

# The Nebraska Planner

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2021 APA NE & NPZA AWARD WINNERS

The American Planning Association Nebraska Chapter and the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association both recognized award winning planning work during the banquet at the annual Nebraska Planning Conference in early September. The winners are listed below. See pages 3-6 of this newsletter for additional information.

#### APA NE

1. *Transportation Planning Award* - 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan - Grand Island Area MPO
2. *Best Practice Award* - Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan - City of Lincoln
3. *Best Practice Award* - One District, Two Plans, One Water Plan - The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District

#### NPZA

1. *District Appointed Officials Award* - Jeff Miller, City Attorney for City of Gretna
2. *District Professional Officials Award* - Brent Kusek, Planner for City of Alliance
3. *District Elected Officials Award* - Alan Zavodny, Mayor of David City
4. *Carol Swayne Planning Commissioner Award* - Pat O'Neil, Hall County Planning Commission
5. *Loretta Ludemann Achievement Award* - Becky Lerch, Zoning Administrator for Cuming County

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

The APA Nebraska Chapter is launching a podcast that summarizes content from the relevant planning books that we do not always have time to sit down and read. Stay tuned for more details on the release of Episode 1, but please reach out to Stephanie Rouse at [rouseplanning@gmail.com](mailto:rouseplanning@gmail.com) by October 22 if you are interested in helping with the podcast production. We need book readers/reviewers, help with website posting, audio editing, and a show co host. There may be a small stipend available for those interested in helping with the podcast.

### APA ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to the re-elected members of the APA Nebraska Board of Directors, listed below, whose 2nd term will begin on January 1, 2022. You can read more about each member on the chapter website [here](#).

- President: Jeff Ray, AICP
- Vice President/PDO: Stephanie Rouse, AICP
- Secretary: Jesse Poore, AICP
- Treasurer: Troy Anderson, AICP

In addition, chapter member Chad Nabity, AICP was elected to the APA Board of Directors as Division Council Chair.

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# PRESIDENTS' UPDATES

Another successful Nebraska Planning Conference! This year we had over 230 people attend the conference. This conference was actually one of the toughest for the NPZA and APA NE boards to prepare for between moving the event to the fall and adjustments related to the pandemic. But we all believe that the conference was a great success! We hope the wide variety of sessions that the NPZA Board packed into the conference program covered every subject that piqued your interests.

It is with great excitement that we announce the movement of the conference to the new [Younes Conference Center North building](#). Only a block north of the existing facility where the past few Nebraska Planning Conferences have been, this facility is nearing completion and will be a state-of-the-art facility that will be a great venue for future planning and zoning training.

The NPZA Board members have started working on a Spring Workshop. This virtual event will be similar in format to our past virtual learning workshops. As we work towards finalizing the event particulars, please stay tuned to [NPZA's website](#) or follow our activities on Facebook and Twitter as well for more information as it becomes available.

The NPZA Board and I are excited about the upcoming learning opportunities and we look forward to seeing you there!



Christopher Solberg, AICP - NPZA President



I hope you all enjoyed the fall conference we had last month. The variety of the sessions just keeps getting better and quality of the presenters was impressive. Thank you again to all who presented, sponsored, and volunteered their time to make this a premiere event for NPZA and NE APA.

For those of you that attended, I challenge you to utilize a new skill or some knowledge that you gained from the conference in the next month. Personally, I was inspired by Mitchell Silver's reframing of the discussion of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Access to avoid politicized words.

Have a great fall and please feel free to [reach out to me](#) with any ideas, questions or concern about NE APA.



Jeff Ray, AICP - APA-NE President





The award jury noted that early implementation actions include “zoning ordinance changes” and that affordable housing “is a universal issue, and Lincoln’s process can be modeled by other communities.”

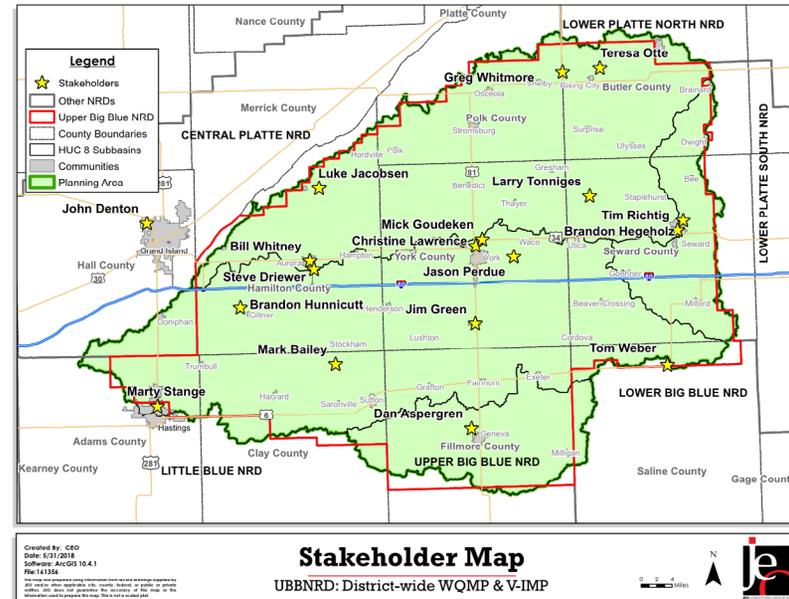


Plan Cover for the Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan

### One District, Two Plans, One Water Plan (Best Practice Award)

The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District (UBBNRD) is in central Nebraska, encompassing 49 incorporated communities and portions of ten counties and the UBBNRD is tasked with protecting, enhancing, conserving, and restoring the natural resources of four watershed subbasins. In fulfilling this mission, the UBBNRD embarked on the state’s first-ever combined water quality management and voluntary integrated management planning processes in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Environmental and Energy (NDEE) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR).

