

Section 6

Allies and Partnerships

“Professional planners need citizens with fire in the belly, who want good planning because the consequences of bad planning and political mismanagement of the development front are too costly.”¹

– Robert Manley, Adjunct Professor of Planning, University of Cincinnati

Relationships with community influentials—whether elected officials, business leaders, developers, neighborhood organizations, municipal employees, engaged citizens, or other stakeholders—are pivotal to successful planning. These groups are the critical constituents in dynamic and ever-changing networks that can help or hinder depending on how they are cultivated, nurtured, supported, and utilized.

Planners are naturally positioned to work with such individuals and organizations—in many different ways. Partnerships vary as widely as the circumstances and communities involved. They may be mandated or voluntary, local or regional, formal or informal.

However organized, successful partnerships don’t happen by themselves. They grow out of trust, cooperation, and initiative. According to University of North Carolina professor Raymond Burby, FAICP, the challenge in bringing other people and groups together to achieve a common purpose is “to use information, persuasion, and other means to bring about a mutual understanding, minimize or resolve potential disputes, and achieve consensus on a course of action.”²

As with any ally development effort, forging successful partnerships involves identifying interested and affected stakeholders and determining what values they have in common. Good communication is needed to keep network members informed and connected as well as to address concerns of persons or groups with opposing views or differing agendas.



Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association

Florida Chapter of APA members Marcie Stenmark (left) and Melissa Zornitta, AICP, (right), with Florida Senate President Tom Lee (center). The chapter worked with state legislators to secure Senate Bill 360, a significant growth management and infrastructure funding bill signed by Governor Jeb Bush in 2005.

As you think about building a network of supporters and allies, your first step should be considering exactly what you want to accomplish. Is the goal to update a comprehensive plan, provide affordable housing, revitalize an aging downtown or inner-ring suburb, or protect prime farmland from being lost to suburban and exurban development? Identifying your allies depends, in part, on what you are trying to achieve.

6.1 Receptive audiences

Speaking to civic and service organizations, such as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and League of Women Voters, is a good place to start building a network of supporters and allies. Many of these groups meet regularly, and local newspapers often cover their guest speakers. Civic associations are self-selected groups of people with genuine interest in the value and well-being of the places where they live and work. As such, they also can be important allies when the need arises.

6.2 Engaging all stakeholders

Once you have identified potential partners, the next step is getting them meaningfully involved in the planning process.

6.2.1

Rochester, New York, mayor encourages all residents to be citizen planners



City of Rochester

Residents participating in a planning workshop in connection with Rochester, New York's citizens planning institute.

Rochester, New York, Mayor William Johnson Jr. wanted every resident to be involved with planning the city's future, so he formed the Neighbors Building Neighborhoods Institute to create "a body of citizens so steeped in the planning process that they become stewards of their neighborhoods."³

The institute launched an aggressive outreach and citizen training program in 1994 that included free technical and leadership training so citizens could do "very sophisticated planning." Accomplishments to date include integration of 10 neighborhood sector plans into the city's new comprehensive plan, formation of land trusts to create parks and rehabilitate vacant buildings, and formation of several community development corporations.⁴

Planners in Kansas City, Missouri, took a series of incremental steps to help them develop closer cooperation with citizens involved with the Forging Our Comprehensive Urban Strategy (FOCUS Kansas City) planning effort:

6.2.2

Small steps used to build cooperation in Kansas City, Missouri

Groups with similar interests were first brought together to begin discussing developing an implementation plan for the comprehensive urban strategy. Later, after the dialogue had gained momentum, teams with differing interests were brought together. At subsequent meetings, involving 300 people divided into seven teams, participants were required to produce a product—

chart, table, or document—to keep their attention focused on a common task. This exercise helped keep enthusiasm high while minimizing opportunities for disagreement. Each phase of FOCUS Kansas City laid the foundation for the next, so planners could achieve successively more difficult goals.

FOCUS, which received a 1999 APA National Planning Award, used several channels for outreach: leaders began by soliciting organizations' input via mail, then reached out through public-access television and talk radio, and ultimately distributed 350,000 newspaper inserts to keep citizens throughout the city informed and interested in participating. After the plan was adopted in 1997 and attention turned to implementation, the city's communications office was expanded to ensure a better exchange of information and opinions between city hall and residents.⁵



Kansas City Planning and Development Department

One of the citizen involvement meetings held during the FOCUS Kansas City planning effort.

