



GEORGIA PLANNER

Newsletter of the Georgia Planning Association, A Chapter of the American Planning Association
DECEMBER 2003

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Georgia 2050 A Case for Better Community Design

by Dan Reuter, AICP

Consider this scenario for the year 2050. The population of the U.S. has grown from 280 million to 400 million. The population of Georgia has grown from 8.5 to 30 million. The suburbs of the north Georgia metropolitan area extend across 41 counties. The developed area of north Georgia is essentially continuous from Chattanooga across the north Georgia mountains to I-85 at Lake Hartwell in the northeast and from Athens south through Madison to Macon extending west to LaGrange and north through Dalton back to Chattanooga.

The historical 10-county Atlanta region at a population of 10 million has become substantially more dense, however, the suburbs of the metropolitan area have grown immensely and extend between medium sized urban areas of 200,000 population centered at Dalton, Rome, Cumming, Athens, Gainesville, Commerce and Macon.

Around the year 2030, with ever-worsening traffic congestion all land with access to the interstate system in Georgia became phenomenally valuable. Access to markets, labor and natural resources require all new industry and jobs to be located within 3 miles of the interstate system as arterial roads are hopelessly gridlocked.

Worsening driving conditions have created not only 24-hour cities and lifestyles but 24 hour traffic. The issue of air quality related to cars has been solved as a result of engine and fuel technology but the average commute time exceeds one hour. Time is the most valuable personal commodity. Traffic congestion has forced many companies to not only permit employees to work from home but actually pay a bonus to reduce the need for office space.

Widening roads is no longer an option as the fiscal resources of governments are so far extended that maintenance of roads requires all funds and the cost of right-of-way prevents new construction for any travel mode.

Many environmental issues have become completely unmanageable. All stormwater and sanitary sewer effluent is processed and treated for additional drinking water. Preserving greenspace or areas for animal habitat has long since become pointless. Large areas of impervious surfaces and heat islands extend through most of the Atlanta area and wide swaths of north Georgia along the interstates.

Back to the year 2003. Jim Kuntsler or critiques would say this future is already cast for north Georgia. Transportation planners in many U.S. regions no longer consider reducing traffic congestion but rather seek to manage the length of gridlock time during the day. Some would say the balance of state, regional and local government powers in Georgia perpetuates a cycle that might create the future outlined above. Low residential densities and separate land uses connected only by roadways have been the primary Georgia development model. The growth cycle from rural to suburban is difficult to break. Does any Georgia planner doubt that substantially more population growth, suburban development and traffic congestion will occur in our state?

So some planners or activists may conclude growth is bad. The economic forces that create growth, bad. Free markets, bad. Government policies that support growth, bad. Cars, bad. Roads, bad. Developers, bad, bad. The American dream of home ownership, bad. But that can't be right.

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From the President...

Now that I've assumed the duties of President, let me thank you for the vote of confidence in 2002 as president-elect and reassure you I'll treat the position of president with high respect. There are so many good things to report. Our membership is to be recognized for its recent successes and for several upcoming initiatives about which we are excited. The remarks that follow are based in part on my address to attendees of the luncheon at our fall conference in Savannah.

The 2003 Election and New Board

Thanks for your recent participation in the election of the new board of directors. The election was notable in our organization's history. For the first time, we made a concerted effort to run contested elections for district directors, the secretary and treasurer, and others for which we are not required to run competitively. Some 35 names were on the ballot, and the names were more diverse and more broadly representative of employers than ever before. Per a bylaws amendment, we added two new positions on the board for planning officials, and we also institutionalized the Planning Official Development Officer (PODO) position on the board.

All in all, we have some 24 elected positions and 3 appointed positions on the board. Our 27-member board is much larger and more inclusive than the boards of other state chapters of APA (which are often 8-12 members). I look forward to working with the new board, which includes excellent leadership potential from two former presidents, David Kirk and Glenn Coyne, and others.

Recognition of Past Board Members

In electing a new board, we have lost some great members from their voting positions. But I'm confident they will continue their participation and help the Board advance our objectives. When you see these folks, please thank them for the volunteer time they've contributed to GPA.