The two planning efforts are typically conducted separately, but the UBBNRD seized the opportunity to combine two inseparable priorities for water: quality and quantity. The award jury noted that “collaboration across different agencies and combining the public participation process is something planners have often strived for but have not been able to accomplish.”



A map displaying the stakeholders involved in UBBNRD’s water plan

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# 2021 NPZA AWARD WINNERS

A total of five individuals were honored at this year's awards ceremony held during the banquet on Thursday night during the Nebraska Planning Conference. These individuals reflect the great work being doing throughout the state.

## **Jeff Miller (NPZA District Appointed Officials Award)**

Jeff Miller was the lead attorney for Gretna during their recent annexation and the subsequent legal challenges in a case that went all the way to the State Supreme Court. He always asks the hard questions regarding specific planning and zoning language when the City's ordinances and regulations are being amended. Jeff will be a major supporter and leader regarding the implementation of Gretna's new planning jurisdiction as well as Gretna's move from a city of the second class to a city of the first class.



Jeff C. Miller, City Attorney for City of Gretna



Brent Kusek, Planner for the City of Alliance

## **Brent Kusek (NPZA District Professional Officials Award)**

In addition to his duties as the Planner for the City of Alliance, Brent Kusek has become a valuable resource for the Panhandle. He puts a great amount of time and effort into representing the Panhandle district in NPZA and in helping to coordinate and present the Panhandle Planning Workshop. This workshop has been extremely valuable in helping to train staff members and planning commissioners who otherwise would not have the opportunity to attend training.

## **Alan Zavodny (NPZA District Elected Officials Award)**

Alan Zavodny is amid his 3rd term as Mayor of David City. During his tenure, he has always supported the Planning Commission even when he didn't agree with their recommendations. His support of the Commission's actions includes the recent update to the City's Comprehensive Plan, which ushered in a new vision for the future of this community of 1,600. During his term as Mayor, Alan has seen the completion of several critical projects including the "Northwest Drainage Project" which addressed excessive surface flooding during even the smallest rainstorm and an extensive downtown infrastructure project which upgraded stormwater drainage, improved water service, and revitalized streets.



Alan Zavodny, Mayor of David City

*Continued on following page...*

**Pat O'Neill (Carol Swayne Planning Commissioner Award)**

Pat O'Neill was appointed to the Hall County RPC in 2001. Within three years he became Chair of the Planning Commission. He has served as a Planning Commission advisory member on committees of the American Planning Association. He has also represented the Planning Commission on the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (GIAMPO) Policy Board. In addition to his work and planning activities, Pat is also on the board for Fonner Park and the local YMCA.

**Becky Lerch (Loretta Ludemann Achievement Award for Excellence in Planning by a Woman in the State of Nebraska)**

Becky Lerch has shown her strength, knowledge, determination, and very good judgement while conducting the business of zoning for Cuming County. With her leadership, the county has adopted subdivision regulations, conducted a comprehensive update of their zoning regulations, and adopted updates to their comprehensive plan. She has acted with professionalism and grace when confronted by citizens that are unhappy with zoning requirements. She has exhibited 'strength, yet courtesy' when put into difficult situations. Becky responds with firmness, knowledge, and strength in those situations. Should she not know an answer, she doesn't hesitate to pull out the Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance and share her findings with the individual.



Pat O'Neill, Hall County RPC Chair



Becky Lerch, Cuming County Zoning Administrator

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# WHAT ARE PLANNERS IN COLORADO DOING?

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE 2021 COLORADO ANNUAL PLANNING CONFERENCE

BY: STEVE MILLER, AICP

It's been my experience that planners are curious professionals and we go to great lengths to learn and understand what our colleagues in other states and other parts of the country are doing. What key issues are they facing, what funding sources are available, and what are the employment trends? I've been lucky in my career to have been able to attend planning conferences or workshops in many states in very different geographic regions. The conference I've attended the most is the Colorado Annual Planning Conference.

The Colorado conference historically is held in the fall and it's specifically scheduled before ski season begins. Since it's the "off" season, the ski resorts aren't busy and can provide the Colorado Chapter with a cost-effective opportunity to host the conference. During the past five or so years, the conference has been hosted in Crested Butte, Steamboat Springs, Snowmass Village, Vail, and Keystone. Fall is a great season to visit the Colorado mountains and the planners attending the conference willingly share their recommendations for getting out to enjoy the scenery, to take a hike, or hit the golf course. It seems everyone wants to take in all the warm weather they can before the winter and snow drift into the mountains. I once saw a moose while I was walking on the trail from my room to the conference center in Keystone. While that was a great experience, I think seeing the sandhill cranes taking off from the Platte River near Kearney is one of the best ever wildlife viewing events.

Outside of the location, the Colorado conference has many similarities to the Nebraska conference – an opening reception, an awards ceremony – but Colorado does this in conjunction with a large breakfast event. The session topics are similar too – climate/environment, equity, housing, ethics & law, growing water smart, small town and rural, and transportation and transit.

This year in Colorado the emphasis in most sessions appeared to converge on three issue areas – equity in planning, climate change and its impact on water, and housing.

In planning departments, agencies, and organizations across the United States, equity is an issue that touches all of us in the industry. The City of Denver is addressing it head on by testing an Equity Assessment Process for all rezoning applications. The process will assess and evaluate how a rezoning action will impact designated criteria outlined in its comprehensive plan. Some of the criteria include access to healthy food, distance to parks or playgrounds, the percentage of affordable housing units created, and impact on childhood obesity.

