



# *Sacramento Valley Section*

# Planners Tabloid

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## ***Feature Article***

### ***So You Want To Be A Planning Director?***

***By Richard H. Carson***

- ◆ If you want to be a planning director, then this article will help you in your quest. Unless of course it persuades you not to be a planning director, which is understandable. To be a good planning director you need four general skill sets. You should have (1) basic experience in planning, (2) good management skills, (3) a customer service orientation, and (4) good political skills.

#### **Experience**

The best planning experience you can gain is to work in city or county government, and in a variety of jobs. In other words, don't specialize too long or work in a special purpose agency too long. You need most of your experience in current planning, long-range planning and project management.

I suggest you be an opportunist early in your career. The best way to get promoted is to quit and take another job. Try to put in at least two to three years per job, but only in the earlier years of your career, until you become a senior planner. Employers take a dim view of planners who have a long career of short stints. They will believe you can't hold a job.

#### **Management Skills**

Becoming a planning manager is not easy, but you can learn. You need to learn how to manage people, processes and budgets. So I would strongly suggest that you get a Masters in Public Administration if you want to be a planning director. This may be in addition to, or a substitute for your Masters of Regional and Urban Planning degree. One of the other things you need to learn is how to achieve organizational goals. There is never enough money to do the work you are charged with -- so you need to do "strategic" planning and be able to setup a 5 to 6-year work program. You will also need to learn how establish performance goals and then monitor them.

As a planning manager, you will have to do what is euphemistically called "progressive discipline." When it comes to building strong, effective organizations -- I believe the job is 95 percent hiring or promoting good employees and five percent firing those who are not so good. When it comes to hiring, if you have two candidates of equal ability, always hire the internal candidate. It says a lot about you to your team if you promote competent staff. And they may stay longer than two to three years. Also it is better to hire a person whose character you know and trust, than to take a risk on someone you don't. The truth is that professional references are not a reliable way to find out about an unknown applicant's ability.

A good planning manager delegates because they don't have time to micromanage. Conversely, if you do micromanage, then you are not spending your time on the important management issues. Remember that when you must delegate authority, you must demand performance accountability.

I have one caveat about learning to be a manager. Great planning directors are leaders. Leaders are people who you trust and like. They are people who listen well and communicate well -- both in their writing and orally. They have the ability to show their positive emotions and never get mad. They don't yell at people or belittle them. They are terrific problem solvers and not afraid to make a decision. It is important that you be honest with yourself about whether you possess this important and elusive attribute.

### **Customer Service**

If you haven't read [\*Reinventing Government\*](#) by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, then do it. Customer service is something you had better embrace as a basic tenant of faith. I am not talking about creating "fast food"-styled organizations where the customer is always right. Public service is a form of customer service that means you:

- Listen to what they are saying;
- Treat them with respect; and,
- Try to help them through the process.

There is never a reason to tell a customer "No." The fact is that there is a course of action they can take – even if your opinion is they don't have a chance of being successful. People can always attempt to rezone their property, get a comprehensive plan amendment, move an urban growth boundary, or even get the zoning code language changed. As an associate of mine says, "Treat everyone as though they might be the next city councilor."

### **Political Skills**

Being a planning director means you have to be a political animal. Politics is the use of strategy and tactics to compel or cajole elected officials, voters and special interest groups toward the goals you have set or have had set for you.

We planners are very good at processes and planning, but we aren't very good at politics. Maybe it's because planning is an open "consensus building" process – and politics is sometimes a closed "behind the scenes" negotiating process.

You also need to develop a broader understanding of how government functions. In local government, you will be competing for resources with such sacred cows as the police and fire departments, the library and the parks and recreation program.