Gary Cornell, though continuing on the board as past president, deserves our thanks for offering stability and instilling respect in our organization as President during a trying time. Tom Sills has had a long and distinguished tenure serving GPA as VP of professional development. We also thank Professor Larry Keating for his work as professional development officer. York Phillips did an outstanding job while VP programs and managed a successful annual fall conference in Savannah. We broke the 200 attendance mark for the first time in our history of holding annual fall conferences.

Lee Sutton's involvement as District 10 (Savannah) director has been wonderful; credit Lee's boat ride arrangements for lots of fun and the hook that got the APA Board and AICP Commission to choose Jekyll Island as the site of their retreat on the organizational development plan in late January 2003. Pat Chapman has served as our treasurer and PODO for several years. During that time, Pat has almost single-handedly planned and implemented our Community Planning Institute (CPI).

Outgoing board members Mary Huffstetler, Paul Soudi, and Dan Basso have spearheaded important committee work in transportation, urban design, and student services, respectively. Mary has helped take charge of our new GPA transportation committee and integrate its functions into conference programming that will better serve transportation planners. Paul has chaired the urban design committee, held productive committee meetings, and institutionalized an urban design track at conferences. And Dan has helped put us on a path of better serving our student members. These folks will help us continue the momentum of quality committee work.

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Georgia Planning Association
Board of DirectorsGeorgia Planning Association
Board of Directors**Jerry Weitz, AICP**
Presidentc/o Jerry Weitz Associates
1045 Mid Broadwell Road
Alpharetta, Georgia 30004
jerryweitz@aol.com**Gary Cornell, AICP**
Past Presidentgcornell@jig.com
Rob LeBeau, AICP
VP/Programsrlebeau@atlantaregional.com
Alex Ikefuna
VP/Chapter ServicesAlex_ikefuna@ci.savannah.ga.us
Tracy Dunnivant, AICP
Secretary25 Wildflower Circle
Newnan, Georgia 30265
tdunnivant@carrollton-ga.gov
Ellen Heath, AICP
Treasurerc/o EDAA
817 West Peachtree St, Suite 770
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
heath@edaw.com**Larry Vanden Bosch, AICP**
District 1 Directorlvdbsch@nrgdc.org
Kip Padgett
District 2 Directorkpadgett@gainesville.org
David Kirk, AICP
District 3 Directordavid.kirk@troutmansanders.com
Adam Hazell, AICP
District 4 Directorahazell@cityofgriffin.com
Phil Clark
District 5 Directorpclark@mrgdc.org
Lori Sand, AICP
District 6 Directorlsand@csgrdc.org
Patti Cullen
District 7 Directorppcullen@dhrr.state.ga.us
Paul Forgey, AICP
District 8 Directorpforgey@swgrdc.org
Wayne Kilmark, AICP
District 9 Directorwkilmark@warecounty.com
Tom Wilson, AICP
District 10 Directorwilson@thempc.org
Deborah Minness, AICP
AICP Director At-Largedimness@dca.state.ga.us
Eric Linton, AICP
AICP Director At-Largeelinton@co.douglas.ga.us
Diana Wheeler
Non-AICP Dir. At-Largedwheeler@alpharetta.ga.us
Kathy Field
Non-AICP Dir. At-Largekfield@ci.roswell.ga.us
Cheryl Contant
Non-AICP Dir. At-LargeCheryl.contant@arch.gatech.edu
Paul Grether
Student Representativegrether@mindspring.com
Helen Stone
Planning Officialhelen_stone3@hotmail.com
Christi Trombetti, AICP
Planning Officialctrombetti@bellsouth.net
Dan Reuter, AICP
Chair, Legislative Committeedreuter@atlantaregional.com
Glenn Coyne, AICP
Professional Development Officergcoyne@hdrinc.com
David Sutton, AICP
Planning Officials Development Officer

dsutton@sgrdc.com

DCA Receives EPA Award

Please take note that the DCA Georgia Quality Growth Program has won a national award from EPA for community outreach and education. As you may know, GPA participates in the resource teams that I believe were cited as part of the reason for awarding DCA. Very many applicants (112) and few winners (5), so competition was stiff.