Colorado, especially along the Front Range (the eastern slope of the mountains), is experiencing rapid population growth. Housing supply has been out-paced by the population growth. As a result, the price for all types of housing has sky-rocketed and income growth has not kept pace. For example, the median sales price over the summer for a single-family home in Colorado Springs is over \$450,000, nearly \$600,000 in Denver, and almost \$800,000 in Boulder. Several sessions at the conference discussed the crisis of housing in Colorado offering numerous strategies for consideration.

The conclusions I draw from attending the Colorado conference don't dwell on the details presented and discussed in the sessions. As planners, we all address complex issues without easy solutions. Conferences present to us the opportunity to come together, to share our experiences, to celebrate our successes and to lament our failures. In the end, it brings us together and helps us create a common language we can use to make our rural areas, towns and cities better and more fair places to live, work, and play.

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# PLANNING AND DESIGNING FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION - MITCHELL SILVER, FAICP KEYNOTE

**BY: CALE BRODERSEN, AICP**

Nebraska's APA and NPZA members were delighted to welcome past American Planning Association (APA) president Mitchell Silver to Kearney, NE to deliver Thursday morning's keynote presentation at the Annual Nebraska Planning Conference. Silver has more than 30 years of award-winning planning experience, including heading the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, where he oversaw the management, planning, and operations for over 30,000 acres of parkland and recreational assets.

On the surface, Nebraska and New York City couldn't seem more different. But in his talk titled "Planning and Designing for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion," Silver emphasized the importance of proactive planning for the shifting population demographics in urban metros and rural villages alike. What Silver means by "equity" is actually a word we all grasped at age five: fairness. "Everyone understands what fairness means," Silver said. "The word 'equity' muddles the meaning." The more ambiguous, the more room for misinterpretation and misinformation.

While emphasizing fairness in planning, Silver referred to the needs of Nebraska's rapidly changing population. "It's not just about what is next, but who is next?" Silver stated. When we ignore diversity, we are saying no to seniors and young people, to people of color and people with disabilities. There are consequences for saying no to diversity, and we must pay close attention to emerging trends in our communities. According to Silver, success means all residents can say "I feel welcome here. I belong here." If not everyone can say that in your community, then there is more work to be done.

As the Commissioner of over 1,700 public spaces in New York City, Silver has witnessed what happens when planners drop the ball on fairness. Under his leadership, the Parks Department used GIS to analyze which parks received capital improvement funding over the past 20 years, and which neighborhoods were being neglected.

The results were astounding: of the 1,700 public spaces maintained by the Parks Department, 215 received essentially zero investment for two decades. "That isn't fair," remarked Silver. Those parks and, subsequently, those neighborhoods and the communities they house were left behind, while other parks and neighborhoods were regularly receiving large investments.



Conference Keynote Speaker: Mitchell Silver, FAICP

Parks are critical to the health and well-being of communities, and this necessary access to wide open (and green) spaces was being denied to certain populations. The Parks Department strives to correct the allocation of resources to fairly serve all NYC residents, with the goal of every resident living within a 10-minute walk of a quality, local park.

With the foresight from Silver's presentation, Nebraska planners who attended his keynote session were energized to begin responsibly planning for equitable spaces that meet our current - and future - population's needs. "Diversity, equity, and inclusion is not a campaign. It's who you are," said Silver. Your future neighbors, residents, and business owners want to know: Who will you be?

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# PLANNING STUDENTS HELPING TO REVITALIZE DAVID CITY'S DOWNTOWN

BY: AVA GAGNER, REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM [WWW.NEWS.UNL.EDU](http://WWW.NEWS.UNL.EDU)

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s College of Architecture and the Southeast Nebraska Development District are partnering with community members on a downtown revitalization plan for David City.

Students began working on the plan in early September, with a trip to David City for a community meeting and tour. Community members were asked to take a survey to help the students better understand the needs of the downtown area and community concerns.

“Students in the CRP program will have a great opportunity to learn from this real-world planning project and apply their expertise and skills to help the community ...,” said Zhenghong Tang, professor and director of the Community and Regional Planning program.

Faculty and students will conduct a community stakeholder survey, participate in numerous community meetings, make field surveys and assessments, and offer planning strategies and recommendations.

“This downtown revitalization plan will be a great tool to guide the city on the track to potentially igniting the local economy,” Lecturer Frank Ordia said. The plan will draw on David City’s strengths, with Ordia noting that “the number of historic buildings here are the foundation of reimagining David City.” Community members are excited about the project.

“We are grateful that SENDD and UNL are willing to help our community create a vision for the future of our downtown,” said Clayton Keller, City Administrator. “David City recently completed a downtown project that addressed the infrastructure needs of the area. We hope to keep that momentum moving forward as we turn that focus to economic and property improvements.”



MCRP students on a tour as part of a downtown revitalization planning process for David City

Mayor Alan Zavodny said: “We are looking forward to our partnership with SENDD and the University of Nebraska for David City’s downtown revitalization. The downtown of a community like ours is the heartbeat of our community. We realize the importance of this endeavor.”

The downtown revitalization plan also has support from local business owners.

“As a longtime resident and business owner in David City, it’s exciting to hear of a potential downtown revitalization effort,” said Mike Moravec, owner and president of Moravec Financial Advisors, Inc. “David City has a lot of positive things happening, and the timing is perfect for a refresh of our downtown. I know the business community will welcome CRP and SENDD’s help on this project. It’s important to our local economy that our downtown be an inviting space that people want to come to dine, shop and do business.”