As the head planner you will report to a city manager or a county administrator. That person reports to and is directed by a city council or county commission. So you will have to learn how to deal with these elected officials because they influence your boss and your work. Elected officials are very different from the professional planners, engineers, and lawyers that you are used to dealing with. They have one primary skill -- they got elected. After that they have professional abilities that vary from good to bad. My suggestions for reading on politics are:

- [\*The Art of War\*](#), by the 3rd century B.C. Chinese general, Sun Tzu;
- [\*The Prince\*](#), by the 15th century Italian statesman, Niccolo Machievelli; and,
- [\*Community and the Politics of Place\*](#), by the 20th century Mayor of Missoula, Montana, Daniel Kemmis.

One last thought on leadership. If you want to be a planning director, then you better love being the boss. If you don't like it, then you won't be successful or happy.

### **Ready, Set, Go...**

So you are going to interview for the job. I would suggest that:

- You should go after a job as a planning director in a small town in a major metropolitan area, or as an assistant planning director for a larger metropolitan agency. Unfortunately, most people live in metropolitan areas and have an urban bias against professional people who work in rural areas.
- If it is your first planning director job, then think twice about taking on a planning group that is known to be dysfunctional. Leave the "turn-around" effort to either a more seasoned planning manager or a more foolish one. You want to your first job to result in a positive reference later.
- Do your homework on the jurisdiction and its leaders. You have to come across as knowledgeable about the place in which they live and work.

*Richard H. Carson has 30 years of professional planning experience in the Pacific Northwest and has been a planning director for 20 years. He is currently the director of the Clark County Department of Community Development in Vancouver, Washington, where he manages 120 employees and \$17 million in annual revenues. He is the past assistant city manager/community development director for Oregon City in Oregon. He is also the past director of planning for Metro, the regional government for the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, which includes 24 cities and 3 counties. Mr. Carson has been an elected official of the American Planning Association, and is webmaster for Planning Utopia on the Internet.*

*The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author.*

## **Legislative Update**

### **New Land Use Legislation for 2002**

*by Terry Rivasplata, AICP*

- ◆ January 1, 2002 will be the effective date of this year's land use legislation. Here's a quick summary of some of the new laws that the New Year will bring. For more information, and copies of this legislation, see the Legislature's website at: [www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html).

#### **SB 221 (Kuehl) Chapter 542, Statutes of 2001**

This bill prohibits the approval of a subdivision map or development agreement for a project of 500 or more dwelling units without prior consultation with the water agency that would serve the development. The water agency is obligated to provide the city or county with a detailed accounting of the availability of water to serve the project and future supplies. If the water agency informs the city or county that there is insufficient supply and the city or county nonetheless decides to approve the project, the city or county must make specific findings regarding the availability of other water supplies.

#### **SB 497 (Sher) Chapter 873, Statutes of 2001**

This bill limits lot line adjustments to four or fewer adjoining parcels (previous law set no limit on the number of parcels involved). In addition, it requires lot line adjustments to comply with the local general plan (and coastal plan, if applicable). This bill specifies that only a conditional certificate of compliance may be issued for lots that do not comply with the Subdivision Map Act.

#### **SB 610 (Costa) Chapter 643, Statutes of 2001**

SB 610 expands the water agency consultation requirements first embodied in Senator Costa's SB 910 of several years ago. It requires consultation for all environmental documents, not simply EIRs, prepared for specified large development projects. In addition, it requires the responding water agency to provide more information about available water supplies and efforts to obtain additional water.

#### **AB 369 (Dutra) Chapter 237, Statutes of 2001**

Government Code section 65589.5 has long required a city or county to make specific findings before rejecting certain development projects that would be affordable to moderate-, low- or very low-income residents. AB 369 now provides that if a city or county is successfully sued over non-compliance with this law, the court will award the plaintiff reasonable attorneys fees and costs, with limited exceptions.