Jerry Weitz

Balancing Growth and Quality of Life: National Smart Growth Achievement Award Recipients Announced

Judy Pino, EPA

Finding a balance between growth and development reaps rewards. Five communities were recognized today by the Environmental Protection Agency for their innovative approaches to projects ranging from the revitalization of brownfields to the renewal of urban centers, while still maintaining a sense of community identity and respect for the environment. The five recipients of EPA's National Smart Growth Achievement Awards announced in a ceremony at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., incorporated the principles of smart growth in ways that could be replicated elsewhere.

"Our winners are models for other communities, and their efforts prove that people everywhere care about how and where we grow," said EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt. "How we grow today influences not only how we live, but how future generations live. We must plan for growth in a way that protects our streams and rivers, keeps our air clean, and preserves areas of natural beauty and ecological importance."

Smart growth development practices support national environmental goals by preserving open space and parkland and protecting critical habitat; improving transportation choices to reduce emissions from automobiles; promoting Brownfield redevelopment; and reducing polluted run-off.

Among the five winners: Community Outreach and Education: Georgia Department of Community Affairs for the Georgia Quality Growth Program. The state offers a number of services to communities throughout Georgia including: on-site visits by resource teams, small grants, and a clearinghouse of Georgia examples of smart growth.

For more information about the National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement program and this year's winners visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards.htm>.

Georgia Planning Association

2004 SPRING CONFERENCE

March 18th & 19th, 2004

Macon Crowne Plaza

Macon, GA 31201



The **GPA 2004 Spring Conference** will feature two days of special topic training sessions in the heart of Georgia. The upscale Crowne Plaza hotel is located in historic downtown Macon, minutes from all that Macon has to offer.

Make hotel reservations now. Rooms are \$79/night for single or double occupancy. Call the hotel directly at (478) 746-1461 and mention the Georgia Planning Association Spring Conference. **This rate will be good through the weekend.** Participants are encouraged to bring their families and stay the weekend to enjoy the beauty and events of the annual *Macon Cherry Blossom Festival!*

For more information, contact Rob LeBeau, AICP at rlebeau@atlantaregional.com or Phil Clark at pclark@mrgdc.org

2004 Legislative Preview

*Dan Reuter
Chair, Legislative Committee*

The 2004 Georgia Legislative Session is just around the corner. The October issue of Georgia County Government magazine has the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) legislative platform, which is an excellent overview of upcoming issues. Both ACCG and Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Legislative Policies are available at their websites. Links to ACCG and GMA website can be found at www.glga.org.

2004 should be an exciting year at the Capitol. Planners will probably be concerned with anticipated water related planning legislation, possible growth management related bills and changes to the Service Delivery Strategy Act. During the 2004 session, GPA anticipates an improved communication to GPA planners. We plan to send, at a minimum, bi-monthly GPA Legislative Updates to members through e-mail. We also plan to send GPA Legislative Alerts when an issue is particularly important. The information in these notices will come directly from ACCG and GMA.

As always these notices will not take a position on legislation but rather seek to keep planners informed statewide. This is a good reason to make sure GPA has your current e-mail address! We hope these notices will help you communicate planning related legislative issues effectively with your city or county manager and elected officials.

In advance of 2004, planners may want to have local officials become familiar with House Bill 868. HB 868, which is a carry-over from 2003, is supported by Representatives Westmoreland (86th), Walker (115th), Dodson (84th) and Jamieson (22nd) and involves the issue of proceedings before a special master for inverse condemnation proceedings. The bill would permit a property owner to seek reimbursement of property value for takings by state, local governments, etc. through an expedited process. It is unclear to what degree the law would apply to such regulations as creek buffers, open space requirements in a zoning district, etc.

2004 AICP Exam Information

*Glenn Coyne, AICP
Professional Development Officer*

If you are interested in becoming a certified planner, the 2004 American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Examination information is now available. I would encourage you to visit the American Planning Association (APA) website at

www.planning.org/certification

for detailed information about the 2004 AICP Exam.