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# SMALL CHANGES FOR BIG IMPACT:

## ZONING REFORM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

BY: KURT ELDER, AICP

On Thursday, September 30th I had a wonderful opportunity to present at the National APA Policy and Advocacy Conference. The session title was 'Small Changes for Big Impact: Zoning Reform at the Local Level' and the abstract read: "Cities, counties, and small municipalities are the sites of bold innovation in housing planning and local code reform. Hear directly from city officials, community organizers, and housing advocates leading the way toward meaningful reform in our urban, ex- and suburban, and rural communities. These leaders detail how strategic, critical, and often rather small changes to codes and zoning resolutions are being implemented and how to navigate the challenging politics of reform." I was joined by three others. The first was Yesim Sayin Taylor who is the Executive Director of the D.C. Policy Center. She spoke on reform in Washington D.C. The second was Adam Gordon who is the Executive Director at Fair Share Housing Center. He spoke on sub- and ex-urban New Jersey reform and fair housing issues. It was moderated by Eric Shaw who is the Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development in San Francisco. Then there was me ... Kurt Elder, a civil servant, who choose to speak on rural/ Nebraska interests.

The National APA believes that to make an impact with our advocacy, we need real stories of what's happening in local communities. Our stories will help us cut through the noise in Washington and drive tangible change.

The Unlocking Possibilities Program - based on the APA-endorsed Housing Supply and Affordability Act - is among provisions that House, and Senate Democratic leaders are weighing whether to keep or cut in a scaled-down reconciliation package. At issue is the topline cost of the overall legislative behemoth and how lawmakers will lower that figure.

The legislation would create a powerful new grant program inside the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that would empower planners to reform exclusionary zoning and development codes, create and implement housing action plans, and modernize regulations. Zoning reform is among planners' top federal priorities in 2021." This housing focused panel worked to aid this effort.

I won't recap the others input but I'll review my presentation and take-aways in the action items presented below. I began my presentation by refocusing the broad topic in my presentation titled, 'Reform & Rural Housing Policies'. In preparation I interviewed urban and rural housing authorities, statewide developers, small city administrators and attended some wonderful sessions on housing development at the 2021 Nebraska Planning Conference.

**Action #1: Rural elected officials need to educate their communities that in order to deliver marketable lots (i.e., those with infrastructure) to developers they may need to use eminent domain.**

There is often a perception that rural areas don't have a land problem. Outsiders can simply point to the corn fields that surround many communities, but they lack context. We know that land is expensive and is often tied to generational wealth that can be used for additional wealth. People live in rural areas because of the lifestyle (i.e., community benefit) it provides. These small places recognize common benefits such as telephone and broadband as utilities that contribute to the broader benefit; however, housing isn't always thought of in the same way.

**Action #2: Increase the number of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) which will help entice more developers to enter the marketplace.**

In Nebraska we have a very competitive market. There are more projects than credits. This issue is further compounded by the small pool of developers that have experience in using them. Furthermore, those developers are selective about where they extend their capacity. In my research it was shared that we need these additional credits to entice others to enter the development market and to cover the additional cost of unit production.

**Action #3: Support direct developer subsidies in relation to public housing authorities.**

Nationwide our public housing authorities have been capped on the number of units they can support (i.e., unit caps) since 1994. These local leaders often have some of the best capacity to do more but they are limited in being part of the local solution.

**Action #4: Support source of income protections.**

Discrimination based on one's "source of income" is currently legal in Nebraska. This means some landlords and management companies can refuse to rent to individuals relying on certain forms of legal income. For example, those who use a Housing Choice Voucher, receive veterans' benefits or Social Security Insurance (SSI) payments can be denied, among others. While this policy will not create more affordable and available rental housing - it will further access to housing.

**Action #5: Provide regulatory flexibility in the use of federal funds - Project Impact (A).**

Above it was noted that our local housing authorities have a wealth of experience, and the ability to engage them in the market is a solution forward; however, current rules make partnering difficult if not directly undesirable for the private developer.

For example, if federal funds are planned to be used in a private project, then the project must abide by all applicable rules regardless of amount invested. These federal funds can trigger environmental reviews, procurement procedures, Davis Bacon, Section #3 requirements, paperwork and reporting/monitoring.

**Action #6: Provide regulatory flexibility in the use of federal funds - Project Impact (B).**

In rural areas the type of federal funds used to support local initiatives is about 50% HUD and 50% USDA. USDA funds have different rules. Flexibility for HUD funds in rural areas would be helpful to complement other federal sources. This kind of flexibility isn't uncommon either. For example, National Housing Trust Fund and the 2008 Neighborhood Stabilization program didn't require Davis Bacon. Also, many of our federal COVID relief funds and recent HOME-ARP funds were awarded with statutory flexibility with the former done through a series of mega waivers. Point being good work was done with flexibility and it should remain. Until flexibility is granted to rural efforts, a limited toolbox of community development investment clubs, foundations, TIF, and ready lots will support local housing efforts.

**Action #7: We need policies/flexibility to develop partnerships, reduce risk, engage existing systems.**

I've said it once, I said it twice and here is a third time we need flexibility to use existing systems in new ways to solve problems in ways the development & free-market community won't oppose. For example, if I said, 'inclusionary zoning' (i.e., a mandate to add 'X' number of affordable units to a protect) a steady chorus of review would follow for a variety of reasons; however, if I could achieve the same thing through a density bonus then both parties are satisfied.

A hypothetical case – for example only: A local developer can build 30 units of market rate housing on a piece of property by right.