**AB 1367** (Wiggins) Chapter 396, Statutes of 2001

Under existing law, a school district board of education may, by two-thirds majority, vote to exempt school construction from local zoning requirements. This bill requires a school board to advise the affected city or county and offer the opportunity for a meeting prior to voting to exempt school construction. The same requirement will apply to school district preparation of a facility needs analysis, master plan, or other long-range plan for school siting. AB 1367 also requires a city or county to notify the school district and provide the opportunity for a meeting prior to amending or adopting its local general plan.

**Jobs Available**

**City of Sacramento**

**Associate and Assistant Planners**

- ◆ City of Sacramento is seeking Associate (\$3,418 - 5,051/mo) & Asst. Planners (\$2,922 - 4,317/mo). Excellent benefits. Starting salary DOQ. Both levels require BA in planning or closely related field & professional planning experience. Seeking CEQA or current planning experience. MA degree may substitute for exp. Requires Class C CaDL. First cutoff date is 11/30/01. Second cutoff date 2/2/02. AA/EOE. For a complete application packet contact: City of Sacramento Employment Office, 921 10th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 264-5726 or visit [www.cityofsacramento.org](http://www.cityofsacramento.org).

**RRM**

- ◆ RRM is a professional firm of Civil Engineers, Surveyors, Planners, Architects, and Landscape Architects specializing in the design and implementation of projects for public and private clients RRM design group employs over 100 professionals specializing in Architecture, Planning, Landscape Architecture, Civil Engineering, Surveying, and Construction Management. An award-winning team with expertise in project representation, agency coordination, and public participation, RRM has designed and implemented projects throughout the State of California. RRM offers a generous compensation and benefits package including full medical, dental, vision, Life, LTD insurance, 401(K) and profit sharing programs. We have the following openings throughout our offices in California:

**Architecture Division:**

*Project Manager (multiple positions):* Strong project management skills; managing client relationships, preparing proposals, budgeting. Strong people skills.

*Team Leader:* Strong leader whose primary responsibility will be client management, marketing, maintaining the firm's profitability, high quality of design work produced, and team morale.

**Planning Division:**

*Landscape Architect (multiple positions):* Strong design and production skills using Autocad 2000. Eligible for a California Landscape Architecture license. Both five years experience and 8-10 years experience.

*Senior Planner:* Project management level planning position. Minimum seven years experience in Planning, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, or related field; strong design and graphic skills.

For a more detailed job description, please call or submit resume and cover letter to: Attn: HR, RRM Design Group, 3765 S. Higuera Street, Suite 102, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, (805) 543-1794 x298 or fax:(805) 543-9149 or online: [HR@rrmdesign.com](mailto:HR@rrmdesign.com).



**Director for Projects**

**Solano Transportation Authority \$74,000 - \$89,000**

- ◆ The Solano Transportation Authority (STA) is seeking an energetic, experienced and talented individual to become the Director for Projects for an eight-member agency that serves a county population of 401,000 with a \$1.5 million operating budget and a staff of thirteen. The Director for Projects reports to the STA Executive Director. The STA is a progressive JPA that coordinates transportation programs and projects in concert with the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Caltrans and other agencies. The ideal candidate will be a consensus builder with excellent communication and technical skills, an open style, an

understanding of transportation policies, experience in constructing and managing transportation projects and experience working with Regional, State and Federal transportation agencies. A bachelor's degree in engineering, planning, public or business administration or a related field is required (advanced degree preferred). STA is a member of PERS and offers a very competitive benefit package. **Final filing date is January 11, 2002.** To apply, submit resume, cover letter, three work-related references and current salary to David Harris at: Shannon Associates, 740 University Avenue, Suite 130, Sacramento, CA 95825, Tel: 916-567-4280, Fax: 916-567-1220, Email: [resumes@shannonassoc.com](mailto:resumes@shannonassoc.com), Website: [www.shannonassoc.com](http://www.shannonassoc.com), Visit the STA website at: [www.solanolinks.com](http://www.solanolinks.com)