There have been several changes to the AICP Exam process:

1. The AICP Exam will be offered twice in 2004, during two testing windows. The first is between May 10 and May 22 and the second is between November 8 and November 20. In the past, the Exam was offered only once each year on the 2nd Saturday in May. Applicants will select one day within the testing window that is most convenient.
2. The AICP Exam is now computer based. Rather than filling in the bubbles with a #2 pencil, applicants will go to a designated testing center, sit in front of a computer terminal and take the exam electronically.
3. The application deadline for the May testing window is January 7, 2004. The application deadline for the November testing window is July 6, 2004. I cannot

emphasize strongly enough that these deadlines are firm and there are no exceptions granted for late applications. You can apply on-line through the APA website or download the forms and return by mail.

In preparing for the AICP Exam:

1. GPA will sponsor our annual one-day AICP Exam preparation workshop. This session will be held at Georgia Tech in Atlanta and is tentatively scheduled for the first week of April, 2004.
2. There is a wealth of review materials available to assist in reviewing for the exam. The APA website has a good list of resources, but contact me if you have questions about these materials.

If you are thinking about taking the 2004 AICP Exam, I would like to hear from you. Please drop me a brief note including your contact information to glenn.coyne@hdrinc.com so that I can begin a roster. This will help us to get the word out about news, deadline reminders or announcements about the 2004 AICP Exam.

Thanks for interest in AICP.

GEORGIA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

2003 AWARDS



Outstanding Planning Document **City of Marietta for Powder Springs Street Master Plan**

The Powder Springs Street corridor is one of the major thoroughfares leading to Marietta's downtown historic

square. The street is lined with disconnected land uses, poor design, high traffic volumes, and an unsafe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Master Plan that deals with these concerns is an innovative document in that was created largely by a diverse group of concerned citizens and stakeholders, and exemplifies excellence in collaborative thought and analysis based on the needs and desires of the community. The new urbanism style developments proposed in the plan are applicable to many cities in Georgia because they focus on the creation of public/private partnerships in the process of redevelopment.

Award Recipients: **Karl Holly, Planning Director and Rusty Roth**



Outstanding Plan Implementation **Fulton County Department of Environment and Community Development for The Chattahoochee Hill Country.... Nature at its Best**

The Chattahoochee Hill Country Community Plan is an outstanding example of public/private partnerships, which focuses on preserving rural character and the environmental, cultural and historic resources of approximately 40,000 acres of undeveloped land in Fulton County. The crux of the plan proposes the creation of compact, mixed use villages that will accommodate the majority of expected development and thus preserving existing agriculture and open space areas. Since the plans adoption, Fulton County has implemented several ordinances and policies that support the Community Plan including: amending the 2015 South Fulton Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan policies, the Countys Zoning Ordinance to incorporate mixed use/live-work village nodes; Overlay District and Design Guidelines to protect natural and historic resources; and a Transfer Development Rights program, which is the first of its kind in the State of Georgia.

Award Recipients: **Steven Cover, Director of Environment and Community Development, and Alice Wakefield, Deputy Director**



Outstanding Student Project **Georgia Tech Fort Valley Brownfield Studio Team for Fort Valley: Making Connections**

Fort Valley, located in Peach County, is like other cities that face situations associated with brownfield sites. Specifically, the spotlight is shining on two Superfund sites connected to one industry that produced agricultural pesticides. When the industry closed in the mid 1990's, it left environmental contamination, unemployment and a demoralized African-American community. The city received an EPA Brownfield Planning Grant, and after a year of Phase I testing at various sites around the city, contacted the Georgia Tech City Planning Program to make sense out of the situation. The nine students participating on the Studio Team approached the problem from two angles: economic development and urban design. Through this approach they not only became familiar with the environmental context of each brownfield site, but also the unique characteristics of Fort Valley. Out of the 4 month long studio came a recognition of the need for the community to connect across racial lines; a vision statement emphasizing history, environmental stewardship and community balance, and 38 projects ranging from the general such as the revision of the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, to the specific such as preservation of an historic building on the campus of Fort Valley State University.

