

# PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY TODAY

APA

American Planning Association  
Technology Division

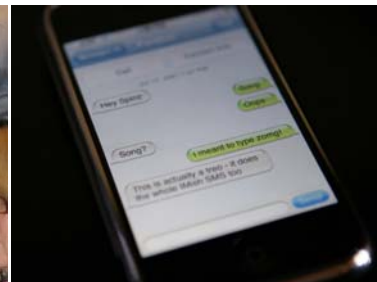
Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Technology Division of the American Planning Association

## TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Issue 90 • Fall 2007

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Ken Snyder, Chair of IT Division

# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Ken Snyder*

In my work with PlaceMatters and APA's Technology Division, I am constantly looking for more effective tools and techniques to engage citizens in land use planning and community building. The continual emergence of innovative GIS and online tools has made the search exciting and rewarding.

As technology becomes more an integral part of planning and public outreach around planning, the need for a "creative touch" becomes increasingly important. While technology can increase the quality and quantity of public input, it can also diminish the quality of human interaction and creativeness. In particular, we look for activities that use technology but also engage youth, utilize art materials, maps and other visuals, and encourage storytelling.

Last month PlaceMatters helped run five workshops in Routt County Colorado as part of their Vision 2030 process. We used keypad polling and content management web technologies to collect ideas, let people identify what qualities of community character are most important and most threatened, and vote on the issues submitted to the larger group. The use of wirelessly linked laptops at each table and keypads for each participant enabled us to have four feedback mechanisms packed into a single evening. These tools illustrate the rapidly changing science of public participation.

Nonetheless, two of the more rewarding and engaging activities of the evening were sharing photos and statements provided by school children in the community, and going around the table and sharing favorite memories of living in Routt County. These two activities were critical in adding energy and excitement to the

evening. In preparation for the first activity, we had local schools engage in an art project tied to the initiative. Students were given disposable cameras to take pictures of the things they like most in their community and to add statements. These images were then shown at the public workshops both as a PowerPoint and posted on a physical display in the room. The photos and statements



"These two trees have been standing next to our school since it began. They remind us how change can be beautiful if done right." -Madison King

(example at left) reminded people why we are engaging in a conversation about the county's future – to sustain the elements of community we find so important and pursue activities that continue to build a sense of community for future generations.

The second activity involved going around the table and having people share their favorite memories of living in the valley. For those who were not shy to speak into a microphone, we had inexpensive microphones attached to the computers at each table and collected stories digitally. In the end we collected over 100 stories which will be available on a rotating basis at [pollingresults.org/?q=sbs2030](http://pollingresults.org/?q=sbs2030)

Without these two activities we would have missed great stories and information about what makes a place special. As science and technology play a more prominent role in public gatherings, it is critical also to identify creative and artistic activities that balance the technical tools.

This Planning and Technology Today issue highlights other projects that have used technology as a tool for gathering public input, while not losing sight of the "human" element. This issue also is the first with our new logo design and newsletter name. Let us know what you think!

-Ken Snyder

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: WINTER 2007-2008 PLANNING AND TECHNOLOGY TODAY

The new format of the Technology Division newsletter will include one or two feature length articles in each issue. We will also be including one page "spotlights" on various technologies and tools of interest. Our regular one page spotlights will cover Public Participation, GIS, Online Tools, Visualization, and Scenario Planning.

Division Leadership will be writing the spotlights. But we still need submissions for our feature length articles. For these articles, we are looking for **case studies that demonstrate how planners and/or communities have used technology in planning**. What are the innovative tools and techniques applied; what worked well and what did not?

In particular we are soliciting articles and sidebars that focus on:

- ☞ Case studies directly from communities
- ☞ Lessons learned (both positive and negative) regarding the use of technology in public participation.

Please submit your abstract ideas to: Jocelyn Hittle, [jocelyn@placematters.org](mailto:jocelyn@placematters.org) by January 31st.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES OF INTEREST

### January Through June

#### *Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute 17th Land Use Conference*

March 6- 7, 2008  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.law.du.edu/rmlui](http://www.law.du.edu/rmlui)

#### *Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities Conference*

March 31- April 2, 2008  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.fundersnetwork.org](http://www.fundersnetwork.org)

#### *APA National Conference*

April 27-May 1, 2008  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
[www.planning.org/2008conference/](http://www.planning.org/2008conference/)

#### *Where 2.0*

May 12-14, 2008  
Burlingame, California  
[en.oreilly.com/where2008/public/content/home](http://en.oreilly.com/where2008/public/content/home)

