

THE VANTAGE POINT



American Planning Association
Pennsylvania Chapter

Making Great Communities

A Publication of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association

ANNOUNCING THE 2015 *Great Places in Pennsylvania*

The PA Chapter of APA kicked-off the “Great Places in Pennsylvania” Program in 2014. The purpose of the Program is to recognize places with exemplary character, quality, identity, cultural interest, and community involvement. Great Places are unique and have a sustainable vision for tomorrow. They not only demonstrate the rewarding results that occur through community partnerships, planning, and dedication, but also serve as a model that other communities want to emulate.

For 2015, there were two categories of Great Places: Great Public Spaces and Great Neighborhoods. A total of 17 nominations from across the Commonwealth were submitted. They were then reviewed and rated by a panel of nine judges. The outcome was the designation of five Great Places in Pennsylvania: two in the category of Great Neighborhoods and three in the category of Great Public Spaces.

*Congratulations to the 2015
Great Places in Pennsylvania!*

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

Media Borough, Delaware County: Media implemented its Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Media Strategy to become a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant town with a strong sense of community. Its diverse population and housing stock, historic districts, thriving downtown commercial center, extensive public transit system, green infrastructure and community engagement make it a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Tacony, City of Philadelphia:

Tacony is an historic, mixed use neighborhood located in northeast Philadelphia. Its revitalization has been guided by a Strategic Plan, partnerships and community involvement. The Tacony Music Hall and commercial corridor have been revitalized, bringing new businesses and stabilizing existing businesses. The neighborhood is well connected to other areas of the City and beyond.

GREAT PUBLIC SPACES

Clearview Common, Mt. Lebanon, Allegheny County:

Clearview Common, located in the heart of the Uptown Central Business District, was revitalized through an extensive public involvement process. Today, it serves as an aesthetically pleasing and accessible green space that reflects local architecture and the importance of the trolley era in the community’s past. Residents, employees and visitors now enjoy the Common fostering a greater sense of place and community pride. It is also the focal point for many community events and activities.

Market Square, City of Pittsburgh:

The Square, redesigned in 2011, is a vibrant, cohesive, flexible and pedestrian-oriented public space, with historic character, in Pittsburgh’s Central Business District. Daily visitors include commuters, tourists, downtown employees, students, and others interested in an active urban square. Market Square promotes a wide range of programming from a farmers market and art/crafts fair to performances and

festivals. It has also become a unique outdoor dining destination.

The Oval, City of Philadelphia:

Formerly known as Eakins Oval, this eight acre public space was transformed, through implementation of the Parkway Action Plan, into “The Oval,” the new “Park on the Parkway.” The result is a thriving pedestrian environment that serves as a connector between the many cultural institutions on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, provides a gathering place for residents and visitors, and offers programming and activities for people of all ages. Innovative, collaborative partnering with community organizations has been vital to the Oval’s success.

For more information and photos of these Great Places, please visit the Chapter website (www.planningpa.org). A special thank-you is extended to the judges for their time and dedication to the Program. PA-APA also celebrates the many community leaders and officials, professionals, and residents who contribute to making the Great Neighborhoods and Public Spaces.

The next time you are planning an adventure, consider visiting the “*Great Places in Pennsylvania*.” Also, stay tuned for the announcement of the next opportunity to nominate Great Places in early 2016. It’s not too soon to start thinking about great places to nominate in your community.

The PA Chapter of APA thanks **Pam Shellenberger, AICP** and her committee and judges for all their hard work in organizing the Great Places Program. ♦



Greater Reading Bronze Award *Trail Systems*

The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) has announced the **Greater Reading Trail Systems (GRTS) as an official Bronze Level Ride Center™**. The Bronze Level Ride Center designation represents IMBA's Model Trail recognition for **large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer something for every rider.**

A ride center can earn certification only after a member of the IMBA team conducts an on-site visit to evaluate the location's trail system, bike amenities and ensure it meets other IMBA criteria. To date there are only 37 ride centers worldwide, which now include Reading, PA.