Recipients: **Richard Dagenhart, Associate Professor, and Wendy Cullens (student)**



Outstanding Innovative and Effective Planning Process and Outstanding Media Involvement **Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission for its Visual Preference Survey: A Vision for the Future**

During the past eighteen months, the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission significantly expanded

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WORKING TO BETTER OUR COMMUNIT[ES AND ENVIRONMENT

2003 Awards, *Continued from Page 5*

citizen involvement within its comprehensive planning process through the use of a visual preference survey. Over 1,275 citizens rated over 150 images featuring alternative scenarios for the downtown, city neighborhoods, and suburban/rural fringe in regards to street design, parking, parks and open space, infill and redevelopment opportunities, signage, and transportation options. The Planning and Zoning Commission utilized variety of promotional tools and media outlets throughout the process. This included development of a Shared Visions - Planning Smart Choices logo and theme; a 53 minute video presentation that was locally written and produced and ran six times daily for over a year on the local cable channel; two 30 second public service announcements entitled Make Your Voice Heard and Everybody likes to See Results; a traveling Visual Preference kiosk that visited festivals, meetings and other events throughout the community; promotional ads placed on the sides of public transit buses; and a host of feature stories in the print media.

Award Recipients: Mr. Connie Cater, Chairman and Vernon H. Ryle, III, Executive Director



Outstanding Educational Tool
Atlanta Regional Commission
for its **Community Choices**
Program

The Community Choices Program was developed to provide communities in the

Atlanta region with resources and technical assistance that would enable them to plan and grow smart in ways that best suit their needs and preserve their unique character. The program contains three components: A Quality Growth Toolkit, the Community Planning Academy, and funding for innovative planning and implementation. Each component is designed to educate citizens, local government staff, appointed and elected officials and community leaders, and encourage their involvement in quality growth initiatives.

The toolkit currently contains 18 tools on innovative planning techniques. The Community Planning Academy is a series of training classes to educate citizens who are appointed to planning commissions. The Community Choices program also supports ARCs Livable Centers Initiative which provides planning grants and implementation funding to communities seeking greater livability and mobility for their citizens. Since its inception, \$1 million has been invested in innovative planning throughout the region, and \$27 million in implementation.

Award Recipients: Rob LeBeau, Land Use Division and Kellie McDonough, Senior Local Government Specialist



Outstanding Historic Preservation Project
South Georgia Regional Development Center for Historic Rural Schools Initiative

I believe many will acknowledge that there are many vacant or underutilized historic school buildings located throughout the State. The South Georgia RDC also recognized this and initiated a project to identify and document the regions historic school buildings with the intent of preparing a Multiple Property National Register nomination. The Georgia Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources also recognized the value of this effort and worked with the RDCs Historic Preservation Planner to develop a field survey form and database that will be transferrable and useable by others. A total of 91 historic school buildings have been surveyed throughout the South Georgia region. As a result of this project, South Georgia RDC has also been selected by the Natural Resources Department to prepare a statewide Multiple Property Documentation Form for Georgia historic schools. This Documentation form will simplify the process of nominating individual school buildings to the National Register and will encourage the recognition of Georgia historic schools.

Award Recipient: Andrea MacDonald, Preservation Planner



Outstanding Special Community Initiative
Historic Piedmont Scenic Byway Corporation, Middle Georgia Regional Development Center, and Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center

For Historic Piedmont Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

The Historic Piedmont Scenic Byway is a shining example of cooperation on a local, regional and state level. Involving local governments in Hancock and Putnam Counties, Central Savannah River and Middle Georgia RDCs, two colleges, and 14 civic groups non-profit organizations, the designated Byway is expected to bring economic benefit to a depressed area, protect significant rural cultural and historic resources and enhance the quality of life in the area. Upon receiving official designation, the involved parties immediately prepared a Corridor Management Plan that is being utilized by Georgia DOT to serve as a model for other

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Georgia 2050, *Continued from Page 1*

Correction, growth is good. Consider as an example the 2050 outlook for Italy versus the U.S. With declining birth rates and strict immigration laws, demographers wonder will there be a future workforce and who will support older Italians in the future. For many others reasons population growth is good. Cars and roads are good. Dependence on oil is bad but lets not go there. Developers can be good. Developers are in business to make money just like everyone else. They are also responsible for most of the built environment you see when you walk out the front door of your home. The construction industry is a large portion of the economy of north Georgia. The American dream of home ownership is good for too many reasons to discuss. I know there are many examples of negative aspects to population and economic growth but lets get back to development patterns in Georgia.