## **Announcements**

### **January ITE Meeting**

#### ***How State-of-the-Art Simulation Provides New Tools to Evaluate Transportation Projects***

- ◆ This presentation will include demonstrations of state of the practice and state of the art 2D and 3D micro-simulation modeling for transportation projects. The presenters will discuss traffic and transit operations modeling using the CORSIM, VISSIM, and PARAMICS software programs as well as special 3D enhancement options. Some of the simulation examples that will be shown include bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail transit (LRT), freeway interchanges, roundabouts, bicyclists, and pedestrians. RSVP to Kristin Calia at Fehr & Peers (916) 773-1900

PRESENTERS: Ron Milam and Fred Choa, Fehr & Peers and Chris Nunno, ITSPATIAL

DATE: January 18, 2001

TIME: 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

LOCATION: Sudwerk's, 1375 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento

### **National Program to Promote Community Greens**

- ◆ Two national, non-profit organizations, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, have joined forces to launch Community Greens: Shared Parks in Urban Blocks. The mission of Community Greens is to promote the development of shared green spaces inside urban blocks in cities across the United States. Once the hallmark of earlier planned communities such as Radburn, New Jersey, and Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York, the concept of shared green space inside blocks is regaining popularity and seen as a way to attract families back to cities by providing additional greenery and play space for children. Community Greens has begun to post online profiles of both historic and contemporary examples, describing their development and design, ongoing maintenance and management, and multiple uses. According to director Rob Inerfeld, AICP, the program plans to disseminate model ordinances, legal and financial mechanisms, and information on incentives for encouraging the development of shared green spaces. Over the next year, Community Greens seeks public, private, and non-profit partners in three to four cities to explore citywide policy issues and develop new shared interior block parks as demonstration projects. The Community Greens staff can help you write a short article for your chapter newsletter that highlights examples of existing community greens in your state or region. For more information, see [www.communitygreens.org](http://www.communitygreens.org), call 703-527-8300 x255, or e-mail [rob@communitygreens.org](mailto:rob@communitygreens.org).

### **2002 APA Journalism Award Competition**

- ◆ Nominations are now being accepted for the 42<sup>nd</sup> competition for the annual APA Journalism Award honoring newspapers "for public service rendered in the advancement of city and regional planning through outstanding journalism." Deadline for receipt of entries is January 14, 2002. For more information, please see the National APA website - <http://www.planning.org/abtapa/jrnalism2000.html> or the Sacramento Valley Section APA website - [www.sactoapa.org](http://www.sactoapa.org) for more details and an entry form.



## **Support for Public Design Competitions**

- ◆ The National Endowment for the Arts announces the third year of New Public Works, a Challenge America initiative that sponsors design competitions for diverse projects including Urban Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Industrial Design. This year there is a special focus on competitions for the Design of Schools with funding of up to ten projects at \$75,000 each. Ten additional design competitions for projects with the potential for significant impact on the public realm, especially those for institutional buildings, nonprofit housing, and public space, will receive up to \$50,000 each. Letters of interest must be received by January 11, 2002. For more information, visit <http://www.arts.gov/guide/NPW02.html> or call 202-682-5452.

## **2002 AICP Exam Preparation Workshops and Programs**

- ◆ This year a number of excellent workshops and study sessions will be offered at convenient locations around the state. Your ability to prepare for and pass the certification exam is an important goal of CCAPA. Through Cal Chapter's comprehensive training programs, California APA leads the nation in candidates who pass the exam on their first try. Contact Michael R. Waiczis, AICP, CCAPA PDO for more information. Mike can be reached at 559-495-0604 (office) – [mwaiczis@fresno.ca.gov](mailto:mwaiczis@fresno.ca.gov); and 559-298-9770 (home) – [mrw36@csufresno.edu](mailto:mrw36@csufresno.edu). Mike's mailing address is 815 Fordham Avenue, Clovis, CA 93611. Also contact your Section Professional Development Officer (Sacramento Section – Mike Johnson, AICP - [mjohnson@folsom.ca.us](mailto:mjohnson@folsom.ca.us)) for information about other training opportunities