In this community any complex over a certain size has to offer the local public housing authority (PHA) the right to invest in their property because it's hard to find enough land to build their own dedicated complexes. If the PHA thinks the site furthers their housing goals (i.e., access to housing) then they can contribute to the total site costs. (Sidenote: Let's assume we have some flexibility in HUD/USAD rules, and no impact is present). In exchange for allowing the PHA to build a dedicated building on site, or to develop scattered units within the complex the developer gets an additional density bonus. Lastly, and again ... mutual partnerships are limited in an already small pool, and it's almost wasteful to not use existing expertise.

### **Action #8: We should advocate for a fourth HUD National Objective: Fair Housing (FH).**

All HUD activities need to address one of three national objectives. They are (1) Benefit Low and Low Moderate Income Persons, (2) Aid in the removal of blight, and (3) Urgent need. Within these areas there are codes that we assign to projects. Each kind of HUD funding stream (i.e., CDBG, HOME, etc.) has two general pools. The first is programable funds (think of home rehabilitation, construction) and administrative funds (think of planning and employee salary). If a project for 'fair housing testing' was proposed it would come out of the smaller admin bucket because there isn't a matrix code specifically for fair housing. If we had a national objective, we would advocate to have a matrix code to spend more money (outside of the public service and admin cap) on furthering fair housing.

### **Action #9: We should advocate for a dedicated fair housing funding stream from HUD**

HUD has responded to national needs with dedicated funding streams, via legislation, in the past. I believe that furthering fair housing and access to opportunity is a worthy investment opportunity.

### **Action #10: Tracking fair-housing issues should take place in a common management system.**

We need to empower the local housing market and elected leaders with easily accessible goals, projects, funding details, and project outcomes whether that be, fair housing testing, housing provider education, tenant education etc.

It was a wonderful experience, and I hope I did our State, and primarily rural leaders concerns justice.

# CHAPTER SPONSORSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

APA Nebraska will be launching an annual chapter sponsorship program in the coming months which will begin January 1, 2021. Our goal is to limit the number of times we ask firms and organizations to help us fund educational and networking events throughout the year. This new streamlined process will have one application window in the fall each year where sponsors can sign up under one of three tiers. Your sponsorship will help fund the Emerging Professionals events, Mentor-Mentee program, Spring Workshop, and potential new chapter activities throughout the year. Benefits to sponsorship could include the following depending on the tier of sponsorship selected:

- Business logo in Nebraska Planner Newsletter
- One article highlighting their work/a project under a sponsor highlight section (firm must write and submit the article)
- Logo in monthly E-blast
- Logo on posters for all Mentor-Match Events
- Logo on poster for the EPG Happy Hour at Conference
- Logo on APA Nebraska Website Page with contact information
- Sponsor Booth at the Spring Workshop
- Free Registrations at the Spring Workshop
- Logo on website, program, signs at the Spring Workshop

This sponsorship will be separate from the Nebraska Planning Conference sponsorship program. If you are interested in learning more or to become a sponsor today, please email Stephanie at [rouseplanning@gmail.com](mailto:rouseplanning@gmail.com).



Sponsorship poster from the Emerging Planners Group networking event at the 2021 Nebraska Planning Conference

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# PLANNER PROFILE – BELINDA FOWLER-HAGEN

BY: STEVE MILLER, AICP

One of the great things about being a planner is wide ranging areas of expertise that people who call themselves planners have. I had the great opportunity to meet Belinda Fowler-Hagen at the 2021 Nebraska Planning Conference in Kearney and I was inspired by her intellect and passion for planning at the crossroads of environmental planning, public health, and business development.

Belinda is the Small Business Environmental Assistance Coordinator for the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy and an adjunct instructor in the Community and Regional Planning Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

She graciously took the time to share some thoughts about her background, her experience, and the important things to her about being a planner. Please see Belinda's responses to the following five questions:

## **1. Describe your current job or the current work you're doing.**

I currently work for the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) and as a part-time adjunct faculty member for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Community and Regional Planning Program-teaching Environmental Planning and Policy and Planning for Public Health Crisis (new course) in the spring of 2022.

At NDEE I wear several hats as one of the environmental assistance coordinators within the agency. Most of the coordinators within the agency have a program specific focus. My role is a little different as it spans all programs in support of new or expanding business permitting, outreach, and compliance assistance.



Pictured: Belinda Fowler-Hagen

My role coordinates with our in-house programs to provide education that supports environmental compliance, protection, and energy resources across the state through guidance documents, webpage, or webinar program content. I work with two teams to identify synergies with outside agencies and organizations, sole-proprietors, community planners, economic development districts, and many others.

Each day is filled with new challenges, questions and opportunities to learn more about environmental regulations, requirements within each program, and provide education and assistance through on-site compliance assistance visits as a service for regulated facilities across the state. Seeing your recommendations implemented is one step forward toward a sustainable future and is quite rewarding.

## **2. What did you want to be when you were growing up and how did you get into planning?**

I really wanted to go into the medical field and become a general family practitioner, but after job shadowing and balancing a young family, I selected my second love of being outdoors, always wondering about the natural environment, and incorporating biology and environmental science to my education and career pathway. I had many that helped along the way, and can't over-emphasize to students and professionals alike, the value of networking. I could never really decide what narrow area of specialization would be the most beneficial, and when exposed to planning, I realized I could know a lot about many different areas and build a broad skill set that would be valuable not only for my innate need to be a lifelong learner, but also for Nebraska communities, private enterprise, economic development, and students alike.

## **3. Describe a mentor or someone who had an impact on your career.**

So many to mention! As a young student in Upward Bound, Joan Mendoza-Gorham set the belief that I could finish college as a first-generation (from my family) student. The continued support from science and math professors at Northeast Community College. Joining the NDEQ (now NDEE) as a surface water intern and gaining hands-on experience with the staff in the surface water section in conducting field sampling and developing a scientific environmental study on a sedimentation basin. I wouldn't have completed my undergraduate degree without them!

