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*This newsletter is
published elec-
tronically by the
STaR Division.*

Feature Article

Cullman, Alabama's All-Electronic Comprehensive Plan

By James Fisher, Cullman City Planner



CULLMAN, ALABAMA IS BUILDING A VIBRANT FUTURE...

Fig. 1. Newly refurbished L&N Railroad Station and RR Museum

Imagine a small community of 17,000 having a totally-electronic comprehensive plan. The web-based plan was developed for Cullman, Alabama by Red Sage Communications, Inc. and can be found at www.Cullmantomorrow.org. The plan includes the Downtown Cullman Redevelopment and Streetscape Plan, a proposed brownfield redevelopment (called The Greif Brothers Property) to be redeveloped into a 105,000 sq. ft. Performing and Cultural arts Center (see Figure 3 on Page 7), the redevelopment of an area called the 4th Street and West Main German Village lifestyle Center, and construction of a 50-foot-tall four-faced Clock Tower and Band Shell within the downtown Depot Park (see Figure 2 on Page 6).

The plan also features a first class recreation complex including with two sports arenas; one within a large multi-use sports center having baseball, softball, and soccer fields (Heritage Park) and one with a fully handicap accessible ball field (Field of Miracles); a \$14 million Aquatic and Fitness Center (go to www.Cullmanrecreation.org); newly-designated bike and jogging trails around town; and a \$900,000 timber-framed Farmer's Market (the largest timber-framed structure in the Southeast; a central park system developed by the County (Sportsman's Lake, a 35-acre recreation lake with a jogging trail, narrow-gage railroad, camping, wildflower trail, covered picnic shelters, a merry-go-round, and fishing piers); a natural area with hiking and mountain biking trails, as well as, a North Alabama Birding Trail site called Hurricane Creek Nature Preserve; and two major Hospitals, two large fishable water reservoirs (Lake George and Lake Catoma).

From the Chair

Dave Gattis

Tempus fugit*!

The old saying “the hurrier I go, the behinder I get” must have been written about me. Unfortunately this newsletter started out as the October edition, but alas, it is now December. Much of that delay is mine alone. Mea culpa! All I can say is that we will try harder in the future.

* “time flies”

Meet Us in Minneapolis!

We have a number of activities of interest to small town and rural planners scheduled at the National Planning Conference in Minneapolis next April. Make plans now to attend. Most sessions are eligible for CM Maintenance credits.

Monday, April 27

6:15-8:00 AM—STaR Business Meeting and Awards Presentation. We are trying a new time slot this year because of the conflicts associated with evening meetings. Most small town planners I know are early risers, anyway. Breakfast will be served.

8:00 AM—2:00 PM-Mobile Workshop “Small Town and Rural Planning Successes” (W025). Dale Powers will lead a tour of local small town planning projects in the Minneapolis area. 5.00 CM credits.

3:00—4:15 PM-Session “Changing Perspectives on the Rural Economy” (S530) The panel will discuss the unique economic opportunities and impediments associated with rural communities. 1.25 CM credits.

6:00-7:30 PM– Joint Divisions Reception. Come join us at the STAR table, meet your colleagues, and enjoy appetizers, soft drinks and a cash bar.

Wednesday, April 29

9:30-10:45 AM-Session “Renewable Energy Systems for Small Towns.” (S658) The panel will discuss options for small towns to produce renewable energy from wind, solar, wastewater and geothermal sources. 1.25 CM credits.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

As I finish this up, it's Christmas Eve and I'm stuck in the office (someone has to be here.) No matter what your spiritual orientation, I wish you a happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year on behalf of the Executive Committee!



