

# ALBERTA PLANNING EXCHANGE

The Newsletter of the  
Community Planning Association of Alberta



November 2006



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## In This Issue ...

Message from the Chair .....	Page 1
Conference 2007 Update .....	2
CPAA Education Initiative History .....	3
Student Mentorship .....	4
Scholarships .....	5
Essay by Scholarship Winner .....	5
Notes from the Editor's Desk .....	8

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Your Board of Directors has met once since the summer – on October 13<sup>th</sup> at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The meeting was primarily dedicated to the organization of the 2007 Education Session and Annual Conference. Board members have worked hard over the past several months and we think we have an exciting program taking shape.

The theme of the **Education Session** on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> will be **Working with Communities, Working with Developers**. Once again, we will be partnering with CMHC to bring this to you. As well, I want to make special mention of Brown and Associates Planning Group from Calgary who will be the Platinum Sponsor for the Education Session. We are grateful for the continued support that Brown and Associates has given us over the years, and look forward to yet another fruitful partnership with them.

The **theme for the Annual Conference**, April 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>, will be **Planning People-Friendly Places: Back to Grassroots**. The program is rapidly taking shape and we think we will once again have a contingent of strong speakers to inform and challenge you. More details about the theme, speakers, and sessions will be provided in our next newsletter currently planned for distribution in late January/ early February 2007. Some of the sessions we are currently examining include: *New Models for Public Involvement*; *Housing Choices*; *Opportunities and Challenges in Community Planning*; *Servicing Growth – Issues and Opportunities*; and *Implementing Community Designs – Common Planning Mistakes*. Of course, these sessions are preliminary but I hope they provide a flavour of what we are offering you.

### ***Message from the Chair...continued***

The move of the Association offices from Red Deer to Edmonton is now complete. Our new Secretary, Vicki Hackl of *Vici Designs*, has worked tirelessly through the summer to get our administrative systems operating smoothly, our accounts transferred to Edmonton and the financial records organized, and our communication systems and materials in place. She is now working on upgrading our membership information and lists.

The next meeting of the Board will take place in Leduc on December 1<sup>st</sup>. We hope to be able to flesh out the details for the 2007 Education Session and Annual Conference, and confirm some of the speakers we have approached.

I would like to offer thanks to my colleagues on the Board of Directors. These members do not meet simply to discuss and vote on conference themes, policy and administrative matters, **ours is a working Board!** Individual members take personal responsibility for conference sessions – contacting potential speakers, organizing their involvement, ensuring their needs for travel, accommodation, and audiovisual equipment are attended to; and they will ultimately act as moderators at the Conference for the sessions they have planned and organized. They truly share the load.

Finally, once again I want to thank you, our members, for your continued support. I wish you all a happy and joyous Christmas and New Year holiday season.

Dr. Tim Burton, Chair  
Community Planning Association of Alberta - November 2006

### **Conference 2007 Update**

The 2007 Community Planning Association of Alberta Conference (CPAA) is set for April 2, 3, and 4, at the Capri Conference Centre in Red Deer, Alberta. The theme of the conference is ***Planning People-Friendly Places: Back to Grassroots***

The Education Session, an integral part of the conference, will take place on Monday, April 2, 2007. The theme of this session is ***Working with Communities, Working with Developers***. The morning session will consist of a workshop on the “Not in My Back Yard” (NIMBY) phenomenon. CMHC will again conduct this workshop. After lunch Glen Lyons, a well-known planner and developer, will chair a session and make a presentation on understanding developers.

The CPAA will host a Monday evening reception that will feature the **Honourable Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs**. This reception has always been an informative and interesting start to the conference.

The conference proper starts Tuesday April 3, 2007 with the **keynote address by Mary-Frances Turner**, Executive Vice-President of York Regional Rapid Transit Corporation in Ontario. This will be followed by the morning breakout session with several interesting topics for those attending the conference. After lunch there will be two sets of breakout sessions on thought provoking topics. Again this year we are bringing in a humorous speaker for the banquet, and we will be holding the annual silent auction for our student scholarship fund during this time.

Wednesday morning will begin with the **CPAA Annual General Meeting**. After a coffee break we will have the Question and Answer Panel followed by the closing Plenary Session.

## **Conference 2007 Update...continued**

### **Conference fees will remain the same for 2007:**

Conference Early Registration Fee (to Feb 28)	\$220.00
Conference Regular Registration Fee (after Mar 01)	\$250.00
Education Session Registration Fee	\$200.00
Extra Conference Luncheon Tickets	\$ 25.00
Extra Conference Banquet Tickets	\$ 30.00

We will again be sending requests for Conference sponsorships, displays, and silent auction items.