I would be remiss without mentioning staff at the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District (Norfolk), Dr. Alan Kolok and Dr. Daniel Snow at the UNL Water Sciences Laboratory to learn about GIS applications, how samples are tested, processed and results reported. Marty Link for providing a second internship at NDEQ to learn about well-head protection, water quality reports, sampling, and serving as a role model as a woman in leadership.

I am thankful for my first true boss, and now my friend- Mr. Michael Mattison, P.E. at Nebraska Department of Transportation, for taking a chance on me and guiding my learning and growth into my first professional job where I learned to read environmental regulations and managed environmental compliance for rest areas and maintenance facilities across the state. Later, Mr. Joe Francis accepted me for my current role here at NDEE which has stretched me in terms of leadership, communication, planning, and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

While I am missing many in this writeup, I must, last but not least mention the fantastic Community and Regional Planning Program professors at the UNL College of Architecture. They create a sense of community with their students and within their program and become significant mentors to their students. Throughout the courses, they teach you the foundation of planning, the technical skills required, and the soft skills required to interact with members of the public at large. My true thanks for the support of Dr. Gordon Scholz (retired), Dr. Zhenghong Tang (current Planning Program Chair), Dr. Rodrigo Cantarero (retired), Dr. Yunwoo Nam for all the commitment and support. I cannot thank them enough for believing in me and providing the opportunity to be a part of their group, their community, to teach, lead and shape our current students in their current or future professional planning roles, wherever they may be.

## **4. What advice would you give a young planner just starting their career?**

Don't think you don't "fit" or that you don't know enough. You bring something to the table no matter where you are or where you come from. You are a stakeholder! We are all learning every day and if I channel a phrase from one of my Community and Regional Planning Professors: "You will never plan alone". Planners help create a feeling of community within their organizations, through their professional networks, with their stakeholders and are spread like a polka-dot quilt across every community no matter where you're located. Get Involved!

Find training opportunities. If you don't know something, don't be afraid to ask. Be respectful, humble and kind. Ask to job shadow, be interested in the people and always have an open mind toward learning more from a variety of perspectives. Emulate those that you admire, identify what traits they exhibit that you can model yourself after. Attend public meetings, know who your local representatives are and what they stand for. Attend conferences and offer to present even if it is uncomfortable. Volunteer to help in planning processes or organizations. You never know what opportunities may arise afterward.

### **5. What has been your involvement in APA, NPZA, and other professional organizations and how has it helped you as a planner?**

APA offers free memberships to MCRP student, and the resources provided on the APA website are extensive and support student research. The APA also supports the Nebraska Chapter of the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association, which hosts an annual conference that is second to none. As a student, the conference allowed for student presentations, which set the stage for gaining confidence and skills in public speaking. I have attended this conference almost annually as a student and now as a professional, speaking almost every year. The networking, the content, the ongoing education and training helps to keep current with emerging trends and historical perspectives in planning. The knowledge gained at these events is shared and elevated during daily work activities within our team. I am grateful to APA for supporting this annual event for students and professionals alike.

I have only recently connected with APA members directly and have decided to seek the AICP professional certification (now that the timing is right). Following the 2021 conference, I am now reaching out to members of the APA to gain insights on training materials and tips in preparation for the exam. Members of the APA are always open and available to reach out to with questions or offer suggestions for resources that can assist you with the current planning challenge you are facing.

Their podcasts and journal articles are easily accessible on their website and allow you to virtually meet other APA members and stay current. This was especially true when I was developing content for a COVID-19 planning related course in the Spring of 2020.

Other professional organizations that I have been involved with include the National Small Business Environmental Assistance Program, [www.nationalsbeap.org](http://www.nationalsbeap.org), the Local Emergency Planning Committee in Central City, Nebraska, a grant reviewer as part of the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and as a volunteer planner for a non-profit organization Wessels Living History Farm in York, NE. Every organization or entity has added value by presenting new challenges or opportunities to gain experiential learning, grow professional skills, gain new friends, improve the environment, and engage as a planner. Consider your local resources and connections to find opportunities to get involved. At the beginning you may be the mentee, but after some time, you will likely find yourself in a position to be the mentor. Mr. Jesse Poore, AICP and the Nebraska APA Chapter president said it so right, "With knowledge comes responsibility". As planners we have an ability to make a big difference, but the difference starts with you.

# EMERGING PLANNERS GROUP - BOOK CLUB REVIEW

BY: CALE BRODERSEN

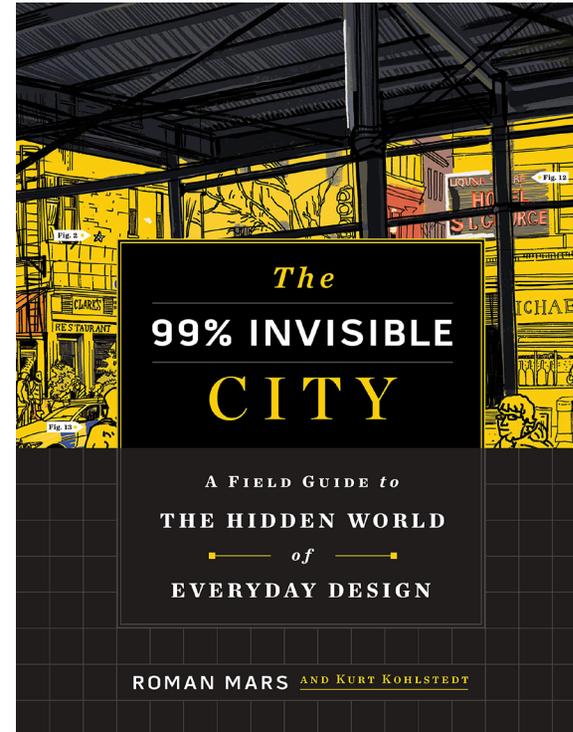
## **The 99% Invisible City: A Field Guide to the Hidden World of Everyday Design By Roman Mars & Kurt Kohlstedt**

This September, the Emerging Planners Group's Book Club reconvened to discuss *The 99% Invisible City*. This book was inspired by the 99% Invisible podcast by Roman Mars, which has released over 400 episodes since its inception in 2010.