According to IMBA, the Greater Reading Trails System, overseen by multiple organizational members of the Greater Reading Trails partnership, **consists of more than 125 miles of trails in 5 major preserves**, all of which can be **accessed via the Schuylkill River Trail**. The trails range in difficulty from beginner-friendly to some of the most technical, rock-strewn trails anywhere. There's also an abundance of in-town amenities, including bike shops, craft beer bars, hotels, music venues, restaurants and sporting events.

The effort to develop the GRTS as a ride center was an undertaking of the Greater Reading Trails Partnership, led by the Berks Conservancy in partnership with Berks Area Mountain Biking Association, Greater Reading Convention and Visitors Bureau, the County of Berks, the City of Reading, the Pagoda Pacers, Schuylkill

River Heritage Area, ReDesign Reading, Reading Health System and Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

According to Kim Murphy, President of Berks Conservancy, "We are thrilled with the news of the IMBA Ride Center designation. This is a tremendous recognition for our collective efforts through the Greater Reading Trails Partnership to close trail gaps and improve access for the visitor and trail user. Those of us who live here know how special our natural resources are in Berks County and now many others will have the opportunity to **visit and enjoy places like Neversink Mountain, the Schuylkill River Trail, Blue Marsh, French Creek State Park and Mt Penn.**"

GRCVB President, Crystal Seitz, commented on the impact the Bronze Level Ride Center designation will have on local tourism. "Greater Reading's special characteristics include being **part of an urban center with trails within close proximity of one another. Additionally, Reading is the only one ride center in the northeast; well within a day's drive of millions of people. This will definitely create a boost to our tourism industry.** Other less populated areas that have optimized their trail systems have seen increases of more than 20,000 trail users. This effort blends perfectly with our work to enhance outdoor recreation niche identified in the Destination Marketing Study."

BAMBA Director and experienced mountain biker, Fred Moreadith said "the IMBA Ride Center status puts our trail systems in the top tier of Mountain Biking and opens Greater Reading to the entire world of the mountain biking community....the long term economic effects can be lasting as long as we nurture, expand and continue to invest in this natural resource."

The Greater Reading Trail partners have done a phenomenal job expanding and maintaining local trails. The area is home to the annual Duryea Downhill Race, held annually on the first weekend in May, and it was once the training ground of World Cup DH racer, Neko Mullyaly. The GRTS experience will not disappoint even the most technically skilled rider. ♦



2016 Governor's Awards for Local Government *Excellence*

Have local government leaders in your community demonstrated exceptional dedication to improving public services through innovative projects or initiatives? If so, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services (GCLGS) wants to hear about it! Each year, the GCLGS presents the Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence in recognition of successful undertakings that may serve as inspiration or as best management practices for local government officials throughout Pennsylvania.



Nominations for the 2016 Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence will be accepted from September 1, 2015, through December 1, 2015, and may be submitted for one or more of the following award categories:

- Building Community Partnerships
- Responding to Adversity
- Promoting Community/Economic Revitalization
- Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives
- Fiscal Accountability and Best Management Practices
- Innovative Planning and Sound Land Use Practices
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Information Technology
- Health and Wellness Initiatives

Please visit www.newPA.com/lgawards to learn more about the judging criteria for each category, as well as to view the award winners from prior years and to submit a nomination during the timeframe specified above. ♦

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Contact information is available at
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INSIDER

A Message from President **Brian O'Leary, AICP**

Hello Fellow Planners. Nowadays, it seems the summer lull is barely a lull. The Chapter has kept busy on a variety of fronts:

- The APA-PA Shale Energy Committee has continued meeting, tracking new shale energy initiatives, and preparing planning recommendations.
- The Chapter announced a second round of Great Places winners, representing excellent neighborhoods and public spaces around the Commonwealth. Visit the website at <http://planningpa.org/about/great-places-in-pennsylvania-2/2015-great-places/> to learn more about the latest winners.
- Every two years, AICP takes nominations for new Fellows for AICP. The Chapter and its Sections are working on a number of new nominations.
- Earlier this summer, Pam Shellenberger, Susan Shermer, and I met with Neil Weaver, Deputy Secretary for DCED, to discuss

cooperative efforts between the Chapter and DCED. We all agreed that there are many opportunities for even more partnerships.