Dave Gattis, FAICP, Deputy City Manager
City of Benbrook, Texas

STaR Division

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Zia Planning Consultants
dpowers@ziaplanning.org

2009 SMALL TOWN AND RURAL PLANNING DIVISION AWARD NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

The Small Town and Rural (STaR) Planning Division invites nominations for STaR's Planning Awards to recognize outstanding individuals and projects for their contribution to planning excellence in small town and rural communities. The program is open to any individual, organization, or consulting firm involved in planning for small town and rural areas. Members of the Awards Committee (and their organizations) are not eligible for an award. Nominated plans, projects, programs and studies must have been completed within two years of the nomination submittal date. For Comprehensive Plans and Special Project Plans prepared by consultants, the award recipient shall be the client for whom the planning activity was conducted. The categories are:

Outstanding Small Town and Rural Planner, Given to an individual in public service, academia or the private sector that has made an outstanding contribution to planning in their community.

Outstanding Comprehensive Plan or Special Project Plan, Given to an outstanding comprehensive plan or special project plan that addressed the development of a neighborhood, community, county or region.

Outstanding Planning Initiative, Given to an outstanding initiative or program in public education, workshops, ordinances, or enforcement that promotes planning in small towns and rural areas.

Outstanding Student Project, Given to an outstanding project by a graduate or undergraduate class or individual that addresses a planning issue facing small town or rural areas.

Award recipients will receive the award, a one-year membership in the STaR Division, and up to \$700 reimbursement for travel, lodging and/or registration expenses for public sector or academic employees to attend the National APA Conference in Minneapolis, MN during April 2009. Additional copies of the award may be ordered for support staff and consultants at a nominal cost.

Awards Committee

The STaR Executive Committee has appointed a four-member Awards Committee responsible for evaluating award nominees. All awards will be made at the sole discretion of the Awards Committee. The Committee may grant more than one award in each category.

The Awards Committee will use the following criteria in its consideration of award nominees:

- Innovation,
- Quality,
- Measurable results and implementation,
- Role of Elected Officials,
- Transferability,
- Collaboration/Public Involvement, and
- Long-Term Sustainability and/or use of Smart Growth Principles.

Continued on Page 4

Nomination Procedures

Anyone may place a nomination for any of the awards categories before the Awards Committee. Nominations must be submitted according to the following rules. A complete nomination package must be **submitted (postmarked) no later than Friday, January 30th, 2009** using the Entry Form. All submissions are non-returnable and each application package must include:

- * Four (4) copies of the award nomination Entry Form;
- * Four copies of a 300 to 500 word summary statement indicating why the nominee merits the award;
- * Four copies of the plan or project report being nominated, or a resume or biography for an individual being nominated;
- * Four copies of letters in support of the nomination;
- * Four copies of any supporting reports, plans, articles, newsletters or other supporting documentation (CD-ROM is an acceptable format); and
- * A check for the nomination fee made payable to APA STAR Division (\$25 if nomination is made by STaR member, \$100 if nomination is made by someone who is not a member of the STAR Division)

Nomination packets must be submitted to:

Mickey L Rhoades
STaR Awards Committee
Town of Warrenton
PO Drawer 341
18 Court St
Warrenton, VA 20188

Awards recipients will be notified as soon as possible and invited to receive their award at the STaR Business Meeting on Monday, April 27th in Minneapolis. As a public sector or academic award recipient, STaR will pay up to \$700 for reimbursement of travel, lodging and/or registration expenses to attend the STaR awards ceremony. STaR will make other arrangements to present awards to recipients who are unable to attend the 2009 Conference.

For further information, contact Mickey L Rhoades at (540) 347-6267 or mrhoades@warrentonva.gov

Continued on Page 5

2009 APA STAR Planning Awards Entry Form

Award Category (check one – complete a separate entry form for each nomination)

- Small Town and Rural Planner

 Planning Initiative
 Comprehensive Plan/Special Project Plan

 Student Project

Project Name: _____

Nominee: _____

Population of Jurisdiction _____ Approximate Budget for Project _____

Person Making Nomination: _____
 STaR Division Member? Yes or No (Circle one)

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Additional Contact: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____ E-mail: _____

Application Checklist – Complete application packages should include the following documents: (All submittals are non-returnable)