It's helpful to have as many parties as possible, including final decision-makers, involved, as appropriate, at each step of the way. For instance, planners in Arlington, Texas, working with the local chamber of commerce, created the Futures Committee to involve people with all kinds of backgrounds and attitudes in charting a course for the city's future. The group included neighborhood representatives, faith-based groups, economic development and business groups, ethnic and advocacy organizations, educators, social service workers, arts and culture groups, government organizations, and community-based groups.⁶

Partnerships may start with a limited set of objectives that later evolve into more ambitious goals. On-going communications and regular meetings led the jurisdictions belonging to the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Commission in 2003 to sign an agreement, of their own accord, requiring local land-use practices to comply with the area's regional plan—even though the commission's original charge did not require anything more than monthly meetings and retention of an advisory staff for technical issues.⁷

6.3 Keeping parties engaged

In order for a plan to move forward, especially if it involves contentious issues, participants must feel it is worthwhile to participate. When parties have a zero-sum mindset and think someone else's gain will cause them a loss, discussing mutual benefits is virtually impossible. Before you attempt to reframe an issue and explore areas of mutual benefit, it is important to listen to and understand the reasons for opposing points of view so that you can build trust and begin to establish dialogue. This is what planners working on an endangered species conservation plan for San Diego did:

6.2.3

All issues put on the table in Arlington, Texas

6.2.4

Regular communication helps southern Nevada communities recognize regional issues

6.3.1

Planners address developer doubts when crafting conservation plan for San Diego, California

When a major overhaul of the San Diego, California, waste water system in the 1980's was required to meet federal standards established in the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency conducted an impact study that found that more than 90 candidate, proposed, or listed state or federal endangered species in the 900-square-mile sewer district could be adversely affected.⁸ San Diego officials were given a choice either to develop a district-wide conservation habitat plan, or have much of the area's future development challenged, depending on where it was proposed and what threatened or endangered species could be adversely affected.



San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program

One of the areas of wildlife habitat in San Diego County, California, protected as a result of planning efforts there.

Given the consequences and delays the latter approach would entail, the city, county, and other jurisdictions initiated a Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP).⁹ Developing the conservation program involved monthly meetings that continued for nearly six years, author Gene Bunnell, AICP, notes. At these meetings, attendees addressed concerns such as fear that eminent domain would be used to acquire sensitive lands for species habitat protection and restrict overall development. Ultimately, the plan specified that only land from willing sellers

would be set aside for conservation purposes. Other provisions gave developers assurances on where building could occur without federal interference.

Since the plan, guidelines, and implementation measures were adopted in 1997, the program has been implemented largely as originally envisioned. During the past eight years, only nine percent of development has occurred inside the habitat planning area,¹⁰ which eventually will encompass 172,000 acres or 30 percent of the sewer district.

6.4 Strategic alliances

6.4.1

Inner-ring suburbs in Ohio join together to solve joint problems

Community revitalization and economic development plans prompt many strategic partnerships—and can actually help neighboring jurisdictions turn rivalries into alliances. In Cleveland, Ohio, decreasing populations and declining property values led seven older suburbs surrounding the city to form the First Suburbs Consortium in 1996. Planners from the Cuyahoga County Department of Development and Planning worked with economic development and elected officials to establish the group. Today 16 cities and towns belong to the consortium, which also has served as a model for similar efforts in Toledo, Ohio, and elsewhere.¹¹ (For additional information, visit <http://www.marc.org/firstsuburbs/members.htm> and <http://www.firstsuburbs.org>.)

