



American Planning Association  
**Alabama Chapter**  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

## **ALABAMA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

### **5-YEAR CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2028 & ANNUAL WORK PROGRAM**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION & ADOPTION**

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

The purpose of the Chapter Development Plan (CDP) is to:

- Serve as a guide for the Chapter to carry out its 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 vision to guide the implementation of activities which will support and strengthen Chapter program areas and service.

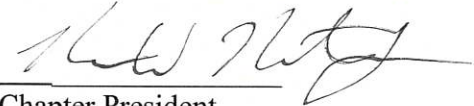
The Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association is an organization comprised of practicing planners, planning commissioners, students, educators, interested citizens, and others throughout the State of Alabama. As a constituent chapter of the American Planning Association (APA), the Alabama 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 CDP is intended to be a comprehensive document designed to direct Chapter activities for a five year time period, beginning in 2023. However, the CDP is designed to be a fluid document. 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 to maintain its currency and relevancy considering the Chapter's conditions and priorities.

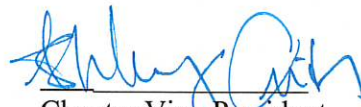
Implementation of the CDP will occur through preparation of bi-annual work programs and annual budgets, which are to be adopted by the Executive Committee and reported to the Chapter at its annual meeting. These documents should be consistent with the objectives of the CDP and support of the Plan's overall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

This CDP is also meant to satisfy the requirement of each Chapter's responsibility to produce and adopt the same through the APA's Chapter Presidents Council's mandatory requirements of the Chapter Performance Criteria, adopted in May 2017.

**ADOPTED AND APPROVED** this the 16<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2024

By:   
Chapter President

AND

  
Chapter Vice-President

## **II. STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Chapter Mission**

The mission of the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association is to help make great communities happen across our state by advocating excellence in planning, providing tools and resources to further the professional development of its members, and fostering leadership in and recognition of sound planning practices.

### **Chapter Assessment**

This component of the CDP critically examines the Alabama Chapter – APA in terms of the prevailing professional context. Below are the opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses that perceptually face the Chapter.

#### *Opportunities*

1. Building coalitions with other groups in support of the mission of ALAPA.
2. Promoting better strategic planning and addressing policy issues throughout the State.
3. Cultivating relationships regarding planning issues in our communities within the State.
4. Cooperation with other APA Chapters in surrounding states.
5. Training courses offered by American Planning Association (APA) through their online portal, the Alabama Planning Institute (API), the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALOM), Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) and other certified training entities.
6. Development of training and continuing education opportunities at the university level.
7. Communicate with State administrators and legislators about current federal planning issues.
8. The significant numbers of planning officials currently on the Chapter roll.
9. The potential for new members.
10. Abundant, diverse and untapped talent of the membership.
11. Opportunities for improving exchange of practical information and problem-solving experiences across the State.
12. Expansion of programs and services to members.

### *Threats*

1. The low value State and local officials and citizens place on planning.
2. The low level of planning awareness in the State.
3. The current political climate.
4. Present state of continuing education programs, especially for Planning Commissions, Boards of Zoning Adjustments, and communities without professional planners.
5. Increased costs associated with hosting conferences and workshops.
6. Increased costs associated with obtaining and maintaining available credentials.

### *Strengths*

1. Continuity in Leadership.
2. Emerging Chapter leaders and committed Chapter members that continue to remain interested in the organization's activities.
3. The number of planning officials currently on the Chapter roll.
4. Sound fiscal policies.

### *Weaknesses*

1. Lack of involvement in the legislative process, ALOM, Association of County Commissions, AARC, Real Estate Commission and Alabama Real Estate Exchange.
2. Lack of coordination and cooperation with the API to expand professional development opportunities.
3. Lack of student involvement in Chapter activities.
4. Low participation in regional activities.
5. Lack of utilization of existing resources (i.e. Website/Newsletter) for exchange between agencies and individuals
6. Limited resources to work with.

## **III. CHAPTER GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAM**

To accomplish the Chapter's intended mission, while building upon past programs and achievements, the following Chapter goals are presented. Following each goal statement is a set of objectives with a Work Program for meeting each objective.