- Entry Form – Four copies
- Nomination Summary Statement (300-500 words) – Four copies
- Plan or Program Document (Resume or Biography for Planner) – Four copies
- Letters of recommendation – Four copies
- Supporting Materials (reports, news articles, or other materials) – Four copies
 (It is important that four copies are received. Copies on a CD-ROM are acceptable in lieu of large documents.)
- Video tape or other media (optional) – Four copies
- Application Fee (payable to APA Star Division) – (\$25.00 for STaR members, \$100.00 for non-STaR members)

Submit Completed Entry Packets to:

STaR Awards Committee
 c/o Mickey L Rhoades
 Town of Warrenton
 PO Drawer 341
 18 Court St
 Warrenton, VA 20188

Entries must be postmarked no later than **January 19, 2008**.

STaR Awards Grant to a Student Proposal

The STaR Division Executive Committee has awarded a Small Town and Rural Area Project Grant to Woodrow Muhammad, a second year graduate student in the master's degree program in Landscape Architecture at the Louisiana State University. The grant will be used to fund the development of a conceptual master plan for Jefferson County, Mississippi, a rural community located in the southwest portion of the State of Mississippi. The master plan will be designed to serve as a template for other rural communities because of its experimental integration of contemporary planning techniques and growth management practices. The project will employ Transect planning principles and the Land-Use Conflict Identification Strategy (LUCIS) Model, a geographic information system model. The project will be a conceptual comprehensive plan that includes components such as land use plan, affordable housing, conservation, transportation, recreation and hazard mitigation. The study will evaluate existing conditions and constraints, solicit stakeholders input and establish goals and objectives for the land use element. Mr. Muhammad will prepare an article for the STAR newsletter at the completion of his work.

Cullman Plan, continued from Page 1

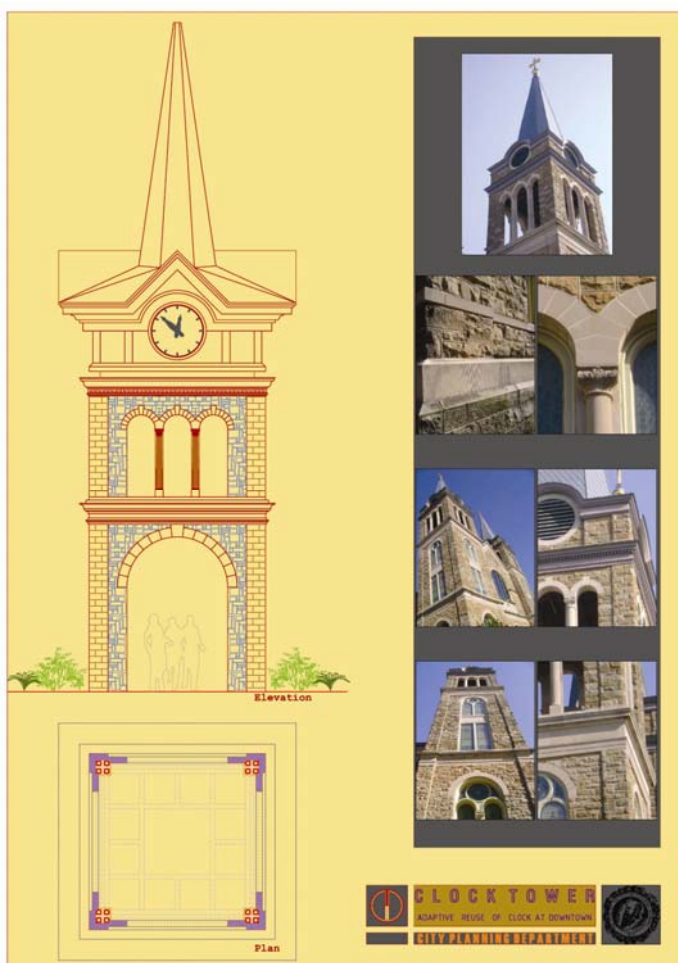


Fig. 2 Proposed Cullman clock tower for 2010 Alabama Year of Small Towns and Downtowns

Cullman is located 45 minutes south of Huntsville's Space and Rocket Center, 45 minutes north of Downtown Birmingham, and 45 minutes east of the Bankhead National Forest and Sipsey Wilderness Area. The weather is great year round.