#### *American Institute of Architects National Convention and Design Exposition*

May 15-17, 2008  
Boston, Massachusetts  
[www.aia.org/ev\\_conv\\_aia\\_o8](http://www.aia.org/ev_conv_aia_o8)

#### *REAL CORP 008: Mobility Nodes as Innovation Hubs*

May 19-21, 2008  
Vienna International Airport  
[www.corp.at](http://www.corp.at)

## UNITED BY TECHNOLOGY: POST-KATRINA VISIONING WITH 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TOWN MEETING®

By Wendy Jacobson and Andrea Scallon, AmericaSpeaks

### AMERICASPEAKS

#### About AmericaSpeaks:

Founded in 1995, AmericaSpeaks is a national non-profit dedicated to providing citizens with a greater voice in public decision-making. Using innovative deliberative tools such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting®, AmericaSpeaks has engaged more than 100,000 people in governance, in all 50 states and around the world.

Among other projects, AmericaSpeaks brought large-scale citizen participation to the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site; to the creation of municipal budgets in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco; and to regional planning and economic development efforts in the greater Chicago area and Northeast Ohio.

Two years after Hurricane Katrina, the city of New Orleans and many of her citizens still struggle to return to a 'normal' life. Thousands of stories have been written about the individual challenges New Orleans residents faced on August 29<sup>th</sup> and continue to endure today. This, however, is not a story about the struggles. This is a story about how the city of New Orleans united and created the Unified New Orleans Plan that is now rebuilding the city.

With the help of [AmericaSpeaks](#), thousands of citizens of New Orleans were able to participate in the development of the rebuilding plans. The use of technology at the city-wide Community Congresses of the Unified New Orleans Plan ensured the public's role was substantive, representative, and intrinsic to the final plans. Technology was used to involve those still living in the city of New Orleans and those displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, plans to rebuild New Orleans faced a ravaged infrastructure, financial losses of enormous scale, decision-makers scrambling in crisis mode, and a citizenry whose trust in government had been abused. City officials' early planning efforts were met with anger and protest as the community struggled with the challenges of distributing resources and reviving an entire city.

In the spring of 2006, officials began to conceptualize a plan to address these challenges. That summer, following

months of intense negotiation, the Mayor, the City Council, and the City Planning Commission endorsed a new planning process. The foundation-funded [Unified New Orleans Plan](#) (UNOP) would be run by the Greater New Orleans Foundation and overseen by a community advisory board comprised of neighborhood representatives and delegates from the Mayor's office, the City Council, and the City Planning Commission.



Participants in the Unified New Orleans Plan using the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting® method

UNOP would address all city-wide systems, tackling infrastructure needs like housing, flood protection, transportation and public services. It would also produce 13 district-level plans with recovery priorities for the city's neighborhoods. Unlike earlier planning work, it would incorporate the results of all previous efforts.

AmericaSpeaks has been engaging citizens in deliberations about the most important public decisions in their lives for more than a decade, and did so in New Orleans via their 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting® method. To make sure the Pre-Katrina demographics of New Orleans were represented within the Community Congresses, AmericaSpeaks partnered with a wide array of grassroots organizations, service providers and leaders in diaspora cities across the country. Registrants received pre-recorded calls from the Mayor; public service announcements featured celebrities like Wynton Marsalis; and free meals, childcare, transportation, and translation of program materials into Spanish and Vietnamese enabled participation for many who might otherwise have been left out.

AmericaSpeaks' 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting® methodology uses networked laptops and individualized keypad polling to support facilitated, small-group discussions at diverse tables. These discussions feed into large-group sharing and decision-making. At every table, a laptop is used to collect individual's key points and table consensus on each topic area. This information is then networked to the Theme Team, who organize the data into the resulting themes. After review of the themes, the keypads are used to allow each participant to prioritize the themes.

With key decision-makers listening at the Community Congresses, citizens discussed how to ensure safety from

future flooding, empower residents to rebuild safe and stable neighborhoods, provide incentives and housing so people could return, and establish sustainable, equitable public services. Five cities; Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Dallas, Houston and New Orleans, were linked by satellite during the meeting, allowing the greatest number of displaced New Orleanians in the Community Congresses. Multiple times throughout the meeting, participants in each city were selected to speak to the group and mention what their table discussed. While sitting in a meeting focused on rebuilding of New Orleans, participants felt a sense of community not only in New Orleans but in the four other cities as well.

Through this 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting® model, technology allows participants to receive immediate results and adds a

layer of transparency to the meeting. Citizens express their opinions on many levels throughout the meeting: individually with the keypads, as a table through the computers, as a room and as the whole New Orleans community with the use of the satellite connection. Technology helps to ensure that these different levels come together, creates a strong sense of community and develops the individual's role in the community.