6.4.2

Small Pennsylvania communities cooperate to secure federal funds

Cooperation also helped a group of cities along the Ohio River in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, gain more than they had previously accomplished separately. Before entering the partnership, the towns competed against each other for federal Community Development Block Grants, which limited the chances of their receiving

funding and led to disjointed design and materials in adjoining communities. To get around these problems, everyone had “to agree to wait,” says New Brighton Town Manager Larry Morely. “That [was] the whole key.” In 2001, the Rivertown Partnership’s communities agreed to do just that; they now apply jointly for one block grant at a time.¹²

To advance housing choice and increase home affordability, several communities in eastern King County, Washington, formed A Regional Coalition for Housing (recipient of the 1999 APA-HUD Secretary’s Opportunity and Empowerment Award). The idea for this partnership, formed in 1992, originated in a citizen task force.¹³ Other examples of strategic partnerships and alliances that planners have undertaken are revitalization efforts along South Broad Street-Avenue of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (recipient of APA’s 2005 Outstanding Planning Award for Implementation) and in a 15-block neighborhood bordering Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut (recipient of APA’s 2000 Outstanding Planning Award for a Special Community Initiative).

6.4.3

Examples of partnerships addressing affordable housing, urban revitalization

Keeping Washington Growth Control On Course

With the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA) under increasing attack, in early 2002 the Washington Chapter of APA (WAAPA) began, in the words of then chapter president Lisa Verner, AICP, “speaking up for what’s right about GMA, as well as what needs close reexamination.”¹⁴

The chapter not only began speaking out, but it developed strategies and partnerships to ensure that elected officials heard the chapter’s concerns and amendments strengthening the act were adopted. In recognition of their efforts, the group also received an American Planning Association 2005 Karen B. Smith Chapter Award for Outstanding Outreach to the Community.

Providing the basis for the chapter’s message points and subsequent legislative priorities was an on-line survey that asked chapter members to identify examples of GMA successes as well as areas needing improvement. The findings, reviewed by a blue-ribbon panel, were published as the report, “Livable Washington, APA’s Action Agenda for Growth Management” (<http://www.washington-apa.org/pdf/LivableWashington.pdf>). Released in November 2002, the 12-page study was sent to the governor, all state legislators, local officials, and selected media outlets as well as chapter members.



6.4.4

Chapter uses survey of members as basis for special report on state growth act

Chapter members were encouraged to use the report’s findings to educate local leaders and area residents about growth management in the state. At the same time, chapter leaders met with elected and appointed state officials and made presentations to various groups, including the Growth Management Policy Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council. The pre-

sentations, in turn, helped the chapter build credibility with other organizations also concerned about attacks on the state's growth act.

Following a meeting with officials from the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to discuss strategies to address the chapter's new agenda, WAAPA and the department agreed to host representatives from organizations with a stake in the Growth Management Act. The goal, according to Verner, was to determine if a coalition of groups from various perspectives could work together and reach a consensus on various proposals.

Roughly a dozen groups—including the Washington Farm Bureau, League of Women Voters, Washington Association of Realtors, and the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties—originally embraced the idea. (The working group has since expanded to include representatives of the Association of General Contractors. The Association of Washington Business and the Building Industry Association of Washington have been invited to join, but have not yet accepted.) A facilitator was hired and a meeting was held where group representatives realized a better understanding of the issues was needed before taking further steps. Following educational presentations by a subgroup, a name was selected and the Growth Management Act Working Group was off and running.

In 2003 the working group adopted policy statements concerning Growth Management hearing boards, funding, and timelines for required updates (<http://www.washington-apa.org/pdf/GMA%20PolicyStatement2004.pdf>). The group also identified several areas of the act needing further attention.

"In the past, policy statements would have been developed and WAAPA would have responded once they were issued," notes past chapter president Michael Kattermann, AICP. "This time, we were at the table and affected the outcome of that effort."¹⁵

Four planner-supported amendments were approved in 2004 including measures addressing industrial land banks and concentrated rural development. Also adopted was a gubernatorial directive to the Growth Management hearing boards to review administrative rules and make appropriate changes.