Cullman was founded in 1873 by Colonel Cullman as a largely German-populated railroad community. It still hosts an annual Oktoberfest, a Blooming Festival at the St. Bernard Benedictine High School campus, which also has the world famous Ava Maria Grotto and the nearby Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Angles Monastery.

Cullman is a "city of churches and church steeples," where family values are still valued. The City's educational system is excellent, rating among the highest for small towns in the country. The City places an emphasis on future Workforce Development through Cullman Area Workforce Solutions and Wallace State Community College.

Cullman has two residential Nationally Registered Historic Districts and the Downtown is a Commercial Historic District. Numerous second story downtown, loft apartments/condominiums have been remodeled. Cullman is proud to be the home of a nationally known architectural antique warehouse called Southern Accents, and one of the finest woodcrafting shops in the Southeast.

For more information, contact Red Sage Communications at (256) 560-0098 or visit Cullman's Comprehensive Planning Website at www.Cullmantomorrow.org; the Park and Recreation Site at www.cullmanrecreation.org; and the City's Official Website at www.Cullmancity.org and the Economic Development Agency's site at www.Cullmaneda.org. We just couldn't fit it all into one website.

Continued from Page 6

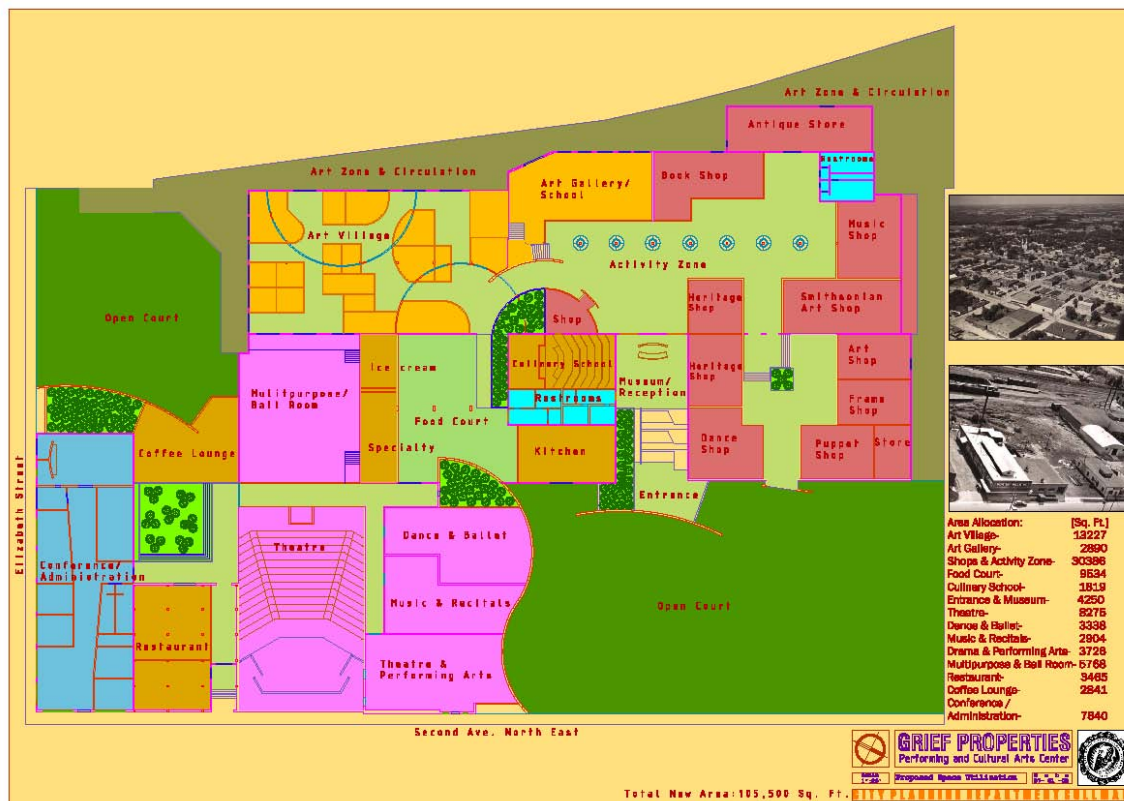


Figure 3. Proposed Cullman Performing and Cultural Arts Center on Greif Brothers Property.



