

## **ALABAMA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

### **CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FY 2010 – FY 2015**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

##### **Purpose of the Chapter Development Plan**

The Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association is an organization comprised of practicing planners, planning commissioners, students, educators, interested citizens, and others throughout the State of Alabama. As a constituent chapter of the American Planning Association (APA), the Alabama Chapter and its members have access to a wide variety of programs and services offered by the national organization. At the Chapter level, members are offered a range of programs, services, and support activities that are relevant to planning issues and concerns facing the State and its residents.

The purpose of the Chapter Development Plan (CDP) is to assess the Chapter's current condition; articulate the Chapter's mission; reaffirm the membership's support of those areas in which the Chapter is performing well; identify specific areas in need of improvement; and provide a realistic long-range work program to guide implementation of activities which will support strong and strengthen weak Chapter program areas and services.

The CDP is intended to be a comprehensive document designed to direct Chapter activities for a six year time period, beginning in Fiscal Year 2002. However, the Chapter Development Plan is neither complete nor inflexible. It serves as a guide to improving the Chapter's overall performance and the level and type of services offered to its members. As with any plan, it is intended to be reviewed annually and revised periodically in order to maintain its currency and relevancy in light of the Chapter's conditions and priorities.

Implementation of the Chapter Development Plan will occur through preparation of annual work programs and budgets, which are to be adopted by the Executive Committee and reported to the Chapter at its annual meeting. These documents should be consistent with the objectives of the CDP and supportive of the Plan's overall goal, which is to enable the Chapter to realize its full potential.

##### **Background and Preparation of the Plan**

The first Chapter Development Plan (CDP) of the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association was adopted by the Chapter's Executive Committee in December of 1991. Since that time various Administrations have updated the Plan and adopted new goals for the future of the Chapter.

This update to the Chapter Development Plan results from a review of the Plan during the

Chapter Leadership Retreat at Five Rivers State Park in Spanish Fort, Alabama in September 2010 and reviews by the Executive Committee during regular meetings in November and December 2010. A group of chapter leaders, using the 02-07 Plan as a basis, assessed the Chapter's progress in meeting its vision and established an updated course for the Chapter to follow in coming six years.

## **II. STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Chapter Mission**

The purpose of the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association is *to help residents of the State improve the quality of their lives through a rational and comprehensive approach to physical, economic, and human resource planning*. This mission is accomplished by:

*Promoting planning approaches in response to developmental and social opportunities and challenges facing the State;*

*Increasing awareness of the planning process, the planning profession and the benefits that both can bring to the State of Alabama;*

*Supporting planning education and fostering the growth of professional planners' knowledge and skills;*

*Encouraging the exchange of planning information and experience in Alabama; and*

*Working with other organizations in the State and Regions to foster common goals.*

### **Chapter Assessment**

This component of the CDP critically examines the Chapter. In terms of the prevailing professional context, what opportunities/threats and strengths/weaknesses face the Alabama Chapter? What follows is an assessment of those factors which influence the Chapter's mission.

#### ***Opportunities***

1. Environmental issues: recycling, solid waste, watershed management, and air quality (particularly the Clean Air Act of 1990).
2. Coalitions with other groups: American Institute Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects, Alabama Bar Institute, Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, Alabama City Management Association, Association of County Commissioners of Alabama, Alabama Manufactured Housing Institute, Alabama Historical Commission, Design Alabama, the Your Town Program, Alabama Association of Regional Councils and the Alabama League of Municipalities.

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4. The changing climate for planning throughout the State.
5. Increasing media attention to planning issues confronting communities within the State.
6. Cooperation with chapters in surrounding states such as Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi.
7. Training courses offered by API, LOM and AARC.
8. The current State administrative and legislative climate.
9. National political interest in an “Urban Agenda”.
10. The planning requirements of SAFETY-LU
11. The significant numbers of planning officials currently on the Chapter roll.
12. The current State administrative and legislative climate.

#### *Threats*

1. The current State administrative and legislative climate
2. The low level of planning awareness in the State.
3. Low salary levels as compared to neighboring states.