A participant giving input during a Community Congress

In addition to the five cities linked by satellite, New Orleanians in 16 other cities participated in the Community Congress in community centers or libraries. These participants watched the meeting by webcast and entered their comments and views via

the internet. People across the country could also watch the webcast, and citizens in New Orleans were able to watch the meeting on public television. For those in the five cities, technology helped to ensure a sense of community was developed by the use of computers and the webcast.

From these multiple means of engaging citizens, 4,000 New Orleans citizens participated in the Community Congress. As of today, the citywide recovery plan has been accepted by the Louisiana Recovery Authority, the last group of many to accept the plan. Even though the road has been long and is not yet over, the recovery plan was developed in a truly democratic way – by the people, for the people.

For more information:

America Speaks:  
[www.americaspeaks.org](http://www.americaspeaks.org)

Unified New Orleans Plan:  
[www.unifiedneworleansplan.org](http://www.unifiedneworleansplan.org)

### TECH DIVISION SESSION AT APA 2008 CONFERENCE NEEDS PRESENTERS!

We need presenters for the Technology Division by-rights session "New Zoning Techniques Using GIS". This session will focus on GIS techniques that help planners understand the deficits of older zoning codes and illuminate the development patterns that should be reinforced with new zoning codes. If you have used GIS technology to support the development of innovative zoning such as **form based codes, new urbanism or smart growth codes** then please share these techniques with your colleagues at the 2008 APA Conference.

Please contact Peter Conrad at 410-396-4367 or [peter.conrad@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:peter.conrad@baltimorecity.gov). This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it for more information.

*Session Title: New Zoning Techniques Using GIS*

*Day/Time: 4/30/2008,  
2:30 p.m.–3:45 p.m*

# 2008 TECHNOLOGY DIVISION AWARDS APPLICATIONS

The Information Technology Division of the American Planning Association will be issuing the following awards at the 2008 National APA Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. The deadline to submit an award is January 31, 2008. Download the application form and more information at [www.itinfotext.org/dmdocuments/TechDivisionAwardsApplication2008.doc](http://www.itinfotext.org/dmdocuments/TechDivisionAwardsApplication2008.doc).

#### Award Categories

##### **Category 1 - Best Use of Technology to Improve a Plan or Planning Process**

This category recognizes an organization for the creative use of technology in improving planning processes. Examples may include technology in subdivision approval, urban design, or comprehensive planning.

##### **Category 2 - Best Use of Technology for Public Participation**

This category recognizes an organization for the best use of technology to enhance public involvement and participation in planning and decision making processes.

##### **Category 3 - Best Use of Technology for a University Urban and Regional Planning Program**

This category recognizes an accredited university planning program for the most effective use of teaching with technology in preparing future planners for professional work. This can include the work of a single class or the use of technology to benefit all students in the program.

##### **Category 4 - Best Student Paper on Technology in Planning**

This category recognizes a student for an outstanding paper on the use of technology in planning. Papers must have been originally written by a single author for a class in a planning program in a US college or university. Master's theses, terminal professional reports, and student group projects are not eligible. Papers may be no more than 20 pages long, including references. Tables, maps, and other diagrams

may supplement the 20 pages of text, but not exceed five pages. Papers must be typed and double-spaced with margins of at least 1 inch and 12 point font.

Nominators must assign each submission to one category. No changes will be allowed after the submission deadline. The jury may move a submission from one category to another.

**Eligibility:** Open to APA members and non-members. Any plan, project, program, process, report, paper, etc. must have been published, implemented, or completed within two years of the date of submission. Members of the Technology Division Awards Committee are not eligible to enter, to be nominated, or to receive awards.

**Judging:** Judging for Technology Division Awards will take place in February 2008. Jurors are under no obligation to grant an award in any category or may select to move a nomination to a different category. Nominators of submissions will be notified confidentially by March 31, 2008. Official announcements of submissions receiving awards will be made after all nominators have been notified.

**Award Recognition:** Award recipients will be recognized at the Technology Division Business Meeting at APA's National Planning Conference in Las Vegas, April 27-May 1, 2008. Technology Division award recipients receive a personalized certificate. Each award recipient will be profiled in the Planning and Technology Today newsletter and on the Technology Division website. The winner selected for Category 4 Best Paper will receive a \$500 scholarship.

**Deadline:** Submission deadline for the Technology Division Awards is Thursday January 31, 2008. All submissions should be submitted electronically. For more information, contact Aimy Varma, Education Chair at (701)231- 7244.