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Dale R. Powers, AICP

A Conversation on Small Town Planning—Part 1

Last Summer, I posed a series of questions about small town and rural planning, and about STaR, as a means to stimulate some discussion about our niche in the profession. I appreciate all the responses, some of which follow in no particular order and with minimal editing:

What are the benefits of practicing in a small town or rural area?

- Patrick Hudson, Kalamazoo, MI: I get to work in all areas of planning - environmental, economic, transportation, community development and with several different communities - never dull.
- Pamela Lazaris, Lake Mills, WI: A variety of experiences, not isolated by specialty, able to track from efforts through accomplishments because the scale is small enough to allow this. The setting is wonderful. It's easier to get answers and solve problems because the "contact tree" is smaller.
- Judith Rodwin, Bath, PA: Really working from the grass roots up. Our area (most rural township in the Lehigh Valley, PA) has only begun to be developed. There is great opportunity here to set a course for the future. Lack of staff is both a challenge and a benefit. You have to do everything... and then again, you have to do everything.
- Jennifer Cowley, Ohio State University: Great learning experience for students. Can engage with a larger portion of the population directly.
- Jon Sevald, Sherburne County, MN: A small town planner is often a one-man shop where the planner is exposed to several issues and experiences. In smaller communities, there's a better chance of knowing and understanding the local community compared to big city or suburban planners.
- Nathan Johnson, Pine City, MN: I love the energy in Pine City. It has a magnificent sense of place. There are a wide variety of challenges which I get to submerge myself in intimately, which makes the job rewarding.
- Matt Morris, Seminole Nation, OK: The benefits are personal satisfactions from working together with good people interested in their community, and making a difference, and being able to accomplish things I wouldn't have a chance to do in a larger, urban planning department.
- Margery Tilton, Lebanon, TN: Getting to work on a variety of projects, long-range planning and day-to-day plan review as well as citywide projects such as planning for parkland, exposure to road projects and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). I worked in a large city-county planning agency and found myself doing the same type of review everyday, which I found boring. Getting to know the people, working in what I consider a small town (25,000) I have gotten to know many people, coming into the community from outside it took some time to earn the people's respect, but my family and I have really become part of the community
- Susan Ballbach, Catawba County, NC: Besides enjoying the setting, I enjoy working for an urban county because I do feel I can make a difference. By educating the public on future ramifications of decisions made today and developing ordinances that guide growth, we can shape how the community will grow—we don't have to wait until the community is broken, and then try to fix problems created by poorly planned developments. As children, we used to ask each other, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" In planning for a developing area, we can help determine what the community "wants to be when it grows up." Goals can range from "we don't want to grow up—we don't want anything to change; we want to remain rural," to "we want to be a densely populated thriving economic metropolis." Whatever the preference, we can help the community to reach its desired goal.

- Benjamin Kimball, Porterville, CA: Small towns are where we still find the roots of our culture, and the physical manifestation of the values we hold dear. Many of us have childhood memories of growing up in a small town or visiting relatives there. The preservation and continued prosperity of these small towns is vitally important to our society. I enjoy raising my children in such places, and enjoy the good nature of the people that I get to work with there. There seems to be less stress in life, and I certainly do not miss driving in heavy traffic.
- * Fred Duncan, Crook County, WY: I am the county planner for a county of less than 7,000 which has had no planning to date, just rudimentary actions to comply with Federal requirements as they were passed thru the State. The benefit is not having to undo what others did. A generalist is of more value here than a specialist, the job requires field work getting out amongst the land-owners. The setting is amazingly fantastic for those that have the ability to see what exists. Future jobs in the rural or small towns great experience; to a metropolitan setting, not a good experience.

