

# NEWSBRIEF



American Planning Association  
Virginia Chapter

*Making Great Communities Happen*

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*Photo courtesy of the American Planning Association*



Photo courtesy of George Homewood



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Photo by Dr. Yang Zhang

## President's Column



George Homewood, FAICP CFM

It is a bittersweet moment as I write my final column as your Chapter President. The past five and a half years have been memorable and I hope that in at least some small way, the Chapter is better for my having passed this way. I have attempted to use this column to discuss issues related to planning, planners and the planning profession. While some have been more substantive than others, all were intended to spur some thought about what we do as planners and why we do it. The feedback I received indicated that I was generally successful in my attempt to stir passion for

our profession or avocation. With that said, I want to return to a couple of themes I've written about previously—advocacy and ethics.

Planning by its very nature must be a fact-based, data-driven endeavor. Whether done at a personal level or for a community or for a business enterprise, planning that is not rooted in factual data is sophistry and fantasy. Yet today, we are challenged by living in an America where for too many, facts are becoming irrelevant, many leaders have become unhinged from the truth and 140 characters constitutes deep thinking and analysis. Over the first 10 months of 2017, we have witnessed the removal of scientific data from federal government websites and the systematic undermining of the role of science not just in climate issues, but also in environmental protection, food safety, weather forecasting and safe drinking

water. The 2020 Census—a Constitutional mandate—is in perilous financial trouble in large part because of opposition by some to collecting any data beyond a headcount stymied necessary funding to prepare in the way which has been successful for previous Censuses.

The modern-day sophists would have you believe that this is a return to government as the Founders intended; however, that is about as far from the truth as many other things we are told today. The Founders were men and women of the Enlightenment who believed strongly in the power of science to improve the human condition—Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were the very embodiment of this philosophy. The conscious and concerted effort to undermine science is antithetical to the writings of the Founders; moreover, it casts doubt on our nation's economic future which

Thanks for your  
service, George!



Photo courtesy of George Homewood

relies heavily on technology and basic research. Indeed, I find it ironic that while doing everything possible to discredit science on the one hand, the other hand is pushing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) as a fundamental core curriculum in schools.

It is my contention that we planners—both individually and collectively as an organization—have an ethical responsibility to the future (and, envisioning the future is a core part of planning) to stand up and be heard in support of verifiable facts, solid data and principled empiricism. While these are clearly among the tools of our craft, they are also necessary for our democracy—or any democracy—to exist. At our Chapter Conference, APA President Cynthia Bowen, AICP, quoted the late Senator from New York, Daniel Patrick Moynihan in saying that *[e]veryone is entitled to their*

*own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts.* Facts are not partisan, political or debatable principles—they are truths that can be proved with evidence. They are the solid foundation upon which decisions and choices can be made. Thus, I urge planners to be strong advocates for facts, data and science at all levels of both public and private sectors. Ignoring or disparaging inconvenient truths may be good short-term politics, but it is a recipe for disastrous long-term policy.

APA's Planners' Advocacy Network (sign up is free) is one avenue of advocacy and the Chapter's Legislative Committee is another. I heartily recommend both, but continuing to exemplify the ethical and professional principles to which we planners subscribe in your daily work is another form of advocacy—as Gandhi said, *[b]e the change you wish to see.* In any case, please do

not choose the path of ignoring the peril.

I want to thank each of the members of the Chapter Board of Directors with whom I have served during my term as Chapter President. I am gratified that we were able together to catch the higher vision of serving our profession and fellow planners by making the Chapter and its programs as relevant as possible to the membership. This was, in part, accomplished by expanding the Board to be even more inclusive. Virginia has been a leader in APA in developing and modeling programs, policies and projects for the benefit of our members. I am confident it will remain so and soar to ever new heights under Earl's leadership.

Finally, thank you to all of you for bestowing the great honor of allowing me to serve you.

Cheers!