On behalf of the CPAA Board we look forward to a thought provoking conference and welcome all to attend from April 2 – 4, 2007 in Red Deer at the Capri Conference Centre.

## **CPAA Education Initiative – the History**

The Community Planning Association of Alberta in 1996 took two bold steps. The first was to hold joint conferences with the Alberta Association Canadian Institute of Planners, and the second was to co-host the Education Session with AACIP prior to the main conference. Although this arrangement provided a strong addition to the CPAA conferences in 1999 it was mutually agreed that the two organizations would go back to holding separate conferences.

The Education Sessions have taken many forms. The first sessions were mostly instructional with titles such as Planning 101, 201, and 301. These sessions were intended to look at the development and implementation of the Municipal Government Act with emphasis on the planning sections. The initial target audience was Municipal Councillors and Administrators.

To the surprise of the CPAA Board there was a request from the membership to continue and broaden the subject matter of the Education Session when we returned to separate conferences. To accomplish this request, the assistance of various organizations was required. Organizations such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Alberta Association Canadian Institute of Planners, the Federation of Calgary Communities, as well as individual planners, municipal leaders, and lawyers with an interest in planning in Alberta volunteered their assistance.

In 1999, we introduced topic introduced topic specific sessions and brought in volunteer experts to assist the Association in broadening the knowledge of planning related matters to those in attendance. **The 1999 topic** was one that continues to be at the forefront of planning entitled ***Mediation in Planning Disputes—Public Meetings, Appeals and Other Blood Sports***. As these sessions continued through the years we have brought together experts on topics such as the Alberta Economy, the Environment and Planning, and the Alberta Planning Structure.

**In 2003** we varied the Education Session to have **roundtable discussions** on a number of topics. Those attending the session were divided into groups to discuss a number of individual topics and come back at various times during the day to report on their deliberations. **In 2004**, the Association teamed up with Partners in Planning to conduct a session on **Sustaining Community Engagement**.

### ***CPAA Education Initiative – the History...continued***

They brought together a diverse group to discuss strategies for engaging and sustaining communities as they continue to grow.

In **2005**, the Association teamed up with CMHC to study a number of planning issues. Session included: **Assessing the Planning Resources in your Community, A Study on Wetlands Development, The Cost of Community Services, and a session on Planning Policy**. The afternoon was setup to conduct workshops on these subjects and return with reports on them. The **2006** Education Session continued our partnership with CMHC, the topic being **Consultation, NIMBY and Community Sustainability**. We examined case studies from the Municipalities of Wood Buffalo and Whitehorse. Because the Wood Buffalo experience was so current considerable time was spent on group discussions

The **2007** topic ***Working with Communities, Working with Developers*** is bound to create considerable interest. We are again teaming up with CMHC and Partners in Planning for the morning session and wrap up. The inclusion of Glen Lyons in the afternoon to relate his considerable experience on this topic will make for an exciting session.

We have often been asked, “**Who should attend the Education Session?**” Our answer is long and inclusive. “**Anyone interested in learning how volunteer community groups can contribute to municipal-decision making and planning process**” should attend the Education Sessions:

- a) Municipal Councillors
- b) Development Officers
- c) Economic Development Officers
- d) Members of municipal planning commissions
- e) Subdivision and development appeal Board members
- f) Planners
- g) Municipal Managers and Administrators
- h) Members of community organizations
- i) Developers
- j) Interested citizens

As a result of this inclusive grouping we have had attendance figures well over 100 participants and in recent times closer to 150 every year.

**The Conference and Education Committee Members for 2006/07 are: Lesley Kalmakoff, Mark Oberg, Nick Paladino, Carla Semeniuk and Halyna Tataryn.**

The CPAA will continue the Education sessions in the foreseeable future and trust that they will be of value to those interested in future planning in Alberta.



## Student Mentorship

In recent years the Association has become increasingly involved with the students at the Faculty of Environmental Design, Planning Program at the University of Calgary. The students have become a significant part of our annual conference and during the year we keep in contact with the faculty and students through our two student directors, Lesley Kalmakoff and Rose-Mary Damiani.

The following is a personal commentary by Lesley Kalmakoff on the relationship between the CPAA and the students.

“As a student in the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary, I was first introduced to the CPAA Board Members during the lunch session they host for us in January of each year. The meeting is organized to introduce the Association to the student body and to encourage them to join as members and participants in the upcoming conference activities in Red Deer.

The annual greeting is always fun and candid, full of laughs and friendly conversation, and allows the students to get to know the Board Members as colleagues in the planning profession. It is an excellent way to gain insight on employment opportunities for the summer, as well as broaden our understanding of when and how professionals participate in planning communities across Alberta.