What has been the highlight in your community, your department, your professional career during the last two years or so? Was there a particular project or victory?

- Patrick Hudson, Kalamazoo, MI: Getting to re-write a 'gold-plated' ordinance written by one of the big-time firms. The ordinance wasn't working because the community didn't really want that much regulation. They were amazed that they didn't have to have all those big-city regulations.
- Pamela Lazaris, Lake Mills, WI: The comprehensive plan workshops and discussions. This is the community's plan and the voices of the community members can be heard from the Plan itself. Clarity of community priorities is coming through in this Plan and it will not be a shelf-sitter. The community will to implement Plan goals will set things in motion.
- Nathan Johnson, Pine City, MN: I particularly love the parks planning we have accomplished. We have tremendous recreational opportunities, whether it's for skateboarders, nature lovers, anglers or those who love horseshoes, golf, tennis, or a variety of other activities. Also, we have been home to one of the nation's only rural LGBT pride events. The mayor asked me to speak at the last two. Having had the opportunity to address attendees was indeed another highlight. Being a welcoming community is good for the sake of the economy.
- Matt Morris, Seminole Nation, OK: Getting the first Tribal Transportation Improvement Program adopted by the Tribe, but more importantly, the first one submitted by the tribe to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and thus having to be considered in their Regional Indian Reservation Road system Transportation Improvement Program (Regional IRR TIP), and eventually into the national IRR TIP of the BIA, which they submit to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration. This was an important step in helping the tribe get self-determination (a formal status with the BIA, and also in the plain meaning in the English language).
- Margery Tilton, Lebanon, TN: this one is difficult, as a small department we have consultants working to update several long-range plans, the adoption of those plans is on the horizon and will be a big victory, our department (Planning and GIS) has made great strides to get accurate utility and infrastructure information into our GIS database, we are working with the utility departments and emergency services to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information for their use, at times it has been difficult to get other staff members on-board; one example of a department that is using some of the basic information is our family life center, membership dues are based on being inside or outside of the city limits and they use the free viewing software to locate the address and see if the property is inside or outside of the city limits
- Susan Ballbach, Catawba County, NC: Formerly, I was a consultant, who wrote ordinances and filled the role as resident planner for several small town clients that could not financially justify having a full time planner. Now I am the senior planner, as part of a planning team, for an urbanizing county. What I have generally found is that residents want to be somewhere between the

two extremes of wanting things to stay the way they are today (with no growth) versus wanting to become a busy city. Generally, residents want growth and economic development but want to retain their rural character. What I most enjoy about my career is educating the boards as to why growth is important (to provide jobs and commercial amenities) while teaching them how to grow properly to ensure that rural character is not lost. It doesn't have to be one of the other. In the last two years, we created a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and adopted our first Parks and Open Space Master Plan. I enjoyed being heavily involved in both.

- Benjamin Kimball, Porterville, CA:
 - o Community: We have won the victory of attracting some major public improvement projects to our community, including a large new courthouse downtown, new fairgrounds, new sports park, new Indian gaming resort complex and a scattering of new businesses.
 - o Department: Our City Council approved a new comprehensive General Plan earlier this year. It contained a host of new planning recommendations including dense, walkable neighborhood centers, tree-lined parkways, and the preservation of important agriculture land by directing new housing to the hill side areas, rather than the valley floor. The fact that the community bought into these principles was a major victory for our department.
 - o Professional Career: Making the switch from a career path of current planning and permit processing to one more oriented to long range planning with significant opportunities for gaining experience and knowledge in this field.
- * Fred Duncan, Crook County, WY: The highlight is the gradual emergence by the cliques that what has been revealed is happening even though they fight against change; the realization that to stay the same they will have to adopt zoning so they can have a say in the urbanizing of "Gods" Country...pay me now or pay me later is alive and well in ranch land.
- * Art Henriques, San Benito County, CA: I came on Board here in January 2006. There was lots of mistrust in the Dept. by the community and the staff was not in good shape, low morale, etc. We restored trust and fairness in the Planning and Building process, creating a more consistent and standard application review process, starting a major long-desired comprehensive update of the General Plan and putting together a good team. Our Department won a Best Bureaucracy Award from a local newspaper reader poll last year. This award is actually a good thing.