*George*



# “Your Hour” Webinars

## Translating Planning Goals Into Project Actions For Sustainable Communities

[Register Here!](#)

Monday, November 27, 2017

Noon—1 PM

1 CM Credit #9133233

**Presenter:** Denise Nelson, Berkley Group

Local governments have many tools for creating sustainable communities. The Envision® rating system is celebrating 5 years of advancing sustainable infrastructure and is gaining popularity in Virginia. Envision was designed to complement the LEED rating system for green buildings (USGBC) by providing sustainability recommendations for all types of infrastructure projects: roads, water pipelines, wastewater treatment plants, etc. Envision also addresses all project lifecycle phases: planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance, and deconstruction. As such, Envision is a tool for planners, designers, and other development professionals.

Learn how Envision helps infrastructure owners translate goals from comprehensive plans and sustainability initiatives into actions on individual infrastructure projects. Envision is freely available as a guidance manual, online scoresheet, and pre-assessment checklist. There are also Envision programs for a professional credential and project recognition available on a fee basis. The impact on Virginia’s infrastructure will be discussed.

*[Visit the Berkley Group website](#) and [read Denise’s bio here](#).*

## Floodplain Management for Planners

[Register Here!](#)

Monday, January 22, 2017

Noon—1 PM

**Presenters:** Kristin Owen, AICP, CFM & Gina DiCicco, AICP, CFM of the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, Division of Dam Safety & Floodplain Management.

Title subject to change. Description coming soon!



APA VIRGINIA

# Board Meeting

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## Planning Advocacy Conference (PAC) Report

*Earl W. Anderson, AICP*

On September 24-26 the largest number of planners ever descended on Washington, D.C., for a multitude of amazing panel discussions and provoking keynotes. We then got to take what we learned and put it into action on Capitol Hill.

Sunday morning started out with a Planner's Advocacy Network Boot Camp, where we learned ways to hone our message-delivery skills. This action-oriented program featured a run-

through of the advocacy opportunities available to planners, followed by hands-on training. We were shown all of the new and engaging ways to interact with our elected officials, including how to send updated action alerts and how to make calls to Congress in new ways. Advocates learned how to cultivate a relationship with our legislator with cutting-edge social media programs like Facebook's Townhall feature.

During the boot camp Dylan

Mullenix and I offered our experiences to attendees, one as a seasoned planning advocate and one as a relative newbie (me). We took questions and were able to give our perspectives on how easy it is to "Stand Up For Planning".

Next up in the afternoon was the first time ever at the PAC was the APA Delegates Assembly. We addressed a few issues at the national conference in New York City, but waited until this conference to have the final vote

on items. At the meeting, the delegates adopted the Healthy Communities policy guide, which will be a valuable extension of the existing Plan4Health work. Special thanks to Brandie Schaffer for keeping our discussion and voting organized. It was great to have so many planners engaged and supportive of this new initiative.

Later in the afternoon we heard from John Thompson, the former U.S. Census bureau director and current executive director of the Council of Professional Association on Federal Statistics, during the 2017 Daniel Burnham Forum on Big Ideas. He laid out today's landscape of federal data collection and tomorrow's opportunities and challenges. He also discussed the Census Bureau's preparations for the 2020 Census, its federal funding challenges, and why it matters.

Quality data is essential to the work planners do in local

communities. But valuable sources of federal data, such as the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, face a tough political climate. He noted that the Bureau would need \$1.8 billion to get the count done correctly.

***The APA Policy and Advocacy Conference, gives planners a chance to learn about federal planning issues and meet one-on-one with congressional staff to advocate for federal planning programs.***

The next morning we started off the day with a plenary with Richard Florida, an urban planning professor and author best known for his work on the “creative class”. He discussed the role equity and inclusiveness should

play in economic development and his talk focused around growing spatial inequality, in the United States, and how cities and regions can shift towards more inclusive growth strategies. He shared many personal stories of growing up in New Jersey and how what he saw growing up formed his view of the world today.

For a place to be great, Florida said a city must have three things: technology, talent, and tolerance. But over the last few decades, cities have been focused primarily on growth (attracting technology and a talented workforce). This has fueled a growing gap between the wealthy urban elite and blue-collar workers — disproportionately along racial lines. These workers are being pushed to the peripheries and suburbs and given fewer opportunities.