## **Your Invitation to Present at "Plan Diego" CalAPA 2002 October 6-9, 2002**

- ◆ Here is your invitation to present a session at the next California APA conference. Share your expertise, gain visibility, and enhance your professional growth by answering Cal APA's Call for Entries. Sessions will be 75 minutes in length and are scheduled for October 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>. We encourage use of innovative session formats in addition to the panel discussion, such as point/counterpoint, debates, audience involvement, case study/problem solving sessions, and charrettes. Please log on to [www.plandiego.com](http://www.plandiego.com) for more information. The website contains information on what to submit, how proposals are reviewed, and timing, as well as where to submit. Hurry, the deadline for receipt of proposal submittals is February 1, 2002.

## **Board Update**

### **Advertise Your Business in the Newsletter**

- ◆ The Planners Tabloid is an important tool for those in the planning field. This newsletter is circulated throughout the Sacramento Valley, and is an excellent opportunity for planning firms to expose themselves to planners in their region. If you are interested in placing an ad in the Consultants Directory, please submit your artwork, and a check for \$150 for one year of advertising. Make checks payable to the Sacramento Valley Section APA and send your check and artwork to: Christy Warmerdam, Newsletter Editor, 2233 Watt Ave., Suite 330, Sacramento, CA 95825.

### **Changing Your Address?**

- ◆ If you are changing your address, please send change of address notices directly to APA in Chicago, 122 So. Michigan Ave, Ste. 1600, Chicago, IL 60603 attn: Membership Department or 312-431-9100 (phone), 312-431-9985 (fax), email to [AddressChange@planning.org](mailto:AddressChange@planning.org). If you receive a hardcopy of the newsletter please notify the newsletter editor of your address change in addition to the Membership Department in Chicago.

### **Sacramento Valley Section Display Booths Available**

- ◆ The Sacramento Valley Section has two display booths available for rent to our members and local jurisdictions. Each booth measures approximately 10 feet wide by 8 feet tall and is easy to set up and take down. The booths are black in color and materials can be mounted to the display with Velcro™. Each booth

can be rented for \$250 per week. To find out more or to reserve a booth for your next event, call Richard Rust at (916) 446-0653.

### Education Vouchers and Grants Available

- ◆ The Sacramento Valley Section APA has purchased a second block of 20 vouchers for a \$25 discount on enrollment fees for a class in the Land Use and Natural Resources program at the University of California, Davis University Extension. If you've picked out a class at the Extension and are ready to send in your registration fee, contact Michael Johnson, at [mjohnson@folsom.ca.us](mailto:mjohnson@folsom.ca.us) or at (916) 355-7224. After checking your membership status, he'll put a voucher in the mail.
- ◆ The Sacramento Center for the University of Southern California is offering a tuition fellowship to Sacramento chapter APA members of \$600 for each of the first three classes in the Master degree of Planning and Development (MPDS) or the Master of Public Administration (MPA). This fellowship grant is available to APA members who meet the program admission. For more information, please contact Rich Callahan, Center Director at (916) 442-6911 or [rcallaha@usc.edu](mailto:rcallaha@usc.edu).

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### Looking for the Most Current and Comprehensive SVSAPA Information?

- ◆ Submit your email address to Rick Rust ([rick\\_rust@urscorp.com](mailto:rick_rust@urscorp.com)) if you would like to be placed on the electronic notification system. This system sends information in a more timely fashion and saves the Sacramento Valley Section money that can be better spent on programs and other events that make the SVSAPA a valuable planner's resource. By submitting your email address, you will receive notification of newsletter placement on the website as well as instant notification of upcoming Section events not listed in the hardcopy newsletter. The Sacramento Valley Section website offers more current and comprehensive section information—[www.sactoapa.org](http://www.sactoapa.org).

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