the planning merits of the East Side Access project, Cross Harbor Tunnel, Lower Manhattan/Long Island/JFK Airport Access Study, as well as the MTA's proposed capital program. The Transportation Committee also initiated outreach with peer professional organizations, co-sponsored a presentation on the Tappan Zee Bridge Alternatives Study with the Institute of Transportation Engineers, co hosted a lecture on parking policy with the American Institute of Architects, and become a supporting member of the New York City Livable Streets movement.

The Committee also organized Metro Chapter's spring event "No Time to Stop! Moving People Through NYC", a roundtable discussion addressing one of New York City's most critical transportation planning issues: How do we improve travel through the City?

Next year, the Committee intends to tackle additional projects including the City's proposed BRT initiative and LIRR's Third Track project. All Metro Chapter members are encouraged to become active participants of the Transportation Committee.

Rex Curry and Rob Lane, chairpersons of the Urban Design Committee, undertook "Public Place Public Process" as its major activity in 2005-2006. The project sought answers to questions about how well the planning and design community engages the public and how community-initiated activities help to build and improve the "public space". The call for submissions from the New York metropolitan region yielded unique insight into the relationship of civic engagement practices to the products of planning and design. A volunteer jury of planning professionals gave the committee advice at an all-day session held in April. A white paper on

the subject is nearing completion, together with a summary of findings and plans for a second workshop.

The experience of the participants in the Urban Design committee was summed up in former committee chair Mark Strauss's opening remarks on the presentation of this project at the APA San Antonio meeting in April 2006. "As a New York planner and architect, I would like to start this presentation with a quote from the legendary New York Yankee Baseball Manager and Urban Planner, Yogi Berra, who said: "You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." This is not only an amusing turn of phrase; it is a timely thought for New Yorkers. Examining the quality of the public processes in defining the public space in all of its dimensions is a daunting and worthwhile endeavor. The Urban Design Committee will continue to work on understanding and improving the processes of civic engagement and excellent urban design.

There's no doubt that planning is thriving on New York City's waterfront these days. In addition to representing Metro Chapter on the Governors Island Alliance and holding committee meetings on a range of topics and new projects, Bonnie Harken and Robert W. Balder, the Waterfront Committee co-chairs, had a high profile this past year with a number of successful public events which they co-sponsored with professional colleagues, including the AIA, ASLA, MWA, and West Harlem Art Fund:

- "Waterparks: Designing Waterfront Parks and Public Spaces" at the Urban Center in August 2005;
- "West Harlem Waterfront" at the Center for Architecture in September 2005;
- "New Dutch Architecture & Planning on the Waterfront" at the Center for Architecture in November 2005;
- "Public Art as a Strategic Planning Tool: Shaping community identity, leveraging funding & influencing development" at the Museum of the City of New York in March 2006.

Goals and Plans for Next Year

The Metro Chapter Executive Committee has established many goals for next year to continue our work as the "best" APA chapter. Some of these are to:

- create a strategic plan;
- review committee structure and activities;
- increase the number of events and educational activities;
- focus on increasing the diversity of our membership and of our activities;
- conduct our bi-annual conference;
- join the digital age with electronic distribution of the Metro Planner newsletter and wider use of our website and of broadcast email to keep our members informed of Metro Chapter activities and events.

Ethel Sheffer
President
June 19, 2006