“We have to switch from winner-



Photo courtesy of the American Planning Association

Photo courtesy of Earl W. Anderson



take-all urbanism to urbanism for all,” Florida said. He believes planners can help “make a narrative where growth and inclusion, growth and equity, are part of the same thing. Because at the end of the day, we cannot grow without inclusiveness.”

The attendees then heard from Stan Gimont from US Department of Housing and Urban Development. He discussed the new administration and its new policies directions. He also took some great, but hard hitting questions from planners on the Community Development Block Grant and HOME programs.

The lunch keynote was Ryan Avent, senior editor and columnist for The Economist. He

addressed the impact of advancing technology and automation on cities, the economy, and the future of employment. He repeated many of the themes we had heard that morning from Richard Florida. Ryan talked about the rising inequality, both economic and spatial, combined with sky-high housing costs in booming cities such as San Francisco, and what that means to middle-class and working-class workers that are continually being shut out of rises in standard of living. This is an important and exciting time for planners, said Ryan Avent, in what he considers the dawn of the “digital revolution.”

Closing Monday’s sessions was a panel presentation and discussion

from the Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative, led by Lynn Ross, AICP, and leaders from the cities of Detroit, Philadelphia, and Akron. The panelists discussed projects and strategies in their cities that have been working to bring together people of different backgrounds and democratize public space through connecting parks, plazas, and trails together.

Tuesday was the culmination of the whole conference. On this day we got to take our message to the halls of Congress for Planners' Day on the Hill and meet with our representatives to stand up for key planning programs and initiatives. Planners looked to address the issues that impact their communities, and this year more planners made



their voices heard through the halls of Congress than ever before. More than 120 meetings connected legislators and their staffs with planners from their states and districts. By the time the sun set on Planners' Day on Capitol Hill, planners from across the country had succeeded in becoming one loud voice for federal support of planning. Specific messages included increasing access to affordable housing, stimulating economic development, and addressing critical infrastructure needs in our localities.

The Virginia delegation consisted of Claire Jones, Glenn Larson, Brandie Schaffer, Lisa Chiblow, Karen Campbell and myself. We met first with Mark Warner's staffer, Ethan Thrasher, then a little later with Tim Kaine's staffer, Nick Barbash. Both offices were excited to hear from their constituents and were very open to the messages we brought them.

After the morning congressional meetings, we took a break for lunch and heard from some of the leading infrastructure advocates

in Congress. Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Rodney Davis (R-Ill.) Both highlighted the destruction from recent natural disasters. Blumenauer addressed the issue by sponsoring the Safe Communities Act (H.R. 3804) so that planners have the resources they need to properly mitigate hazards in the future.

***At the APA Policy & Advocacy Conference, "planners from across the country had succeeded in becoming one loud voice for federal support of planning."***

During the afternoon, the Virginia delegation split to meet with their individual House of Representative members. For me, I had a short conversation with Representative Scott Taylor, before he had to leave for a vote, but then was able to take more time talking his Legislative Director, Reginald Darby. We discussed all the messages and he took great interest in the CDBG programs and what experience I had with the program.

Overall the PAC is a wonderful occasion to learn about our potential to be great advocates. For me it offered an opportunity to remove the unfounded fears I had engaging with my elected officials and encouraged me to not only be an advocate for great planning, but to provide an avenue for me to share my own thoughts and opinions. If you get a chance to go next year, I would highly encourage you to attend.

*Earl is a Senior Planner with York County. The APA Policy and Advocacy Conference takes place every year in late September. Check out the [APA website](#) for more information on this and next year's conferences.*



## 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



# MOUNTAINS OF INFLUENCE

WINTERGREEN RESORT | JULY 22-25, 2018

## Announcing the 2018 Annual Conference!

M. Tyler Klein, AICP

### Cheers to 2018!

As we look ahead to 2018, we take time to reflect on 2017. We hope 2017 was a year of growth and prosperity for you, both personally and professionally. For APA Virginia, our 2017 Annual Conference was a huge success, not just in terms of number of attendees (350+), but in terms of achieving our vision for the Conference, showcasing “future communities,” and collaborating with planners from across Virginia.

