

THE VANTAGE POINT



American Planning Association
Pennsylvania Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President Alexander J. Graziani, AICP

NEXT YEAR, 2010, will be the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association. To help make good strategic decisions in the coming years, the leadership of PA-APA is currently working on a new chapter development plan. Our **current development plan** covers the years 2006-2010. This fall chapter leadership will begin the process with a day-long retreat to draft the next plan.

I would like to encourage you, our members, to take time to review our current plan and offer a critique of what you think we accomplished and/or failed to achieve.

The top two **short term** priorities contained in the 2006-2010 plan were to:

- Educate public, government, non-profits, and developers about tangible functions/benefits of planning.
- Work with the sections to enhance services to existing members.

The top two **long term** priorities in the 2006-2010 plan were to:

- Enhance status/role of planners.
- Improve recruiting of planning officials and student members, including setting up a mentoring program for new planning officials and student members.

In addition, think about what the plan failed to address and what items should be addressed in the next 5-year plan.

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PA Chapter of APA Annual Conference

FAST APPROACHING

New this year!
REGISTER ONLINE
www.planningpa.org
Early Bird Deadline:
September 4



PLAN NOW TO JOIN your colleagues for the annual conference of the PA Chapter of the American Planning Association—"Investing in a Sustainable Future." The event takes place **October 4-6, 2009** at the **Dolce Valley Forge in King of Prussia, PA** and is packed with compelling keynote speakers, valuable workshops, relevant mobile workshops, and many opportunities for networking with professional planners and planning officials from around the state. Take advantage of the early bird rate and register by September 4!

The Delaware Valley, host of this year's conference, exemplifies the theme of this year's conference: **Investing in a Sustainable Future.** Smart Growth initiatives, including cooperative planning ventures, smart transportation improvements, innovative affordable housing and economic development tools, and green technology, have emerged as critical issues facing Pennsylvania. Hear from leaders working in sustainability both regionally and nationally:

- **Timothy Beatley**, *the Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities, Department of Urban and Environmental Planning, University of Virginia School of Architecture;*
- **Jeremy Nowak**, *PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Reinvestment Fund;* and
- **Sandy Wiggins**, *Principal, Consilience Inc., a national consultancy with a mission to build environmentally, socially and economically sustainable communities.*

The workshop sessions offered this year will also serve to challenge planners across the Commonwealth as we work towards planning practices that prepare communities for a sustainable future.

Earn up to 13.5 CM credits

The conference committee has planned carefully to offer a conference packed with CM credit educational opportunities. During two and a half days of educational workshops and keynote speakers,

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Southeast Section Planners and Penn Graduate Students

TEAM UP

FOR MENTORING PROGRAM

by Jeffrey Barg and Faith Cole

The idea was hatched, as great ideas often are, outside walking along a trail.

FAITH COLE, a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's MCP program, and **Jeanette Brugger**, a fellow Penn-Planning alum and planner with Pennoni Associates, met last summer while touring the planned route for the **Cynwyd Heritage Trail** stretching from Philadelphia to Lower Merion Township across the Schuylkill River. Reflecting on their experiences, the two agreed that more interaction with practitioners could better prepare students headed into the field, while keeping planners connected to academic planning, thus strengthening the professional planning community overall.

When they parted ways, they promised to reconnect and work on establishing a mentoring program that would pair professional APA members with graduate students in city planning programs.

Less than a year later—over wine, cheese and guacamole—the Southeast Section's mentors and mentees met each other for the first time at a kickoff event hosted at WRT's downtown Philadelphia office.

In an effort by **Cole, Brugger, Joe Luste**, another Pennoni planner; and **Jeffrey Barg**, a Penn-Planning graduate student and current student representative to the Southeast Section, planners were matched with students

according to expressed interests and specialty, and given an opportunity to cultivate a professional relationship beneficial to both. The team set up a simple and free online signup form for mentors and mentees. All participants submitted resumes and indicated their areas of interest. Students were matched with professionals with corresponding practice areas. Penn's Department of City and Regional Planning sponsored the February kickoff that began a semester's worth of fruitful relationships.

"I really liked this program," said one local planner after the semester ended. "I felt I could give the student real-world advice and believe that I helped in guiding them toward the right career path."

And at least one pair intended to continue talking after the semester was over.

"The relationship does not have to end," another planner said. "I am happy to continue to a relationship with a protégé after the semester. The relationship is beneficial to both parties."

This notion of mutual benefit arose repeatedly in comments from participants. Besides the plus side of "giving back" to a younger generation of planners, numerous mentors cited the amount they learned by talking to students who were both approaching planning problems from a different perspective and who were learning in classes what's on the cutting edge of the field.

In addition to the standard advice about the job market, mentors helped students network with other professionals, gave advice on how to improve their resumes, and in a few instances offered guidance on studio projects. The Southeast Section plans to run the program again in the fall semester, possibly with more formal events in addition to the initial kickoff and outreach to additional universities. *(Only Penn participated in the mentoring program's inaugural run. The team hopes to expand to include other planning programs in the future.)*

Other sections interested in setting up a similar mentoring program with local universities can contact Jeffrey Barg at **jbarg@design.upenn.edu** for more details on logistics and operations. ♦