This book, much like the podcast is jam packed full of interesting tidbits, factoids, and histories about the ways our cities were designed and utilized. Covering a wide range of topics such as manhole covers, wireless towers, advertising inflatables, drinking fountains, property taxation, and races to construct the tallest skyscraper. There is a lot to enjoy from this book. The large number of stories are organized in categories (such as infrastructure, architecture, geography, and urbanism) and subcategories (such as materials, regulations, towers, and foundations).

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln even received a shout out for their creative solution to evergreen trees on campus being cut down and stolen to be used as Christmas trees. Their solution? Spray the trees with fox urine and tag them with signs so that if someone were to bring them inside, they would warm up and the house would fill with a pungent and terrible odor. Now the campus community knows to leave the trees alone.

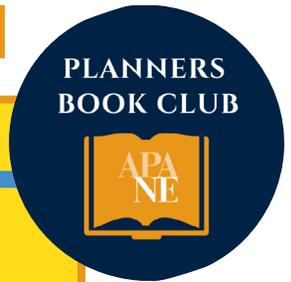
The physical book makes a nice coffee table book that can be read just a few pages at a time, and in any order. The physical book also includes some artistic sketches to enhance your reading experience. The audio book provides for some easily listening and includes a bonus episode of the podcast at the end.



This book is a fun and easy way to add to your urban experience. Whether you are a planner or not, you will certainly start noticing little details about your community that you didn't before.

Don't worry if you missed out this time, the Emerging Planners Group hosts quarterly book clubs. Join us in January for the next one! See page 24 of this newsletter, or e-mail [cbrodersen@cityoflavista.org](mailto:cbrodersen@cityoflavista.org) for more information!

# PLANNERS BOOK CLUB - WINTER SELECTION



Join your fellow planners and allied professionals in the Winter 2021/2022 Planners Book Club hosted by the APA Nebraska Chapter's Emerging Planners Group. Here is how it works:

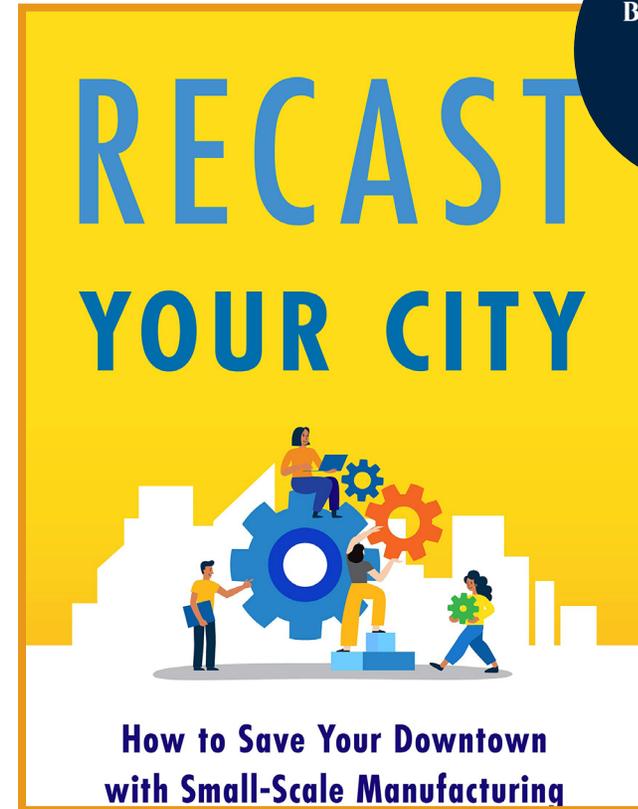
1. Register to participate at the following link: <https://forms.gle/aLmhGEZ5fxPEPf1P7>.
2. Read or listen to the book (available in physical, digital, and audio formats).
3. Join us for a lively discussion in January. A Doodle poll will be sent out to book club participants several weeks in advance to find a time that works for everyone for the discussion. We typically host more than one discussion over Zoom to accommodate everyone's schedules.
4. Earn CM credit for participating in the discussion.

## **Book Selection: *Recast Your City: How to Save Your Downtown with Small-Scale Manufacturing* by Ilana Preuss**

Synopsis by the publisher, Island Press:

Too many U.S. cities and towns have been focused on a model of economic development that relies on recruiting one big company (such as Amazon), a single industry (usually in technology), or pursuing other narrow or short-term fixes that are inequitable and unsustainable. Some cities and towns were changing, even before the historic retail collapse brought on by COVID-19. They started to shift to a new economic model that works with the community to invest in place in an inclusive and thoughtful way, with short-term wins that build momentum for long-term growth. A secret ingredient to this successful model is small-scale manufacturing.

In *Recast Your City: How to Save Your Downtown with Small-Scale Manufacturing*, community development expert Ilana Preuss explains how local leaders can revitalize their downtowns or neighborhood main streets by bringing in and supporting small-scale manufacturing. Small-scale manufacturing businesses help create thriving places, with local business ownership opportunities and well-paying jobs that other business types can't fulfill.