The problem is not population growth or cars. The problem is an over reliance on the suburban model for community design and no transportation options. Most residents of Georgia live in a single-family home in a suburban designed area. Many real estate professionals would say by these homeowners have made a choice. The market builds what people want, right? I disagree. Georgia developers, bankers, engineers, surveyors and local government planners (myself included) have been building the suburban model for a very long time. We all understand it, our development regulations allow it and we are good at it. Most citizens accept it. We do it because we are conditioned and we have very few other examples.

The suburban model is overused in Georgia and it is bad. Should suburban designed projects be the model for the vast

majority of all development activity in Georgia? I do not believe it should dominate in 2003 or the future for one non-planner reason. A single development pattern limits the ability to have a choice. If you are a resident in Georgia, you will likely live in an apartment or a suburban home and drive a car to virtually everywhere. If you cannot afford to live close to your job, family or in a good neighborhood, you will need to find a cheaper suburban home further away with longer commutes. If you think it would be fun to meet your kid at school and ride bikes on a safe and pleasant street to get an ice cream - forget about it. Is that the American way? Is that a free market? Many people would say yes. But government funded infrastructure and development regulations influence current development patterns. So is the market really free and do we have a real choice?

What can be done to improve the suburban growth cycle? It has started across the state in cities like Athens, Covington and Decatur. The revolution must start with better community design. Growth in Cartersville, Griffin and Moultrie is great. But we should aggressively seek better community design in Georgia wherever growth pressures occur. All neighborhoods should have safe pedestrian access to parks and schools. All communities should have a mix of housing types, services and jobs. We should not clear cut forests, cut and fill the landscape only to replant a token tree or two. We should use conservation subdivisions and other tools to encourage developers to preserve large amounts of greenspace. There are many other ways. Just remember growth is good. Using a suburban model for all communities is bad.

2003 Awards, *Continued from Page 7*

communities based upon its comprehensive content, the amount of volunteer participation, successful community support, and timeliness of submission. The Corridor Management Plan was completed in January, 2003 and is already being implemented on several fronts including: 1) a \$95,000 grant from a Georgia Recreation Trails Grant to protect and display a 3,000 old effigy, 2) working with local governments to update sign ordinances to conform with Federal byway guidelines, 3) working with Ga. DOT to acquire easements and develop safe turnoffs to featured scenic and historic areas; 4) securing buffer commitments from timber companies; and 4) seeking a National Scenic Byways grant for acquisition and restoration of various sites along SR 16.

Award Recipients: Larry Moore, Chairman, Historic Piedmont Scenic Byway Corporation and Lynda Ramage, Director of Better Hometown, Eatonton



Distinguished Leadership Award for an Elected Official
William Bill Edwards, Vice Chairman, Commission District 7, Fulton County

Although in office for a little over 30 months representing South and Southwest Fulton County, Vice Chairman Edwards has

demonstrated effective leadership in the areas of innovative comprehensive land use planning and implementation. He has taken time to educate himself and the public about land use policy, development standards, and zoning regulations. He has consistently incorporated the Countys Smart Growth plan into his decision-making with respect to land use changes, zoning issues, and community participation in the planning process.

Numerous projects that have been successfully implemented with his leadership include development and approval of the Chattahoochee Hill Country Plan, working to change legislation with regard to the States Transfer of Development Rights requirements, implementation of the States first Transfer of Development Rights program, development of the Countys first Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, development of Community Visioning Projects throughout south Fulton, which will contribute to revisions of the Comprehensive Plan and South Fulton Land Use Plans, and receipt of four Livable Centers Initiative grants for communities in South Fulton County.

His leadership and passion does not end with his constituency; he is also a believer in making certain that the planning staff has the necessary tools and resources to produce great plans.