What is the biggest challenge facing your community?

- Patrick Hudson, Kalamazoo, MI: Elected officials who think they don't have to follow the rules of the state enabling act. Boards unwilling to prosecute because it might offend a friend or neighbor.
- Pamela Lazaris, Lake Mills, WI: Existing trend of slow decline among younger age groups. One of the key focus points is attracting families to recharge the ranks of young people, maintain school population, and keep up local workforce needs.
- Judith Rodwin, Bath, PA: The biggest challenge is adapting to incomers and change, of all sorts, that the 21st century brings with it. That includes the fiscal constraints of an extremely tax-adverse community, revising the governance of the township (3 elected officials who all work for the township), informing the community of options and techniques, finding a way to inform the community given the lack of money for mailings and low use of the Internet.
- Jon Sevald, Sherburne County, MN: Our community was growing very fast raising fears of conflicts between agriculture, hobby farms, and large lot residential. The biggest conflicts became (1) rising property values (farmland was too expensive to farm), (2) home based businesses (businesses relocating from industrial parks into residential neighborhoods, and growing businesses beginning in residential neighborhoods not wanting to relocate into industrial parks), and

(3) a lack of understanding the cumulative effects of development.

- Nathan Johnson, Pine City, MN: Downtown revitalization is going to be our largest hurdle. In the past couple of years, the courthouse and post office have both been relocated out of our downtown. With the loss of those civic buildings, vacancy of our downtown storefronts has been on the rise. The downturn in the economy has only made matters worse.
- Matt Morris, Seminole Nation, OK: Financial constraints (making it hard to obtain matching funds for grants that I've worked on, and submitted for the tribe).
- Margery Tilton, Lebanon, TN: we consider ourselves to be a rapidly growing community, thus we are faced with issues such as the cost of growth and trying to look ahead to put regulations in place that will have a positive impact on our built environment, one of the big issues is the relationship between residential and non-residential development that is adjacent to one another
- Susan Ballbach, Catawba County, NC: Here in NC, the drought and loss of jobs have been serious issues. The biggest challenge in dealing with the drought and the loss of jobs is educating people to understand that concessions have to be made—without compromising the future vision of the county. Since watering restrictions are in place, developers can now bond for portions of the landscaping to be installed later as opposed to planting everything and risking losing the plants. Other concessions, such as relaxing landscaping, parking or aesthetic construction standards, in order to allow a less expensive development have to be looked at with skepticism. While lessening development costs may promote some development, it may also decrease the value of the area and thereby prohibit a development that wants to be in a higher scale area from locating in the area, since the value of the upscale development may be downgraded by the lesser valuable neighbors. (Just as it would not be financially advantageous to build a \$450,000 house in a \$90,000 average house subdivision.) Development has to be balanced against the loss of farmland, and ultimately the loss of rural character.
- Benjamin Kimball, Porterville, CA: Widespread hostility to government regulation and cooperation in planning within the community. Lack of sufficient industrial and commercial activity in general. Intense competition with nearby communities for new businesses and the subsequent willingness to lower standards in order to obtain developer favor.
- Fred Duncan, Crook County, WY: The biggest challenge is coping with a dollar that is growing less and less valuable; inflation hits government as it does the family. When the clique keeps the "shop" closed they become the problem. It is now becoming apparent that the hospital cannot operate in a close environment, that financial hemorrhaging, although historic, is destroying their clique environment. All this boils down to mental attitude!
- * Art Henriques, San Benito County, CA: Rapid growth, demographic changes, fiscal constraints, economic pressures and reliance on a single major industry - Ag, environmental hazards such as floods and droughts, sprawl, loss of farmland or rural character for starters while also growing the staff's experience level.