Preuss draws from her experience working with local governments, large and small and illuminates her recommendations with real-world examples. She details her five-step method for recasting your city using small-scale manufacturing. Preuss supports and inspires change by drawing from her work in cities from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Columbia, Missouri, to Fremont, California. Preuss shows how communities across the country can build strong local businesses through small-scale manufacturing, reinvest in their downtowns, and create inclusive economic opportunity. Preuss provides tools that local leaders in government, business, and real estate as well as entrepreneurs and advocates in every community can use.

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# JOB POSTINGS

Looking to hire? Send us your posting! Email [rouseplanning@gmail.com](mailto:rouseplanning@gmail.com) with a short description and link to the job posting.

## COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) is seeking to fill the Community & Economic Development position. For more information, or to apply for the position, visit the website [here](#). The deadline to submit applications is November 21, 2021.

## ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING - UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE

Applications are invited for a full-time, nine-month, tenure-track assistant professor position in the PAB-accredited Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), beginning in August 2022. For more information visit the website [here](#). Application review begins November 22, 2021

## FOR MORE JOB POSTINGS VISIT:

- » <https://npza.org/resources/careers>
- » [www.iowa-apa.org/resources/job-postings](http://www.iowa-apa.org/resources/job-postings)
- » <https://www.lonm.org/classifieds/careers.html>

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## HYDE LECTURE - JEFF HOU

Emerging Opportunities for Equality in Planning & Design

Location: Richards Hall Room #15, 560 Stadium Drive, Lincoln, NE 68508

October 22, 2021 | Starts at 4:00 PM CT

Sponsored by: UNL College of Architecture

For questions, please contact Kerry Vondrak at [architecture@unl.edu](mailto:architecture@unl.edu)

## THE NATIONAL REGISTER: A ROUTE TO COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Hosted by the NE Maine Street Network & NE State Historic Preservation Office

Free webinar; Sign up [here](#).

Date: October 27, 2021 | 12:00-1:00 PM CT

## GAINING BUY-IN FOR P2 (PUBLIC PARTICIPATION) AND THROUGH P2

Hosted by the NE Chapter of the International Assoc. for Public Participation

Free webinar; Sign up [here](#).

Date: October 27, 2021 | 12:00-1:00 PM CT

## HYDE LECTURE - ANNE MARIE DUVALL

Emerging Opportunities for Equality in Planning & Design

Location: Richards Hall, 560 Stadium Drive, Lincoln, NE 68508

Date: November 12, 2021 | Starts at 4:00 PM CT

Sponsored by: UNL College of Architecture

For questions, please contact Kerry Vondrak at [architecture@unl.edu](mailto:architecture@unl.edu)

## HYDE LECTURE - CLIO ANDRIS

Emerging Opportunities for Equality in Planning & Design

Location: Nebraska Union, Swanson Auditorium, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68508

January 28, 2022 | Starts at 4:00 PM CT

Sponsored by: UNL College of Architecture

For questions, please contact Kerry Vondrak at [architecture@unl.edu](mailto:architecture@unl.edu)

[WWW.NEBRASKA.PLANNING.ORG](http://WWW.NEBRASKA.PLANNING.ORG)

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# RESOURCES

## APA NE Board Members

- Jeff Ray, AICP – President
- Bruce Fountain, AICP – Past President
- Stephanie Rouse, AICP – Vice President/Professional Development Officer
- Troy Anderson, AICP – Treasurer
- Jesse Poore, AICP - Secretary
- Chris Solberg, AICP – NPZA Liaison
- Andrew Konzett, AIA – Allied Professionals Liaison
- Anna Headlee – Student Planning Association of Nebraska (SPAN) Liaison
- Zhenghong Tang, Ph.D. – UNL Planning Faculty Liaison

## APA NE Subcommittees

- Legislative: David Levy; Amy Haase, AICP
- Membership Recruitment & Appreciation: Paul Barnes, AICP
- Emerging Planners Group: Cale Brodersen, AICP; Ryan Ossell; Mason Herrman
- Conference/Workshop: Keith Marvin, AICP; Stacey Hageman; Jeff Ray, AICP; Bruce Fountain, AICP
- Mentorship/Student Outreach: Cale Brodersen, AICP; Zhenghong Tang, Ph.D.
- Allied Professional Collaborations: Andrew Konzett, AIA
- Newsletter and Social Media – Stephanie Rouse, AICP
- Awards/Nominations – Steve Miller, AICP; Caitlin Bolte; Andrea Gebhart, AICP

## SUBMIT YOUR CONTENT!

The NE Planner welcomes readers and associates to submit articles for publication within the newsletter. We are also happy to include RFP/RFQ's, new job postings, and upcoming events. For your content to be included in the next newsletter, please email [rouseplanning@gmail.com](mailto:rouseplanning@gmail.com).

## NPZA Board Members

- Chris Solberg, AICP – President
- Judy Clark, AICP – 1st Vice President
- Dan Giittinger – 2nd Vice President
- Chad Nability, AICP – Past President
- Char Carpenter – Recording Secretary
- Steve Charleston – Membership Sec/Treasurer
- Dave Ptak – Legal Counsel
- Stacey Hageman – Conference Coordinator
- Jeff Ray, AICP – NE APA Liaison
- Zhenghong Tang, Ph.D. – UNL Liaison

## NPZA Subcommittees

- Conference Committee – Keith Marvin, AICP
- Newsletter Committee – Cale Brodersen, AICP
- Awards Committee – Christopher Solberg, AICP
- Zoning Administrator Certification Committee – David Ptak
- Nebraska Planning Handbook Committee – Rashad Moxey

## Stay Connected