Over the last several annual conferences, the APA Virginia Chapter has highlighted resiliency, innovation, integration and evaluation, and future communities. For 2018, we will turn the focus inward on us as

planners, including local elected and appointed officials. Planners play a pivotal role as agents of change in their communities. We serve our communities as: *advocates, policy setters, designers, environmentalists, preservationists, engineers, data analysts and code enforcers*. Planners, more so than any other profession, have a “*mountain of influence*” over the planning for and realization of a community’s potential. Planners are shaping the future of the Commonwealth every day.

What are your resolutions for 2018? At APA Virginia, we are hoping one of your New Year’s resolutions is to share your experiences and successes with others in your field.

### More Recognition

*Did you know?* Last year we recognized more planners, projects, students, university faculty and local elected officials like never before at our bigger and better [Annual Awards Program](#). We can’t wait to see what other great work is going on around the Commonwealth in 2018. For more information, contact the [VP of External Affairs](#).

### More Conference Tracks

*Did you know?* We are offering even more tracks, session types and formats to let you showcase your talents, projects, and programs. [Submit a session abstract proposal by January 26, 2018](#) for inclusion in the Conference Program.

## Become a Sponsor

Did you know? Sponsoring with APA Virginia throughout the year and at our Annual Conference is a great way to make new connections and showcase your organization. We are grateful for all of our support from our 2017 Conference & Annual Sponsors.

## Volunteer

Did you know? We are always in need of volunteers to review session proposals, evaluate award submission, and help with logistics both pre- and post-conference. For more information, contact the Membership Director.

## Save the Date!

Mark your calendars and join us July 22 to July 25, 2018 at the summit of the Blue Ridge Mountains at Wintergreen Resort.

For more information, and for the latest news and updates on the Annual Conference visit us online at [www.apavirginia.com](http://www.apavirginia.com).

Photo by Dr. Yang Zhang



Photo by M. Tyler Klein



Photo by Emily Gibson



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Photo by Abbey Ness

## Young Planners Consider Future of Attack Site

*Abbey Ness, AICP*

Two weeks after the August 12th Alt-Right rally and vehicular attack in Charlottesville, UVA planning students and local planning professionals gathered at the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) to consider how to pay tribute to the victims and memorialize the day's events.

Many of the attendees were incoming graduate students who were unfamiliar with the city's complicated racial and social history and the events leading up to August 12th. To add to their knowledge, the first half of the event was a "Get to Know Cville" program, during which planning professionals from the area discussed local planning issues and trends. The discussion included an overview of the City's historically harmful relationship with its black community that

continues to influence modern city politics. For example, the City's demolishing of the Vinegar Hill neighborhood under the guise of "urban renewal," displacing hundreds of black residents, resulted in distrust between the black community and the City that persists today.

Dr. Frank Dukes, the Director of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, concluded this discussion with an overview of the legal, social and political contexts that contributed to the Confederate statues controversy and engendered the climactic events of August 12th. Frank was a member of the City's Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Memorials and Public Spaces that recommended solutions for dealing with the statues to the Charlottesville City Council.

Frank then led attendees on a

tour of the site, showing the path of the car and the locations of the victims. Frank encouraged attendees to observe visitors to the site and the tributes that had been brought to honor the victims.

Equipped with this information, the planning students and a few planning professionals returned to the TJPDC office to come up with ideas for how the city could hypothetically memorialize the site of the attack. Will Cockrell of TJPDC led the activity, encouraging the three groups to draw their designs over a map of the street grid around the attack site.

One group decided to create a public park along the entire two-block length of the street where the attack had occurred, with a fountain or other focal point in the middle to memorialize the

victims. This group felt that shutting down the street where it ran perpendicular to the Downtown Mall (a pedestrian mall) was not necessary, and that keeping the street open would make the Mall vulnerable to another vehicular attack.

Another group envisioned only the southern block of the street as park space, This would allow delivery vehicles to use the street in the northern block, but prevent cars from entering the pedestrian area of the mall. The group cited the precedence of existing streets along the mall that allow access for deliveries but do not cross the mall.

