

## CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

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### Health and the Built Environment

Smallpox, typhoid, cholera and diphtheria: at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these were the major infectious diseases that planning sought to control and, in fact, were the impetus for the first zoning codes in the United States. Today, planners are faced with a whole new set of “diseases”: obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, injuries and asthma, among others. Like the health issues of the past, the way in which we grow and design our communities has a direct effect on today’s chronic illnesses and unhealthy lifestyles. We are increasingly recognizing that urban sprawl and auto-oriented land uses – the dominant pattern of growth and community design for over four decades – are contributing to these public health problems. So, today, like yesterday, it is the role of planning to once again seek to eliminate the negative health impacts of the built environment.

### Environmental Health

Sprawl contributes to diminished environmental health. Longer driving times - a defining characteristic of modern transportation planning - contribute to higher levels of air pollution and, as a result, to increases in asthma, other respiratory diseases, and general mortality. For years, we have known that poor air quality triggers asthma attacks. We are now seeing that it leads to the actual development of asthma, and with staggering consequences. From 1980-1994, the occurrence of asthma increased by more than 100% and rates among children rose from 2.3 to 5.5 million. Water quality and quantity are also affected by sprawling land development and the loss of green space. Overdeveloped land is less able to absorb and filter water in heavy rainfall,

increasing the risk water sources that are contaminated and not adequately replenished.

### Pedestrian Injuries

Walking has become one of the most dangerous ways to travel and there is growing evidence that sprawl contributes to the problem. A recent report showed that the most dangerous places for walking are the sprawling, metropolitan areas in the Southern and Western parts of the country. Conversely, another study found that for every 1% increase in compact design, pedestrian fatality rates decreased by 1.47%-3.56%. In auto-dominated development, streets are designed for the fast and efficient flow of cars, thereby creating a hazard zone for pedestrians, particularly children and seniors. To improve the safety of our roads and neighborhoods, public health experts recommend adopting traffic calming measures to slow traffic in residential, school and park areas and building schools closer to homes.

### Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyle

Sprawling communities contribute to sprawling waistlines. Physical inactivity and the concomitant problem of obesity are epidemics in the U.S. In 1976, 47% of adults were overweight or obese. By 1999, that figure rose to 61%. However, it is among children that we see some of the most concerning trends. The rate of overweight kids has doubled in three decades. Overweight children are 70% more likely to be overweight or obese as adults. And, obese kids are unhealthy kids. Thirty percent of newly diagnosed diabetic children have “adult-onset” diabetes (caused by poor diet and excess weight). This type of diabetes used to occur only in adults over the age of forty. Now that it is showing up in such large numbers among children, physicians no longer . . .

**FULL TEXT ARTICLE ONLINE  
AT WWW.OC-APA.ORG**

## TAXABLE RETAIL SALES LEAKAGE IN ORANGE COUNTY

John Rau,  
Ultra-Research, Inc.

Retail sales leakage (and hence sales tax leakage) occurs because residents of a city make retail expenditures in another city other than the one in which they reside. This would occur due to any one of a number of possible reasons including people spending money in a city in which they work which need not be where they live, people going to other cities to shop because of the attraction of large commercial centers (such as regional malls or an auto center), people not spending money in the city in which they reside because it is a bedroom community and/or provides limited commercial retail shopping places, etc.

It is important to recognize that the mere fact that a city is experiencing “leakage” as defined here does not necessarily mean that this could be “recaptured” by building more stores. There may not be a sufficient “market base” in any case. Only detailed market studies would . . .

**FULL TEXT ARTICLE ONLINE  
AT WWW.OC-APA.ORG**

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# Letter from the Director

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Springtime is fast approaching. As many of you know, Spring is the busiest time for OCAPA. We plan many of our yearly activities during this time, including our Annual Awards Program. Here is an overview of some of the activities occurring in the next few months.

**Awards Program** – Planning for the annual 2004 OCAPA Awards Program is in full swing! The Award Program will be held in mid-May. Look for invitations in your mailbox in the coming weeks. We have our awards submittal packages available for download on our website. Submittals are due no later than April 5, 2004. If you have any questions, please contact our Awards Co-Chairs: Jennifer Lilley or John Cuykendall at (949) 489-1442.

**AICP Exam Workshops** - OCAPA will be conducting one-day AICP Workshops for the May and November exams. Don't forget, deadline to apply for the November exam is July 6, 2004. For more information related to AICP Exam, please contact Mac Cummins, Vice-Director for AICP at (562) 431-2527 x316.

**Professional Development** - In July, California Chapter APA lobbyist, Sande George, will come to Orange County to conduct a half day Legislative Overview Workshop. Sande will provide an overview of existing and future legislation and discuss implications on our profession. For more information, contact our Vice-Director for Professional Development, Richard Dial at (949) 833-5588.