Award Recipient: William Bill Edwards, Vice Chairman, Fulton County Commission (third from left)

The GPA 2003 Awards Committee

Larry Vanden Bosch, Chair
Alex Ikefuna, VP, Chapter Services
Gary Cornell, AICP, President
Dan Basso, AICP
Wayne Kilmark, AICP
Paul Soudi, AICP



Gary Cornell, AICP, (left) Outgoing President of GPA Honored for his Service. The award was presented by Jerry Weitz, AICP, (right) incoming President

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From the President, *Continued from Page 2*

We thank those members who ran for office this year but who were not elected. Rarely do we let volunteers get away, and we will call on Michelle Wright, Flor Velarde, Eve Brothers, Ken Suddreth, Tim Young, Pamela Thompson, Barbara Garrett, and David Hancock and others to help in future committee efforts.

Relations with APA National

APA is paying attention to us in Georgia. As noted above, in late January 2003 the entire APA board and AICP Commission along with APA staff chose Jekyll Island for a working retreat. I was honored to facilitate that discussion about the organizational development plan, and that experience educated me on many of national's programs and priorities.

APA staff has also been represented at our conferences. Paul Farmer, APA's Executive Director, gave a keynote address at the 2002 annual conference. Almost a year ago, Paul also took note of Habersham County's repeal of their land use code and abolishment of their planning commission (decisions which were quickly reversed) and chided the outgoing county commissioners for those actions in an editorial published in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Jason Jordan, APA's legislative affairs manager in the DC office, has contributed his time at recent conferences. Stuart Meck of APA's research department spoke in Atlanta on regional housing issues this year at an event sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Chapter presidents participate in leadership training conferences of APA. I'm pleased to note I was invited to moderate an APA education summit in September 2003 in Chicago, the day before the fall leadership conference. That task paid my way to Chicago and thus saved chapter travel budget money. While in Chicago, I participated in leadership training and learned about great opportunities and some new challenges, such as complying with recommended minimum performance standards for state chapters. I also learned while in Chicago that we have been awarded a \$1000 grant from the Chapter President's Council to assist in implementing a more aggressive and formal training program for planning commissioners and other officials. This is an initiative described further below.

During the next two years, we will look at ways to capitalize on contacts with national APA staff. For instance, we should explore the opportunities for APA to handle conference registrations and for registrants to pay by credit card. We are also discussing with Jason Jordan prospects for Georgia serving as a pilot for legislative advocacy technical assistance. These additional opportunities are attributed to a reinvention of APA under Paul Farmer's administration and

leadership of recent APA Boards, all of which equate with better services to chapters.

Now, on to some major initiatives.

Membership and Chapter Services

We have approximately 750 members. Through a membership committee headed by Eve Brothers this past year, we have instituted efforts to prepare a membership brochure, hold a membership committee meeting (thanks to sponsorship by the City of Hapeville), and begin a mechanism for following up with "dropped" members to retain their membership. We hope to make concerted efforts to bring planning directors, planning commissioners, students, minorities, and others into our organization. Our objective is to grow our membership to 850 by 2005. With renewed enthusiasm and concerted effort, there's no reason why we cannot meet this objective, as we have met other objectives the board has set.

We continue to provide a quality bi-monthly newsletter. Our website has improved remarkably since the days of our "tripod" site. Work is progressing toward a listserv for members.

Finance and Budget

Our budget outlook is good, with some \$40,000 or more in funds. Our working (non-conference) budget is only about \$20,000 or so each year, and that is barely enough to get our regular newsletter printed and other basic services performed. We have looked to our conferences as a means of raising additional revenue to embark on new initiatives. This past year we considered but elected not to engage in a formal audit of our organization's finances. However, we did establish an audit committee and thanks to David Kirk's leadership the board became more comfortable with our financial accounting practices.

I'll share some quick budget philosophies. Nobody wants to be labeled a deficit spender, and so we will strive to adopt budgets that balance our expenditures with revenues (including a small assumed profit from conferences). Yet, our organization's fiscal health is sound, and this may be an early argument that the Board consider being a little less fiscally conservative in our upcoming budget deliberations if necessary to achieve the objectives established in our work program.