A third group decided to leave the street open while using the sidewalks and sides of the

buildings available as space for memorializing the events of August 12th. They decided that Emancipation Park (where the Robert E. Lee statue stands) was a better place for a memorial, and that the street itself should not be the focus of a memorial. Several students thought the city should wait to see how the issues played out before deciding what kind of memorial should be built, and others questioned whether the city should have a memorial at all. As one student put it, “weren’t statues what got us into this whole mess in the first place?”

A student attendees who had been injured in the attack described sitting on the sidewalk afterwards, watching paramedics

work on the victims, and how it was important to her to incorporate her perspective in her design of a memorial. Her story made other students realize the importance of including victims and witnesses in the design process.

This activity taught the students more about their current hometown and how planning has informed local political and social issues. Most importantly, it conveyed how planning, once used as a weapon to divide and destroy communities, can also be used as a tool of unification and remembering.

*Abbey is a planner with Cardno in its Government Services Division, which is headquartered in Charlottesville.*



Photo by Abbey Ness



## LUEP CORNER | Local Governmental Response to Solar



*Jonah Fogel, PhD*

The interest in developing solar energy has increased dramatically across Virginia over the last few years. There are several questions a locality must address to full prepare for this emerging land use. Likewise, solar developers and other non-governmental stakeholders may not be fully aware of community planning policies and procedures, their intention, or the legal authorities and responsibilities embedded in the Code of Virginia. I'll try to point out a few key issues here but mostly, I want to draw your attention to a few resources I've developed to help localities respond to this emerging land use.

I first started thinking about the intersection of solar energy and land use issues in the summer of 2016, when a locality contacted LUEP asking for technical guidance. At the time, the best contacts were state agency representatives from Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) and Virginia's Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME). These folks continue to be key points of contact. The information available on the VDEQ web site is helpful. The Code of Virginia provides the framework for how the work of the agencies regulate solar energy development. That was about it though. Only one utility-scale solar project had been approved in Virginia and it wasn't fully online yet. So, there wasn't much advice to give on planning and zoning for solar development. There just weren't many experiences to draw upon.

At the time this article is being published, 65 Notices of Intent

are listed on VDEQ's website (projects greater than 10 acres and 5 megawatts in size, seeking approval for construction). While those numbers are interesting, they don't reflect a full accounting of solar project development in Virginia. The 60+ projects that sprang up over the past year represent only those project seeking regulatory approval through what's known as the Permit By Rule (PBR) process, and "large-scale" projects as defined by the Code of Virginia (i.e. projects over 150MW in designed generating capacity). A full accounting of solar development falls to the Virginia Solar Energy Development Authority (VSEDA), created under 2015 legislation.

The Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Solar Energy Development Authority ("VSEDA" or "the Authority") for the purposes of facilitating, coordinating, and supporting the solar energy

industry and solar energy projects in Virginia. The Authority is composed of 11 non-legislative citizen members. The VSEDA is currently drafting a workplan outlining both legislative and non-legislative priorities [A report issued by the VSEDA in November of 2016](#) suggested "distributed solar generation (net metered) grew from approximately 1,900 installations totaling 13.8 megawatts at the beginning of 2015, to 3,200 installations totaling 27.3 megawatts at the end of September of 2016." While the overall contribution of solar power to Virginia's energy portfolio is small, solar power production is growing rapidly. All renewable sources, including wind and hydroelectric power, account for around 6% of Virginia's power generating capacity according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

By all accounts, solar is just getting started. More legislative changes are expected, further

encouraging solar project development. Other groups such as the Solar Policy Collaborative Workgroup (aka "The Rubin Group"), are working independently from the VSEDA. In 2016, the Rubin Group successfully advanced three pieces of legislation through the Virginia General Assembly. Areas of policy resistance remain. Distributed solar projects, in their many forms, are a current topic of policy discussions, and may yield policy changes in the coming years. Such changes may have implications for how localities incorporate solar into their land use plans and ordinances.