Being that Calgary provides so many interesting examples to study we often don't look outside the city when considering community planning. Through development of companionships with Board Members, I found my perspective on community planning was greatly broadened to the challenges and opportunities they face in their own professional positions, in all areas of the Province.

At the conference each year, the cooperation between students and Board Members furthers the student experience by facilitating networking opportunities and mentorships. The enthusiastic evening celebrations create stories that are carried over for years to come.

During the initial stages of meeting CPAA Board Members, I was convinced that this was an association to which I wanted to belong. It is a pleasure to be a liaison between the board and the students, and I'm sure I speak for all the students when I express my thanks to the Board and extended membership for their professional support, friendship and continuing commitment to provide students with scholarship opportunities.

See everyone in Red Deer, April 2007.”

## CPAA Scholarships

Each year the CPAA gives four, **five hundred dollar scholarships** to students who attend our annual conference and submit an essay describing what they learned at the conference. The **2006 recipients** were:

Alexander Krause, Titania Lam, Lesley Kalmakoff and Jonathan Lea.

In the near future the Board will be announcing an additional Grant for a deserving student based on different criteria than the four conference scholarships.

To emphasize and show our readership the quality of these essays and what the students have learned from attending our conference we randomly picked the following scholarship essay by Alexander Krause.

## **My Experience at the 2006 CPAA Conference**

**By: Alexander Krause**

### **What does Community Planning mean to you and how do you see your future contribution to it?**

Defining planning is a challenging task because it can be interpreted in a number of ways. To me, community planning is the managing and coordinating of interests in both urban and rural settings. The use of the term “urban planning” is often harmful because it implies that planning is only relevant in cities and heavily urbanized areas. The term community planning is appropriate since “community” can exist at a number of different scales. Large cities can have neighborhood communities and conversely a rural municipality is itself a community. I believe that all too often – in planning school in particular – we forget the fact that smaller municipalities and rural areas are also communities that require planning and the managing of interests. Community planning is therefore a broad all- encompassing notion that includes municipalities and neighborhoods of all sizes.

Community planning is also about giving citizens an opportunity to envision their future. With a vision in place, I believe that community planning establishes a framework to guide growth and development. Moreover, it serves to help direct the future of communities while ensuring citizens have their voice heard. Community planning in rural municipalities is particularly challenging because strategic visioning is often due to pressure from larger neighboring communities. I believe that community planning therefore requires the cooperation of not only residents, but also municipalities. In many instances especially in rural areas, I believe that municipalities must work together on common goals in order to create effective community plans. Thus, to me community planning means the ability to help shape the future of both urban and rural communities through effective cooperation and management.

My career goal is to work for a small or rural community. Having grown up in a small town, I have an affinity towards smaller communities. Often planning is somewhat neglected in smaller communities and I would like to work towards improving that condition. First, we must realize the importance of smaller communities. We must acknowledge the fact that they face many of the same issues as metropolitan areas only on a different scale. Next we must somehow work to change the mentality that many people have towards rural and small communities. These places are not simply land holdings for large municipalities, nor are they meaningless. We often focus planning as if it is only a metropolitan phenomenon and I believe this must change. Once this mentality changes and we recognize the value of these places, we can focus on planning small communities for the long term.

### **Describe your most valuable experience at the 2006 Conference and its contribution to your understanding of the community planning needs and issues in Alberta. What in your mind are the two most important issues that came out of discussions at the Conference?**

My most valuable experience at the 2006 conference was being able to meet professional planners and listen to speakers discuss practical and current planning issues. A Practical knowledge of current planning issues is very important, but not focused on enough in school. The CPAA conference thus serves as a complimentary learning tool to conventional classroom instruction. One important issue that emerged at the conference is the concept of sustainability and its application to smaller communities. The discussion on sustainability in Alberta and the Natural Step program on Canmore provided insight into how new planning methods could be implemented in communities. This session raised what I believe is an important point about sustainability in relation to community planning. To implement sustainable initiatives we do not need radical or drastic changes. Canmore is in a unique position to be able to adopt the Natural Step, but as pointed out in the discussions, even small communities can take steps towards sustainable planning practices.

### ***My Experience at the 2006 CPAA Conference...continued***

The discussions highlighted that there is no single recipe or formula for sustainability. In fact, sustainability was once considered a three-pillar concept and today there are 5 or 6 concepts. Rather than dismissing sustainability as a 'radical' idea that is too difficult to implement, as planners we should strive towards making incremental improvements. For me, the issue is not about drastically changing our existing system or halting resource extraction, but developing strategies within our existing framework. Not all communities in Alberta can adopt the Natural Step system. That being said, I think every community in Alberta can take some steps, no matter how small, in order to try to strive towards sustainability.