Progress on implementation of the plan/work program is signified by the following:

Efforts completed or ongoing prior to the current year – **YELLOW**

Efforts planned for completion or additional work in the coming year - **GREEN**

**Goal I: Ensure Chapter Compliance with the APA-CPC's Adopted Chapter Performance Criteria**

**Objective 1: Meet All of the Mandatory Requirements of the Performance Criteria.**

***Annual Work Program:***

a. Adopt this Chapter Plan and Work Program that identifies specific quantifiable goals and actions for the coming year(s) the Chapter knows it is capable of accomplishing within the available resources.

b. Maintain and operate under a current set of bylaws.

The Chapter will review its bylaws no less than once every five years and update as needed.

c. Adopt an annual budget designed to implement the Chapter Work Program.

d. Prepare and disseminate to the membership a financial report for the previous fiscal year within 3 months of the fiscal year close. The report shall include the identification of all sources of income as well as expenditures.

e. Prepare and file appropriate federal and state tax returns within the timeframe established by the tax authority for an on-time return.

f. Use the full name of the chapter as "a Chapter of the American Planning Association" with the uniform logotype of the Association on all Chapter websites, publications, contracts and communications.

g. Participate in the APA consolidated and coordinated election cycle

h. Prepare an annual report to chapter members that summarizes the Chapter's activities in relation to the adopted Plan and Work Program.

**Objective 2: Maintain and Improve the Four Elective Criteria the Chapter is Presently Engaged in to Ensure Compliance with the Minimum Elective Requirements of the Performance Criteria.**

***Annual Work Program:***

a. Continue to provide an annual conference for members to enhance their education and professional development.

- b. Continue to hold annual business meetings at the conclusion of the annual conference.
- c. Continue to send the chapter president or proxy to at least one of the two leadership meetings held in any given calendar year.
- d. Continue to support the awards program at the annual conference to recognize professional planning projects undertaken and completed within the State.

**Objective 3: Select At Least One (1) Additional Elective Item from the Performance Criteria to Add to the Chapter's Program.**

*Annual Work Program:* At least one additional elective to be determined by the Executive Committee. This additional elective may be covered in the remaining sections of this development plan. The additional elective shall be selected from the following options presented by the CPC:

- Membership Recruitment and Retention: The most valuable asset of every Chapter is its members. Each Chapter should have an elected or appointed position and committee whose sole charge is attracting new members and retaining existing members. Additionally, a Chapter should develop a membership recruitment and retention plan which addresses diversity, students, faculty, emerging professionals, legacy planners, mentor programs and how each membership group is engaged by the Chapter.
- Planning Board Outreach: Chapters should provide support for planning board members in developing an understanding of the principles and practices of planning and opportunities to network with both planners and other planning board members. Creation of a Planning Board Development Officer position, offering special tracks for Planning Board members at Conferences and other similar actions are recommended.

Note: Formalizing a partnership with the API would cover this elective. API currently has a well established program for training members of Planning Commissions, Zoning Adjustment Boards, and elected officials, providing them with certification as planning and zoning officials (CAPZO). Such a partnership would open opportunities for modernizing CAPZO materials as well as offering continuing education and professional development opportunities for planning practitioners.

- National Community Planning Month: Each Chapter should use the opportunity and resources provided by National Community Planning Month to engage communities and citizens in a dialog about the value of planning to civic discourse and developing a shared vision for the future of communities. Obtaining state and local proclamations, providing specific programs and writing articles highlighting planning's value to citizens for news media outlets are all examples of successful efforts.

- Local Great Places Program: Some Chapters have found that instituting a statewide or localized Great Places program is very beneficial for promoting planning and what planners can accomplish. Great Places programs can be easily combined with advocacy outreach efforts as elected officials rarely object to being part of positive recognition events.
- Outreach to Youth, Students and New Professionals: Chapters should work closely with College and University Planning Programs in their area, but should also look for ways to engage K-12 youth about the value of citizen engagement and community planning. Finally, Chapters should make specific efforts to bring new planning professionals into the Chapter through mentoring, programming and representation. Mentor-match programs are a best practice which many Chapters have found to be effective and are a way to involve AICP Fellows.

Note: Developing a community assistance planning network program would cover this elective.

Note: Chapter Newsletter was revived in 2020, fulfilling 1 of 2 additional elective items the Chapter aimed to achieve in the last version of the plan.