Programs

As noted above, this year we attained our objective of getting 200 or more attendees at an annual conference. The



most we had drawn previously was 175. Through more member participation, we have divided the grueling job of conference planning through a committee structure and functional committees that feed into the conference planning tasks. Three years ago, the spring conference was basically defunct. On March 18 and 19, 2004, in Macon, we will hold our third consecutive spring conference; please join us. Under York Phillips' leadership, we have established more explicit policies for conference programming. We are also planning further ahead. Plan to join us at the Brasstown Valley Resort for the Fall 2004 conference next year. And we are planning now for 2005 conferences.

We admittedly need greater effort to meet objectives for planners' luncheons and viable district events. One idea we are exploring now is to hold two district events, one in Atlanta and one in Columbus (areas we have not had a recent conference presence), which will focus on Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and transportation planning, again in response to identified needs of transportation planners which have not been fulfilled in prior chapter work programs.

Legislative Affairs

Four years ago, we had lofty ambitions of reforming our planning and zoning statutes and dealing with our quirky constitutional situation with regard to zoning and land use. While none of us has abandoned that objective, we are focusing on more attainable objectives and looking at legislative reform as a more long-term goal. We will seek small successes in the short run and strive to build our credibility with city and county membership organizations. We will continue to cultivate relationships with others and hope to achieve some recognition as an authority in the arena of planning and zoning legislation and reforms needed in our

state. This will move us more in the direction of legislative advocacy than ever before.

Training for Planning Officials

Perhaps the most important initiative we will strive to implement in 2004 is an inter-organizational collaborative to deliver portable training for planning officials (planning commissioners, elected officials, and others) in a way that capitalizes on the strengths of all interested organizations. We hope to broker an agreement whereby we work together to meet growing training needs, rather than competing with one another and duplicating offerings. At the time you read this, we will have held another community planning institute and convened organizational stakeholders in an effort to gain agreement on a multi-organizational curriculum development and service delivery agreement. If all goes well, a recognized training program with official credits for attendees will be in place in 2004.

Conclusion

Through our 150+ volunteers initiative and a strong committee system, both begun last year, there are now more members involved in GPA activities than ever before in our history. We are getting things done, and the renewed energy of additional member contributions has elevated the optimism of what we can do. The Board will meet December 12 in Macon and then in executive committee in January 2004 in Atlanta. Contact me or other board members about initiatives and how you can get involved. We look forward to your continued participation. Help us build the credibility, responsiveness, member services, and membership of GPA.

Jerry Weitz



GEORGIA PLANNER

Newsletter of the Georgia Planning Association, A Chapter of the American Planning Association
2161 Peachtree Road, NE Suite 806 Atlanta, Georgia 30309

A P A ... M a k i n g G r e a t C o m m u n i t i e s H a p p e n



Change of Address: The Georgia Chapter does not maintain address lists. All lists are maintained at the national office and are mailed to the local chapters each month. If you have moved, e-mail: addresschange@planning.org, go to Member Login at www.planning.org, or write to:

Membership Department
APA National Headquarters
122 South Michigan, Suite 1600
Chicago, Illinois 60603-6107

Membership Information: If you are interested in joining GPA or the American Planning Association, contact the national headquarters at the address above or call (312) 431-9100.

Contacts: Direct financial inquiries and address payments to the Treasurer. Direct questions about chapter records to the Secretary. Direct matters for the Board of Directors to the President. See mailing and e-mail addresses inside.

Submission: The Georgia Planning Association welcomes articles, letters to the editor, photos of planning events or state happenings, calendar listings, job notices, planners on the move, etc. We are always interested in publishing items you think may be of interest to others throughout the state. Graphics are especially welcome. Articles may be edited for space. Articles printed in any issue of The Georgia Planner are not the expressed opinion of the Chapter.

Deadline: The deadline for the next issue is **January 31, 2004**.
Send Items for the newsletter to:

William F. Ross
ROSS+associates
2161 Peachtree Road, NE Suite 806
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
GPAnews@planross.com