#### *Strengths*

1. Continuity in leadership.
2. The potential for new members.
3. An impressive track record for continuing education programs, particularly the Alabama Planning Institute (API).
4. Abundant talent of the membership
5. Diverse educational backgrounds and employment of the membership.

6. New blood emerging as Chapter leaders and a visionary core group of Chapter members that continues to remain interested in the organization's activities.
7. A reserve fund to finance special projects and maintain financial security.
8. Continued involvement by a considerable portion of Chapter members who are influential at the local and regional government levels.

### *Weaknesses*

1. A need for building skills in lobbying and the legislative process; the Chapter's legislative program should be strengthened in all areas.
2. Not maximizing academic and student resources – student involvement in Chapter activities.
3. Lack of exchange of practical information and problem-solving experiences across the State.
4. Coordination of newsletter ads and carrying out fund-raisers.
5. Inadequate provision of programs and services to members.
6. Lack of participation by a substantial portion of the membership; general apathy among significant proportion of members.
7. Utilization of existing resources (i.e. Web-site/Newsletter) for exchange between agencies and individuals.
8. Limited participation in Chapter activities by non-professional members.
9. Inadequate use of the media.

## **C. CHAPTER GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

To accomplish the Chapter's intended mission, while building upon past programs and achievements, the following Chapter goals are presented in order of emphasis. Following each goal statement is a set of objectives with strategies to meet each objective. The committee responsibility for implementation, as well as the priority level (first, second, or ongoing) considers the resources, finances, and manpower of the Chapter.

### **Goal I: Improve/Increase Services to Members**

The membership of the Chapter relies upon many of the services currently provided. This goal focuses on maintaining and enhancing existing services to the membership, while improving and increasing services overall and to non-professional members, such as planning officials. Professional development efforts should be continued and expanded.

#### **Objective 1: Improve/Increase Services to Members.**

##### *Strategies:*

- a. Provide on-line newsletter on a quarterly basis.
- b. Solicit the participation of the Student Organization in the newsletter.
- c. Add a focus on the Chapter Sections to the Newsletter.
- d. Solicit newsletter advertisements to defray the cost of publication.
- e. Develop an AICP training course.
- f. Membership Directory: Should be on the Chapter's website along with a procedure to update. Members should be encouraged to update their information through National APA where it would then be filtered down to the Chapter.

#### **Objective 2: Increase networking opportunities for Chapter members.**

##### *Strategies:*

- a. Hold one multi-day State Chapter conference in spring of each year (annual meeting).
- b. Hold a one day professional development seminars – seek opportunities to co-host with other chapters such as Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, etc., professional organizations or AARC

- c. Sections should hold quarterly luncheons in various locations throughout their section to allow a wide range of participation.
- d. Participate in regional conferences with surrounding state chapters, as opportunities arise; periodically host regional APA conferences.

**Objective 3: Create opportunities for the involvement of special interest group in Chapter functions.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Establish and carry out activities of an Information Technology Committee: establish a State-wide network of planners interested in GIS; participate in Chapter conference/seminar/regional luncheon programs; hold independent meetings of committee members; prepare articles for the newsletter; coordinate activities with URISA; serve as a liaison with the national APA *Information Technology Division*.
- b. Re-establish the Alabama Transportation Planners Association as the Alabama Transportation Planners Committee and carry out an active program of activities: provide Chapter membership to non-APA members, establish a State-wide network of Transportation Planners from MPO's, AHD, FTA, and FHWA; participate in Chapter conference/seminar/regional luncheon programs; hold independent meetings of committee members; prepare articles for the newsletter; coordinate activities with the Alabama Transit Association and other sister organizations; serve as a liaison with the national APA Transportation Planning Division.
- c. Provide opportunities for AICP-CM and ITE Credits at conferences and workshops.
- d. Establish a Historic Preservation and Urban Design Committee and other special interest group committees, according to members' requests.

**Objective 4: AICP Exam Counseling Program.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Provide annual AICP training sessions and a session at the annual conference when feasible.
- b. Distribute Chapter President Council AICP Exam Training Manual.
- c. Create an Alabama Chapter Training Seminar to assist Chapter Members taking AICP Exam.

- d. Participate in joint training sessions with surrounding state chapters at regional conferences.
- e. Recognize new AICP members by personal letters of commendation; announcements at Chapter meetings (possibly during Annual Conference Awards Program); and publication in the newsletter.