6.4.5

Like-minded organizations join the Washington APA chapter in coalition to address growth issues

6.4.6

Efforts lead to favorable amendments to growth act being approved

6.5.1

Partnerships and cooperation get Chattanooga, Tennessee, revitalization started

6.5 Public-private planning partnerships

Activating a network of allies and supporters to generate excitement, interest, and support for planning is critical for another reason: attracting investor and institutional backing for planning and plan implementation. "Private investment follows public leadership," says nationally known planning consultant John Fregonese. "If developers know the city has a vision, they will be more willing to invest."¹⁶

This was the path planners in Chattanooga, Tennessee, followed in the early 1980s when they began a series of steps that led to Tennessee Riverpark: Chattanooga, the city's 1985 Riverpark master plan and recipient of a 1998 APA National Planning Award for Implementation. The city and Hamilton County enlisted the Lyndhurst

Foundation to underwrite the cost of the \$300,000 master plan. Stakeholders also formed a private, nonprofit entity, Chattanooga Venture, that was led by a 60-member board of directors appointed by the mayor.¹⁷

“The only charge the mayor gave the Chattanooga Venture board was to look beyond their own agendas, and [to] come up with ideas and recommendations that were in the best interests of the community as a whole,” says Ron Littlefield, AICP, who was Venture’s first executive director and went on to be elected mayor of Chattanooga in 2005.¹⁸



Chattanooga Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

Aerial view of Chattanooga, Tennessee’s riverfront park, the result of a long-term planning and implementation program.

Chattanooga Venture’s first task was Vision 2000, a six-month, high profile visioning exercise that involved some 1,700 people and resulted in 40 goal statements and specific activities, projects, and initiatives.¹⁹ It, in turn, set the stage for the Riverpark master plan’s \$750 million, 20-year implementation phase. A nonprofit public-private development corporation, the RiverCity Company, was formed in 1985 to guide implementation. Its board of directors included the mayor, county executive, and chair of the city commission. Seven local financial institutions and eight local foundations provided funding for the company’s initial capitalization.²⁰

Aligning city, business, development, financial, and citizen interests was central to a planning initiative’s success in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1994 former Mayor Norm Coleman created the private St. Paul Riverfront Corporation to help planners implement what would eventually become the largest revitalization effort in the city’s history. From the beginning, the Riverfront Corporation sought to create interest and support for revitalizing sections of downtown that fronted the Mississippi River. Family walks, riverboat shows, annual dinners, and other community events were organized and publicized. There also were strategic reasons for holding the events: the aim was to inspire confidence among a skeptical public that plans for revitalizing brownfields along the riverfront, including an area known as Upper Landing, actually would be implemented.²¹

At the same time the mayor established the Riverfront Corporation, international city planner Ken Greenberg from Toronto, Canada, was hired to develop a general framework plan to guide redevelopment efforts in a four-square-mile area of the city, much of which fronted the river.²²



St. Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau

The other important development that led the way for implementing Greenberg’s plan occurred in May 1998 when several

Downtown St. Paul, Minnesota, where planners have guided a 10-year revitalization effort along a portion of the Mississippi River.

6.5.2

Political and foundation support critical to implementing St. Paul, Minnesota, mixed-use plan

major foundations (McKnight, F.R. Bigelow, 3M, Hugh J. Andersen, Dayton Hudson, Mardag, Katherine B. Andersen, Wilder, and St. Paul) met with Mayor Coleman to create a new nonprofit organization that would replace the St. Paul Riverfront Corporation. The change was made to help ensure that the downtown revitalization effort would continue, even with a change in city administration.²³ The planning payoff for these efforts arrived in April 2001 when groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the first housing units in the \$160 million, mixed-use Upper Landing urban village.²⁴

6.5.3
Lewis and Clark
bicentennial
prompts Missouri
River town to find
partners for
new park

Public-private partnerships and collaboration also were central to creating a new park in Atchison, Kansas, a town of 10,000 on the Missouri River that received APA's 2005 National Planning Award for a Special Community Initiative. The city had been selected to host a nationally recognized event commemorating the bicentennial anniversary of the Lewis and Clark 1804 expedition. A downtown master plan, completed in 2000, recommended that a \$4.5 million riverfront park be located along the city's eastern boundary. There was no time to waste if the park was to be completed in time for the July 4, 2004, Lewis and Clark celebration.

The Atchison Riverfront Development Council, organized in 2001, retained a private planning firm, HNTB, to develop the park plan. The council also brought together city officials, civic and local business leaders, state and federal legislators, private foundations, and citizens to fund and implement the plan. The park was finished in time for the commemorative event, which attracted 100,000 visitors.²⁵



City of Atchison

The Lewis and Clark Pavilion, one of the amenities found in a new \$4.5 million riverfront park in Atchison, Kansas.

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