## **Goal II: 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.

### **Objective 1: Increase Opportunities for Professional Development and Certification.**

#### ***Annual Work Program:***

- a. Formalize a cooperative relationship with the Alabama Planning Institute (API)
  - Both the ALAPA and the API have as their primary mission to provide city planning and zoning education and professional development services to Alabamians, whether they are in the planning and zoning profession or serving in an elected or appointed capacity. Coordinate programming and resources to ensure both organizations are working together to provide the best possible quality of education and professional development services to those involved in the planning and zoning process.
  - Develop a professional certification for planning practitioners in the State of Alabama that signifies a high degree of expertise in the field of planning and zoning as it relates to the State's enabling legislation, case law, and as a matter of general practice.
  - Modernize and improve CAPZO training resources for elected and appointed officials.
- b. AICP Exam Training:
  - Provide annual AICP training sessions and a session at the annual conference when feasible.
  - Distribute Chapter President Council AICP Exam Training Materials.

- c. Recognize new AICP and FAICP members by personal letters of commendation; announcements at Chapter meetings (possibly during Annual Conference Awards Program); and publication in the newsletter/website.
- d. Periodically hold a One Day Professional Development Workshop to assist members with obtaining CM Credits for AICP maintenance.

**Objective 2: Improve/Increase Communications.**

*Annual Work Program:*

- a. Solicit the participation of students in all aspects of chapter networking.
- b. Improve networking opportunities and distribution of information through the website and social media.

**Objective 3: Increase networking opportunities for Chapter members.**

*Annual Work Program:*

- a. Hold one multi-day Chapter conference each year (annual meeting)
- b. Hold an annual Leadership Workshop.
- c. Have sections sponsor periodic activities 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.

**Objective 4: Create opportunities for the involvement of peer organizations in Chapter functions.**

*Annual Work Program:*

- a. Continue to involve allied professionals in Chapter activities. (i.e. ATPA, ASLA, AARC, etc.)
- b. Provide opportunities for American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) – certification maintenance, Certified Alabama Planning and Zoning Official (CAPZO) certification maintenance, American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) certification maintenance, and Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) credits at conferences and workshops.

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

***Annual Work Program:***

- a. Continue to provide reduced rates for student members at chapter functions.
- b. Support student organizations at each university with a planning-related degree program.
- c. Incorporate student representatives' responsibilities in the Procedures Manual.
- d. Establish lines of communication between ALAPA and a faculty contact at each university.
- e. Offer opportunities for students to showcase their work to the ALAPA's membership.
- f. Establish, maintain, and promote a program for coordinating planning activities for underserved jurisdictions which could include students as part of the assistance team.

**Objective 6: Recruit new Chapter members.**

***Annual Work Program:***

- a. Put in place a system to identify new members & have them welcomed to the Chapter.
- b. Develop and regularly distribute new member orientation and welcome packages.
- c. Encourage the participation of new members in Chapter leadership activities.
- d. Initiate an active membership recruitment program targeted at professional planners, citizen planners, and planning students.

**Goal III: 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.

**Objective 1: Bylaws Maintenance**

***Annual Work Program:***

- a. Review and update Bylaws on a regular basis.

**Objective 2: Establish Leadership Development Program**

***Annual Work Program:***

- a. Prepare Policies and Procedures Manual to be adopted by the Executive Committee.
- b. Establish executive committee transition policy.
- c. Prepare Chapter Leadership Manual to include appropriate materials. (i.e. Chapter Development Plan, Chapter Work Program, Bylaws, Procedures Manual, etc.)
- d. Survey chapter membership for leadership talents and interests.

**Objective 3: Maintain Awards Program.**

***Annual Work Program:***

- 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.**

***Annual Work Program:***

- 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-date audits.
- d. Remain current on Federal tax reporting.
- e. Develop a job description for the Chapter Treasurer's position within the Policies and Procedures Manual.

**Goal IV. 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 the citizens 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 1: Develop an active legislative program.**

*Annual Work Program:*

- 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 on planning issues.
- d. Establish relationships with like-minded organizations to support common legislative objectives.
- e. Continue to be involved in National APA legislative activities.

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

*Annual Work Program:*

- a. Update and distribute the Chapter Newsletter at least twice a year.
- b. Revive and broaden the distribution of the Chapter newsletter to legislators and sister organizations.
- c. Support the "Your Town" program.
- d. Include social media in the Chapter website.