# ONLINE TOOL SPOTLIGHT: MASH-UPS AS PLANNING TOOLS

By Harsh Prakash, Division Secretary Treasurer

Planning departments, especially those of small cities, have long hesitated because of technology, budgetary and other constraints to engage their constituents through web-based mapping tools. Part of the reason is simply an uneasiness with Web 2.0 mapping technologies.

Well, now they have less to worry about. That is, if they don't mind piggy-backing on corporate giants.

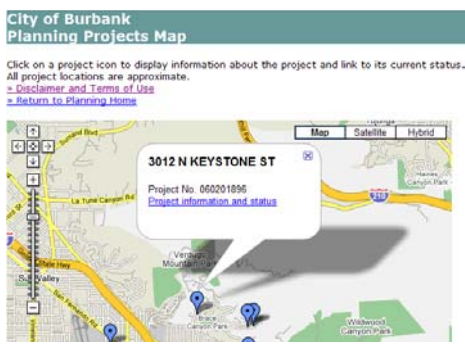
The [Burbank Leader reports](#) on how the [City of Burbank, Los Angeles County, California](#), the not-

so-undisputed "Media Capital of the World" with a comfortable population of 104,317 (2006), is trusting some online service providers and their armies of 24/7 network-support staff to host part of its mapping data. The City has invited public input by publishing its planning project status using Google Maps Application Programming Interface (API).

According to the City's Principal Planner Michael Forbes, AICP, "the [planning projects map](#), run by [Google](#), is an interactive list of all residential, commercial and industrial projects throughout Burbank that are being processed or have been recently approved or denied. Each project icon on the map includes information about the project and a link to its current status."

A note of caution for the impatient GIS Planner: While nowadays, a mash-up is more than a hack, most map APIs

suffer from their ask-coordinates-get-only-image design when it comes to mapping that requires queryable-geometry. Consequently, despite the growing familiarity of such mash-ups, the appropriateness of mash-ups to enterprise GIS for custom mapping is still debated.



City of Burbank Mash-Up

Then there is that question of advertisements on publicly-funded maps. Note that there are ways around it: [Google Maps for Enterprise](#), for one, allows the option to disable location-based advertising for an annual fee.

In short, a community's access to information can be well-served by mash-ups.

# ORTON FAMILY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES BIG BOX EVALUATOR TOOL

## BIG BOX EVALUATOR

The free tool is now available at [www.bigboxevaluator.org](http://www.bigboxevaluator.org)

### About the Orton Family Foundation

The Orton Family Foundation seeks to help small cities and towns identify and articulate their heart and soul—the collective attributes that make communities unique—and build on these attributes in planning toward desired futures. The Foundation serves cities and towns under 50,000 in population in the Northeast and Rocky Mountain regions. Headquartered in Middlebury, Vermont, it also has an office in Denver, Colorado. Lyman Orton, owner of the Vermont Country Store, created the Foundation in 1995.

### CONTACT

[info@orton.org](mailto:info@orton.org)  
[www.orton.org](http://www.orton.org)  
PO Box 111  
Middlebury, VT 05753

The Orton Family Foundation has unveiled a new interactive website designed to be an information resource for people who want to know more about "big box" retail stores and their potential positive and negative impacts on their local communities.

Called the "Big Box Evaluator," the free site gives viewers an engaging, informative way to think about how large retail stores like Wal-Mart and Target may affect their community's economics, environment and unique character—collectively, their town's heart and soul. The interactive format lets viewers learn basic facts, test assumptions, explore interactive models and draw their own conclusions.

"Big box retail is a major issue for the communities we serve," said William Roper, the Foundation's President and CEO. "With this tool we are trying to provide people with more information about the issues: the questions, the facts, and - most important - a framework from which they can draw their own conclusions."

Roper made it clear that the non-profit Foundation is neither for nor against big box retail itself. They have developed the site in keeping with their goal of promoting informed, collaborative decisions about community futures. "We recognize that with important issues like big box retail, a com-

munity needs to make its own choices," Roper said. "Part of the decision can be based on objective facts, and part of it will depend on peoples' own values and vision for the future of their community. We trust that the Big Box Evaluator will help citizens acknowledge heart and soul values as they build vital, sustainable communities."

The new site is centered on an interactive "Your Analysis" tool, which walks viewers through a hypothetical proposal for building a big box store in a community. Page by page, major issues like tax revenue, prices and community character are described, and then viewers are given the

chance to answer questions about the analysis settings and assumptions they want to use. Along the way, abundant links to real-life examples and published research on both sides of the issues are provided. At the end, viewers can see the results of their project decisions, and they can go back and make changes if desired.



Big Box Evaluator Tool helps communities determine the affects of big box retail.