**Objective 5: Increase services to student members.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Provide reduced rates for student members at chapter functions.
- b. Activate and support a state-wide Student Organization with units established at each university with a planning-related degree program: Alabama A&M, Auburn University, University of Alabama, University of South Alabama, University of North Alabama, and University of Alabama Birmingham and other State Colleges & Universities.
- c. List Student Representatives Responsibilities in Bylaws.
- d. Have a faculty representative at the university.
- e. Maintain and promote a program for coordinating planning internships within the State. Provide information about Scholarship Intern Program on the website with information about how to apply and qualify for the grant.

**Objective 6: Recruit and orient new chapter members.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Develop and regularly distribute new member orientation and welcome package, including Chapter pin, brochure, membership directory, by-laws, and Chapter Development Plan.
- b. Encourage the participation of new members in Chapter leadership activities.
- c. Initiate an active membership recruitment program targeted at professional planners, citizen planners, and planning students.

**Objective 7: Enhance planning skills of members.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Continue support for the Alabama Planning Institute as a vehicle for training professional planners and planning officials.
- b. Encourage the updating of the training manual for Alabama Planning Officials; distribute at Alabama Planning Institute courses.

**Goal II: Strengthen Chapter Structure and Administration**

Implementation of the Chapter's work program is heavily dependent upon the organizational framework of the Chapter. If the Chapter lacks an institutional memory, each administration would spend considerable time re-inventing the wheel rather than moving forward with improved and expanded services. The CDP recognizes the need to reevaluate the existing framework for service delivery and make necessary changes to effectuate its implementation.

**Objective 1: Maintain current by-laws.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Continue to review and update bylaws as updates to the CDP are adopted.
- b. Post Bylaws on Chapter Website.

**Objective 2: Continue leadership development program.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Conduct executive committee transition workshop.
- b. Prepare Chapter Leadership Manual (including CDP, policies and procedures, chapter organization, membership directory, and APA Officer Orientation booklet) and distribute to committee members.
- c. Prepare Administrative Policies and Procedures to be adopted by the Executive Committee.
- d. Survey chapter membership for leadership talents and interests.



**Objective 3: Maintain Awards Program**

***Strategies:***

- a. Continue streamlined application process.
- b. Announce awards to media throughout the State, feature in newsletter and on web site, and set up displays at annual conference.

**Objective 4: Strengthen budget and finance practices.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Prepare budget and finance policies and procedures to be adopted by the Executive Committee.
- b. Maintain a long-term investment plan for the Chapter reserve.
- c. Maintain up-to-day audits.
- d. Continue revenue-producing measures to support Chapter activities; (i.e. newsletter ads, scholarship sponsors, chapter/conference/seminar sponsors and vendors, etc.

**Goal III. Influence the Climate of Planning and Overall Development within the State of Alabama**

If the Alabama Chapter of APA is to be an effective, respected organization at all levels of government, the Chapter must actively work to educate all citizens of Alabama about planning and the role that it can play in creating a better life for all of the residents of the State. This goal will be accomplished by acting to increase the public's understanding of planning and strengthening the Chapter's effectiveness in interacting with the State legislative process.

**Objective I: Develop an active legislative program.**

***Strategies:***

- a. Work to energize the Legislative Committee and support the activities that they deem important for the Chapter.

- b. Monitor and respond to legislative issues and threats, and alert members.
- c. Prepare position papers, with research assistance from universities, on planning issues.
- d. Explore the mechanism to lobby for legislation, possibly share with a related interest organization.
- e. Expand involvement in national APA legislative activities.

**Objective 2: Enhance public awareness of the planning profession and planning issues.**

*Strategies:*

- a. Disseminate position papers to the general public and target groups.
- b. Update and distribute a Chapter brochure.
- c. Broaden the distribution of the Chapter newsletter to legislators and sister organizations.
- d. Prepare news releases and letters to the editor for the Chapter President.
- e. Promote “Planners Day in School” program.
- f. Update the Chapter’s planning video.
- g. Promote World Town Planning Day.
- h. Support the “Your Town” program.
- i. Include social media in the Chapter website.