- The Board helped to support two applications for grants through the APA Plan4Health coalition initiative. The Plan4Health project aims to build local capacity to address population health goals and promote the inclusion of health in non-traditional sectors. Plan4Health is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and led by APA's Planning and Community Health Center. It is anticipated that applicants will receive notification of their status (awarded or declined) late this year.
- The Board continues to look at ways to implement our new Strategic Plan, especially broadening our education, improving partnerships, welcoming

new volunteers, and expanding membership. We probably all work in offices where many planners don't belong to the Chapter. They should belong; so, let's all make an effort to boost our membership from our own offices.

- Many folks, particularly in the Southwest Section, are getting ready for the conference from October 18-20 in Pittsburgh. The committee has been hard at work organizing 49 classroom sessions including Ethics and Law, five mobile/walking/biking tours, plenary speakers Gil Penalose and James Brasuell, a thought-provoking plenary session on Tuesday morning, and a new day-long technology salon!! Hope you can come; it will be a great conference. ♦

In Memoriam Roy E. Brant, PhD

The Northwest Section would like to note the passing of long time citizen Planner Roy Brant of Saegertown who passed peacefully at his home on July 12, 2015. Roy's tenure and contribution to the planning field both academically and as a citizen planner began in 1978 with the Crawford County Planning Commission. Over a span of some thirty-seven years, Roy's involvement and dedication of his time and talents with respect to the role of planning for the betterment of our communities, industry and the citizens of Crawford County and beyond cannot be overstated.

Roy's contribution to the PA Chapter of APA stemmed from his decades of direct involvement from the Northwest Section. He served on various committees and initiatives over the years and believed that planning, as a grass roots process, is built on a solid foundation if ideas, galvanized by meaningful political interface and implemented with local officials leading the way. In addition to his decades of involvement with the PA Chapter, Roy was a member of the Crawford County Planning Commission, the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee,

the Crawford County Regional Airport Authority, the American Association of Highway Engineers, and many other civic and philanthropic groups. He leaves behind his wife Marge Brant and two adult sons, Seth and Rick. He will always be remembered by many across the Commonwealth for his dedication to public service and his love of the planning profession. ♦



Central Section Update

By *Rachelle A. Abbott, AICP, Section Chair*

Central Section is dedicated to supporting planning education and making it accessible to all citizens and professional planners. Each year the Central Section offers three opportunities to support local entities that are sponsoring PMPEI Courses. So far this year, the Central Section has co-sponsored two courses, each in the amount of \$400. The first co-sponsorship was presented to Mifflin and Juniata counties, who jointly hosted the Subdivision and Land Development Review Course. Sixteen people successfully completed this course.

The second co-sponsorship was presented to Lycoming County, who hosted the PMPEI Planning Series: Community Planning, Zoning, and Subdivision and Land Development Review Courses. Nineteen people attended each course. Individuals who completed all three courses were publicly recognized as *Citizen Planners*. Through this year's series, 16 *Citizen Planners* were honored and added to the group of 56 *Citizen Planners* in Lycoming County. Attendees to the courses included a mix of Boroughs, Townships, County staff and Planning Commission Members, County Commissioners, engineers, lawyers, and members of environmental organizations.

The third \$400 sponsorship is pending. If you are sponsoring any PMPEI courses, please consider submitting a letter requesting sponsorship to APA PA - Central Section. The letter must include the name of the PMPEI course being offered, course dates, and anticipated number of attendees. This is an excellent opportunity to offset the cost of the course and encourage greater attendance. For more information or clarification, please contact Rachelle Abbott, AICP, Section Chairperson, at raabbott@stepcorp.org. ♦



welcome

New PA Chapter Members!

WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS who joined the PA Chapter over the past few months. The PA Chapter membership includes nearly 2,600 planning officials, professional planners, and others who care about how Pennsylvania continues to grow the places where we live, work, and enjoy recreation. The Board and staff are available to answer any questions. Feel free to contact the Chapter Office at 717-671-4510. Board member contact information is available at www.planningpa.org under **About Us**.

Individual Members:

Makala Ashmar, Lehigh Valley/Berks Section

William Gregory, Southwest Section

Organizational Member:

East Whiteland Township, Southeast Section ♦

Scholarships Awarded to Planning Students

The PA Chapter of APA awarded scholarships from the Francis Pitkin Scholarship Fund, the Richard P. Byler Charitable Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation, the Richard G. Bickel Planning Education Award, and the Leslie & Greta Spaulding Education Fund in time for the fall 2015-2016 academic cycle. Four students benefited from the generosity of these funds and donations from our members. The following students were recipients:

Leonard Bonarek, Temple University

Yani Liang, University of Pennsylvania

Lauren Parker, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Steven Schrayner, Temple University

We look forward to hearing from these “emerging professionals” in the near future!

PDO *corner*

by Susan Elks, AICP, Professional Development Officer

I'd like to **take this opportunity to thank a dedicated member** of the APA-PA Professional Development Committee (PDC), who recently relocated out of state. **Mark Stivers** served on the PDC for more than ten years, assisting many aspiring AICPs with their exam prep and providing valuable assistance with professional development trainings. He also served as APA-PA's **treasurer** and participated in the Chapter's strategic planning efforts. His service to APA-PA and planners throughout the state was greatly appreciated, and will be deeply missed.

Mark's commitment to the professional development of planners and our professional organization is an example that I wish more planners would take the time to follow. APA-PA and its committees, as well as the "products" they deliver, are a **reflection of the time invested by the members. Without volunteers, the Chapter would be unable to provide Chapter members and Pennsylvania communities** with valued services, including the annual conference, exam prep assistance, CM clarification, professional development training, support of PMPEI classes, website resources, and recognition of exceptional communities and projects.

If you are reading this, you are either an APA-PA member, or someone interested in planning in Pennsylvania. **Consider what you can do to give back to the profession and those it serves.** Your fellow planners, and the communities they serve, would appreciate your time and contributions. Whether through a Chapter level committee or Section level activities, there are many opportunities to volunteer. Contact information for the entire Board of Directors and Section leadership is provided on the website, www.planningpa.org. Please feel free to contact me with any questions on the work of the PDC at selks@chesc.org.

If you haven't already, now is the time to register for the APA-PA annual conference, which takes place this year in Pittsburgh. As always, there is a wealth of continuing education options at the conference, including **multiple law and ethics CM options, an AICP exam prep session, and great mobile sessions.** The conference is your best opportunity to **make a large dent in your CM requirements, as well as hear about the latest planning techniques and catch up with fellow planners from across the state.** ♦

CONGRATULATIONS

to those who passed the
May 2015 AICP exam!

Bryan Astheimer
Connie Chang
William Deguffroy
Jamie Genevie
Jamie Lemon
Andrew Meloney
Justin Miller
Joseph Nixon
Katie Rakus
Michael Smith
Henry Stroud
Brian Styche
Meagan Tuttle

For those of you who have signed up for the **November AICP comprehensive planning exam**, there are many resources to help you prepare. **Free resources include the PDC Study Notes from 2007 and the Exam Review Series that is part of the Planning Consortium webcast series. Information on these and other resources is available on the PA Chapter website here:** <http://planningpa.org/for-planners/professional-planners/aicp-exam-prep/> Additionally, **APA has added more exam prep tips to their website** at www.planningpa.org/certification/examprep/.

Prep resources that involve a cost include APA's newly updated Exam Prep 3.0 and *Planetizen's* AICP Exam Prep Class. Both are web-based and include streaming video, practice exams, assessment questions, and discussion forums. The primary difference is the subscription time. *Planetizen* runs with a specific testing cycle. APA opens their exam product to the buyer for three years, to correspond to the time period an application is approved for. Both products can easily be found on the provider's website.