# CROSS-MEDIA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

By Chris Haller, PlaceMatters

In order to foster a democratic relationship between the governing and the governed, decision-making has to adapt to the rapidly changing communication practices of our society. Computers and mobile phones are widely adopted communication devices, each supporting a wide variety of interwoven communication media. Audiences have developed completely different patterns of communication. Following the convergence of communication media, as well as diverging habits of communication within different target stakeholder groups, there is a growing need in civic engagement and planning efforts to offer multiple channels for participation in order to be inclusive.

Recently, various groups have been exploring the use of the internet for citizen involvement (often labeled as eDemocracy or eParticipation). Online engagement methods have evolved and matured, sometimes imitating face-to-face approaches and often built on one specific software platform. Case studies and academic research on these applications have shown that the web is not replacing traditional methods of civic engagement – it is instead expanding the set of tools in the toolbox. The interaction between these different channels of participation (face-to-face, online, via mobile devices, etc.) still needs to be refined and best practices identified. Further exploration into cross-media approaches that integrate face-to-face and online techniques is needed, especially since rapid technological advancements offer new possibilities on almost a weekly basis.

Although eParticipation techniques are constantly evolving, there are a few points that are emerging from existing projects that incorporate online and mobile technology. First, as a project progresses through its phases, communication technologies can play a critical role in integrating the flow of information from one project stage to the next. Process design and incorporation of cross-media into a project needs to start early in the outreach phase,

and keep participants engaged throughout the entire project. Secondly, integration of the various media at any one time is also necessary to assure comprehensive results and consensus across the different channels of participation. Lastly, creating a plan to incorporate cross media participation adds variety to the project, provides multiple points-of-entry for engagement in the process, and enables a broader swath of citizens to exchange opinions and deliberate on issues.

In addition, studying several case studies that used cross-media approaches to engage citizens in planning projects leads to the following list of cornerstones of successful cross media participation design. This list is a work in progress and we encourage your additions at [www.placematters.org/crossmedia](http://www.placematters.org/crossmedia).

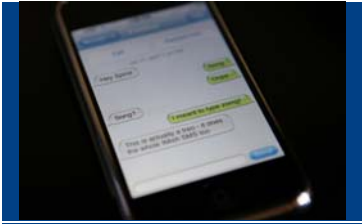
## Cornerstones of Successful Cross-Media Design

**Timing:** The more participation channels are offered, the more important it is to time them appropriately with respect to their different requirements and processes. Online forums, surveys, and feedback mechanisms work better if there is a clear beginning and end to the invitation to participate.

**Public Relations:** Finding the right mix between widespread elements with limited content (emails, flyers, etc.) and content-rich elements with a smaller audience (websites, events, etc.) helps to attract a broad audience and provides them with the necessary information to participate.

**Continuing engagement:** A well-refined timeline supported with the right communication tools for each step of the process is key to keeping the audience engaged over the course of longer projects.

**Website as Base:** Project websites are the key places to provide information about project, deal with important issues, document the process, and share results. Project websites can serve as the hub for all other channels of participation.



Mobile devices are one of many media used for public participation

**Cross-media Kickoff:** Successful participation begins before the official start. Signing up users during the outreach campaign helps to prevent a slow start and an empty online forum. Media partnerships and political backing can bring attention to the kickoff meeting – all these little steps will strengthen participation in later phases.

**Compatible Outputs:** Different participation channels might build on different methods, but will ultimately need to have comparable results to produce a collaborative and balanced outcome.

**Extended Offerings:** Neighborhood walks, information fairs, open door events – all these additional offerings educate the participants and raise the discussion to a higher level, while offering a great point-of-entry to different participation channels.

**Inclusive and Transparent Results:** The results coming from different venues have to be consolidated in a fair and transparent way.

**Flow:** Participation channels should be continuous, to prevent exclusion of certain audiences during the project.

**Cross-media Finish:** Final events should merge all channels of participation to finalize and celebrate results, gain political influence, and attract traditional media outlets.



The Technology Division is charting the new technologies for the American Planning Association. Planners everywhere need to understand the use and planning implications of new systems: computer simulation, GIS, telecommunications, and computer-based information resources.  
[www.planning.org/infotech](http://www.planning.org/infotech)

Planning & Technology Today is the Division's newsletter, bringing you current information that is useful for making decisions on how to use the new technologies.

If you are presently a member of APA, it costs only \$25 to join the Division; students \$10; non-members \$40.

To Join: Send your name, address, and payment to:  
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION  
LOCK BOX 97774  
CHICAGO IL 60678

You may also join at  
[www.planning.org/joinapa](http://www.planning.org/joinapa)

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