Why do you belong to the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of APA? What do you like about it? What do you wish we were doing that we are not doing now?

- Patrick Hudson, Kalamazoo, MI: I did not have any real idea what I was looking for. I am working in rural villages and townships and figured this was the group I belonged in. No real expectations.
- Pamela Lazaris, Lake Mills, WI: I'm a new member. I'm in the Division because small town planning has been my work context for years and more extensive exposure to other experiences would be good.
- Judith Rodwin, Bath, PA: I'm one of those "incomers". Schooling in NYC and working in suburban

CT & NY did not prepare me for rural planning. I've had a lot to learn. My hope is that this division will be a resource.

- Jennifer Cowley, Ohio State University: I enjoy getting the newsletter. I think you are one of the more active divisions trying to actively meet member needs
- Jon Sevald, Sherburne County, MN: STaR fit into my professional profile. I would like to see more stories of how rural communities are addressing their problems and challenges.
- Nathan Johnson, Pine City, MN: I find it useful to be well connected to those I have a career in common with. If I think of any ways of improving the Division as the year progresses, I'll let you know. Thanks, and good luck!
- Matt Morris, Seminole Nation, OK: Because I may want to go back to small town and rural planning (now I am with a tribe, but previously was a Circuit Riding City Planner (serving five cities all at once, for three years), and then four years as Director of Planning for a city-county Regional Planning Commission (in a county where there more square miles than people); and about a year and a half as the Advanced Planner for a County in rural southern California). I liked Dale Powers' frequent communications, and their contents. And it did not hurt when he was working for a County that bordered a County which I previously worked for (as Director of Planning, Zoning and Building). But I would like a job posting list, yet I realize this has been superbly preempted by APA National's Job listings, so my point is moot.
- Margery Tilton, Lebanon, TN: I enjoy learning from others, I will not be out there on the forefront, but the issues I am facing are the same ones that many of my peers are also faced with.
- Susan Ballbach, Catawba County, NC: I feel getting insight from my peers across the nation is valuable. I was working in WI, and now I'm working in NC. Although the dialect is different between the areas, the issues are the same. We can learn from each other's experience. I would like access to sessions through web conferencing, as it is difficult for me to attend the national convention.
- Benjamin Kimball, Porterville, CA: I belong in order to gain insight from other small town planners and learn from each other's experience. I enjoy the newsletters and attempts to keep us informed on the issues and happenings of the division. I wish there was some sort of exchange program where we had the opportunity to host each other in our homes and towns, similar to what the APA does with the International Exchange Program.
- Fred Duncan, Crook County, WY: I belong to the division because that is where I have chosen to practice. I like the potential, unachieved to date as far as I can see, of the growth of rural and small town planning. My experience has been that the communications with the division is two hairs width from totally non-existent. It is extremely difficult to justify the membership costs to my Commissioners when the products in hand are so sparse, so it is my interest to encourage a more timely communication something that will add value to the fee paid for membership. Publish STaR on a consistent monthly (o.k. too often, then quarterly) basis providing some kind of information and an opportunity to exchange ideas amongst us country folks.
- * Art Henriques, San Benito County, CA: I like the work the Division is trying to do and the resources available. I hope to have more time to learn from the Division and to contribute over the next year.

Hopefully you have enjoyed reading these comments as much as I have, and that they may have sparked a knowing smile, a "been there, done that" thought, or a "I can't believe they said that" response. Maybe you want to contact your colleagues with a question about a project, encouragement, or simply a shoulder to cry on. I plan to continue the conversation, but I'm not sure what format we'll use (e-mail, blog, MySpace, etc.) Look for more information in the next couple of months or contact me in the meantime at dgattis@cityofbenbrook.com. Dave Gattis