PA MUNICIPAL PLANNING EDUCATION INSTITUTE

FALL 2015 COURSES

The courses listed are all 3-session programs that meet on successive weeks. Classes begin at approximately 6:00 PM and end at approximately 9:15 PM. All courses are approved for continuing education credit for Registered Landscape Architects, Attorneys, Engineers, Land Surveyors, Geologists and Uniform Construction Code officials.

COURSE IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Lehigh County (Allentown)

September 8, 15, 22
Location: Office of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
961 Marcon Blvd., Suite 310,
Allentown, PA 18109
Registration contact: Eric McAfee,
Lehigh Valley Planning Comm.
Email: emcafee@lvpc.org

Wayne County (Hawley)

September 14, 21, 28
Location: Lackawanna College
Lake Region Center
8 Silk Mill Drive, Hawley, PA 18428
Registration contact: Craig Rickard,
Wayne County Planning/GIS Dept
Email: crickard@waynecountypa.gov

Chester County (West Chester)

October 1, 8, 15
Location: WCU Graduate Business Center
1160 McDermott Drive,
West Chester, PA 19380
Registration contact: William Stevens,
Chester County 2020.
Email: williamjstevensiii@gmail.com

Berks County (Reading)

October 1, 8, 15
Location: Albright College,
Roessner Hall (Room 100)
1940 North 13th Street, Reading, PA
Registration contact: Andrea Weist, Albright
Center for Excellence in Local Govt.
Email: aweist@albright.edu

COURSE IN SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Dauphin County (Swatara)

October 8, 15, 22
Location: Swatara Township Building
599 Eisenhower Blvd. Harrisburg, PA 17111
Registration contact Andrew Bomberger,
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Email: abomberger@tcrcp-pa.org

Lehigh County (Allentown)

November 3, 10, 17
Location: Office of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
961 Marcon Blvd., Suite 310,
Allentown, PA 18109
Registration information contact
Eric McAfee, Lehigh Valley Planning Comm.
Email: emcafee@lvpc.org

COURSE IN ZONING

Bucks County (Doylestown)

September 23, 30; October 7
Location: Delaware Valley College
Student Center, 700 E. Butler Avenue,
Doylestown, PA 18901
Registration contact: Ms. Terri Dickow
PA State Assoc. of Boroughs
Email: tdickow@boroughs.org
(800) 232-7722

Lehigh County (Allentown)

October 6, 13, 20
Location: Office of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
961 Marcon Blvd., Suite 310,
Allentown, PA 18109
Registration contact: Eric McAfee,
Lehigh Valley Planning Comm.
Email: emcafee@lvpc.org

Butler County (Butler)

October 1, 8, 15
Location: Butler Co. Staff Development Center
227 W. Cunningham Street, Butler, PA 16001
Registration contact: Joel Mackay,
Butler Co. Planning Comm.
Email: jmackay@co.butler.pa.us

Montgomery County (Lansdale)

November 5, 12, 19
Location: Towamencin Meeting Hall
1090 Troxell Road, Lansdale, PA 19446
Registration contact: Ms. Rita McKelvey,
Montgomery Co. Planning Comm.
Email: rmckelvey@montcopa.org

COURSE IN ZONING ADMINISTRATION

Bucks County (Doylestown)

October 28; November 4, 11
Location: Delaware Valley College
Student Center, 700 E. Butler Avenue,
Doylestown, PA 18901
Registration contact: Ms. Terri Dickow PA
State Assoc. of Boroughs
Email: tdickow@boroughs.org
(800) 232-7722

WEBINARS

Duties of the Zoning Hearing Board and the Zoning Officer

2-part lunchtime webinar
October 5, 6
12 noon to 1:30 PM
Registration contact: Ms. Terri Dickow,
PA State Assoc. of Boroughs
Email: tdickow@boroughs.org
(800) 232-7722