Another important issue that emerged from the 2006 conference was that of urban-rural conflict. Mitigating conflict is a key issue that is becoming increasingly important as larger centres are rapidly expanding and looking to their neighbors for more land. As Bill Diepeveen from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs emphasized, conflict is natural and inevitable and therefore the challenge is to effectively manage disputes. Municipal Affairs has tools in place to mitigate conflict and provide dispute resolution assistance. Taking advantage of these resources to negotiate agreements before conflicts emerge is an effective way of dealing with urban-rural issues. I believe that urban-rural conflict is an issue that will only intensify in magnitude in the coming years as larger cities expand.

Prior to the conference I did not realize dealing with conflict and inter-municipal disputes is an important component of community planning. I think that the best way to deal with this issue is to build cooperation between neighboring municipalities and wherever possible trying to develop a respectful relationship. Undoubtedly, this is easier said than done; however, as Bill Diepeveen argued at the conference, we must begin to see our neighbors differently and begin seeing each other's needs. Furthermore, I believe that we must change the mentality from which we operate. We must stop considering rural areas as land banks for larger cities and begin respecting the autonomy of rural municipalities. At this point, I believe that the dichotomous relationship between urban and rural municipalities must work towards a mentality where urban and rural areas are regarded as mutually important components of the municipal framework.

#### **How did the theme of the 2006 Conference, "Alberta: the Next 50 years-Masters of Our Own Destinies", help your understanding of community planning, particularly, as it will evolve over the next 50 years?**

Alberta is a rapidly growing province. Oil and gas continues to drive the economy, Alberta will continue to prosper. The economic prosperity brings with it a great influx of migrants and thus increased pressure on communities for growth and development. In many cases, this growth is rapid and therefore puts great pressure on planning because results are demanded immediately. Rural areas will also be impacted by future growth pressure. As large Alberta cities continue to expand, more people will look to rural areas for recreation purposes and as a "retreat" from the city. This phenomenon will make rural amenity areas popular and put new pressure on communities that once focused on the resource industry. The theme of the 2006 CPAA conference shed light on the outlook of planning in Alberta. As planners we have a great opportunity to make a positive contribution to community development in Alberta over the next 50 years.

Alberta is in a great position. While many provinces are planning to minimize the negative effects of community decline, Alberta's growth is lending itself to opportunity. We must also be cautious, however, because of unforeseen technological or economic change that could significantly alter the direction of the province. The CPAA conference made me really stop and think. What happens when oil revenues decline due to world events or if technical advances lead to a change in the demand for resources? This has led me to believe that the time is now for the creation of innovative and long-lasting plans. The time is now because economic prosperity should provide the necessary preconditions for funding to support good community planning. Furthermore, these times of economic boom should also provide the chance to set the foundation for a future Alberta that may not be economically prosperous.

### ***My Experience at the 2006 CPAA Conference...continued***

As planners we must seize the moment and establish a strong foundation for the future, otherwise in 50 years we may be looking back at a lost opportunity.

We are “masters of our own destinies” because by making good plans today and incorporating practices such as the Natural Step system of sustainability initiatives, we can set a strong base for communities in the future. Moreover, nowhere else in Canada do we have the opportunity to implement innovative planning strategies in rural and small communities. Many small cities in Canada are fighting to survive; yet in Alberta places like Canmore are thriving and becoming role models. Through the conference discussions, I learned that community planning could incorporate new and innovative strategies. Community planning is about much more effective development approval and growth management. It is possible to accommodate growth and build better communities especially since we are projecting continued population expansion and increased demand for places with amenity. Rural and small communities in particular are meaningful places that have great opportunity for planning. Given my personal and career interest in small and rural communities, the 2006 CPAA conference gave me great hope for the future of community planning in Alberta.

### **Notes from the Editor’s Desk**

This edition of the Newsletter has been devoted to the Associations interest in furthering planning education in Alberta. The University of Calgary faculty of Environmental Design has a fully accredited program for planners graduating with a Masters degree in Environmental Design in Planning. It is hoped that other educational institutions will provide degree and diploma qualifications in planning and planning technology in the near future.

I would like to thank Gloria Wilkinson, Don Schultz, and Leslie Kalmakoff for their contribution and background information on our articles on the history of the Education Session. Also, I would like to thank Alexander Krause for his insightful essay on what it means to be a student participant at the annual conference.

We are always looking for new members so if you know of anyone wishing to become a member, individual or corporate, please contact our offices.

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*Have a safe and happy holiday!*