The 60+ projects that have filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) with VDEQ occur in more than 40 different localities (towns, cities, and counties). In a planning and zoning sense, there have been a variety of reactions to these proposals. Some localities are using a Conditional Use permitting process. Others are

opting to use a by-right use process. Still others have not published any changes to their zoning and subdivision ordinances online yet. I have been in contact with a few localities that are still working out ordinance amendments. At least two counties have mentioned that the original text amendments made to their zoning may need to be revisited because of lessons learned after a solar project's approval. As communities wrestle with this new land use, we thought it would be helpful to provide some resources to aid the discussions. In putting these together, a number of questions have come to mind. I'd love to hear from you.

- There seems to be some confusion about how to regulate solar installations. There are a number of factors to consider, including: whether the system will be roof mounted or ground mounted, the extent of land area involved, and the power output of the project and

Size	Regulation	Acres	Power (MW)	Requirements
"Small" <=150 MW (§ 10.1-1197.5)	9VAC15-60-130A	=> 2	or <= 500KW	No DEQ Notice or Local Gov. Certification
	9VAC15-60-130B	>2 but <= 10	or >500KW to <= 5MW	DEQ Notice and Local Gov. Land Use Certification
	9VAC15-60-30	>10	and > 5MW to <= 150MW	PBR Application and Local Gov. Certification
"Large" >150 MW		N/A	> 150MW	Full Application (including SCC)

necessary grid interconnection. In addition, who operates the project can make a difference. For example, the Code of Virginia defines solar projects in terms of "small" and "large" scale, but localities have different terms for siting and permitting processes that don't match the state definitions. Likewise, model ordinances available through VDEQ provide little justification for regulating solar at different scales. How does your locality deal with these definitional issues?

- Does your locality provide incentives for solar or "green" development? Programs such as C-PACE can help businesses and homeowners make the shift to renewable energy and invest in energy efficiency programs. Furthermore, have you defined your visions for solar in your community through a Community Energy Planning process or comprehensive plan revision?
- What are the potential tax tradeoffs between solar development and other land protection programs (land use taxation, ag. and forestal districts)? Do you understand the implications of solar development on education funding (calculation of your Local Composite Index)? How about the tax exemption of solar equipment (machine and tool tax exemption)?
- What can local governments (or LUEP) do to help solar thrive in Virginia? Do solar developers understand and seem comfortable with the

- expectations of local planning?
- How are you balancing the desire to approve solar projects with your concerns about environmental issues (invasive plants and opportunities for pollinator species, erosion and sediment control plan inspections)?
- If you have zoning in place to support solar development, how has it been working out? Are the challenges and benefits turning out as expected? How are landowners holding leases within a solar project reacting?

*Jonah is an Extension Specialist at the Virginia Tech Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Director of the Land Use Education Program (LUEP). You can contact Jonah at [jfogel@vt.edu](mailto:jfogel@vt.edu).*

**Join the  
conversation  
on LUEP's  
Community  
of Practice  
(CoP)!**

## Land Use and Solar Policy Resources

1) LUEP's Community of Practice (CoP) is a listserv style discussion. Posts can be made by email or via the web-based interface. We've had a few posts about solar energy over the last few months. Please use and share this service. I think it will help surface issues important to improving solar energy policy in the state. Many lessons have been learned over the last year. Consider lending your thoughts to the conversation.

2) A new Document Library has been established to help access and assess approaches to ordinance changes to accommodate solar as a land use. Please consider adding your jurisdiction to the library, so others can benefit from your thinking. Planning Commissioners, interested citizens, and elected officials are the "front line" workers on many critical issues related to balancing the tradeoffs induced by solar projects. State policy is, in many ways, recommendatory in nature, leaving local governments to negotiate conditions for rezoning approvals.

3) LUEP related presentations on solar policy, recorded over the last year. You can watch videos online and even download handouts in our new Session Archive.

# launch.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The scene is dimly lit, with a blue and yellow color palette. In the foreground, there is a stack of white papers and a smartphone lying flat on the desk. The background is blurred, showing other people in an office environment.

**new APA Virginia  
website coming soon**

**stay tuned for more details**

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