**Lunch Programs** – Lunch programs will continue to be offered monthly. Please check our website at [www.oc-apa.org](http://www.oc-apa.org) for the latest program announcements. We will also utilize the email alerts to inform you of upcoming programs. For more information, contact Jennifer Lilley or John Cuykendall at (949) 489-1442.

**Student Representative** – This is the time of year we begin seeking a student representative for the upcoming year. This appointed position is a one-year team commencing in September. If you are interested in this position, or have additional questions, please contact me at [dbarquist@rbf.com](mailto:dbarquist@rbf.com)

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

DATE	EVENT	ORGANIZATION
04.05.04	<b>OCAPA Awards Nomination Forms Due</b>	OCAPA
04.10.04	<b>Professional Workshop 2004: What Every Aspiring Planner Needs to Know</b> will be offered at the College of Extended Studies, Gateway Center, in San Diego.	San Diego APA
04.15.04	IES APA will be hosting Ron Roberts as he discusses <b>Indian Gaming Casinos and Their Tremendous Effect on the State of California</b> and in particular on communities in the Inland Empire. The program will take place from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. at the Cask 'N Cleaver in Riverside	Inland Empire Section APA
04.15.04-04.19.04	<b>Transiting to a Better Future</b> the 2004 AEP State Conference will be held in Los Angeles. Topics are expected to include Public Transit, School Planning and Redevelopment with presentations on the development of the Walt Disney concert Hall, Metro Rail Gold Line, Live-Work Lofts and Staples Center. For more information visit AEP State Website at <a href="http://www.califaep.org">www.califaep.org</a> .	California Chapter AEP
04.24.04-04.28.04	<b>Celebrate Community</b> , APA's National Planning Conference. For more information go to <a href="http://www.planning.org">www.planning.org</a> .	APA
04.27.04	OCAPA will be hosting representatives from Orange County LAFCO to discuss <b>LAFCO's Municipal Service Review (MSR) Program</b> Santa Ana Performing Arts and Events Center from 11:45 to 1:15 pm.	Orange County APA
05.05.04	<b>AICP Exam</b>	APA
TBA	<b>OCAPA Awards.</b> Date and location to be announced.	Orange County APA
06.24.04	OCAPA will be hosting a lunch program on the <b>Fiscal Effect of Land Use Decisions</b> . The program will take place at the Santa Ana Performing Arts and Events Center from 11:45 to 1:15 pm.	Orange County APA
07.08.04	OCAPA will be hosting Sande George for a <b>Legislative Update</b> . The presentation will take place from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm at Irvine City Hall. The presentation will include an overview of the legislative session just ended, the results of that session and impacts on planning at all levels of government, as well as a look ahead.	Orange County APA
08-22-04-08-24-04	9th National Conference on <b>Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-sized Communities</b> ; Doubletree Hotel World Arena; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Contact: A.T. Stoddard 719-633-2868; E-mail: <a href="mailto:AT-Stoddard@lsccs.com">AT-Stoddard@lsccs.com</a> or on the TRB website: <a href="http://webboard.trb.org/A1D05">http://webboard.trb.org/A1D05</a>	Transportation Research Board
09.30.04	OCAPA will be hosting a lunch program on <b>Redevelopment and Planning: The Great Divide</b> . The program will take place at the Santa Ana Performing Arts and Events Center from 11:45 to 1:15 pm.	Orange County APA

**PAPERLESS**

In an effort to reduce operation costs and provide information to our membership in a timely manner, OCAPA began the process of going "paperless" in 2003. As part of this process, we began publishing the "full text" version of the newsletter online at:

<http://www.oc-apa.org>.

The newsletter version you receive in the mail is a partial version that only covers the highlights.

Going paperless allows us to present planning related information that is linked to other APA chapters or other sites that provide valuable planning resources.

To ensure that each OCAPA member receives program flyers, newsletters, and general information, please be sure to update your membership information with your current email address at the national APA website's membership page:

<http://www.planning.org/memberlogin>

You will need your member ID, which is located on your dues invoice or on your planning magazine label. You simply need to edit your membership information up updating your membership address after you are logged in.

OCAPA receives an updated email list on a monthly basis from CALAPA that is used to send information electronically to OCAPA members.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Dubois, Public Information Director at: [nicole.dubois@lsa-assoc.com](mailto:nicole.dubois@lsa-assoc.com) or Noel Legaspi, Webmaster at: [nlegaspi@oc-apa.org](mailto:nlegaspi@oc-apa.org).



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## Continued from page 1: TAXABLE RETAIL SALES LEAKAGE IN ORANGE COUNTY CITIES

provide the necessary insight as to whether or not there is adequate market support and, as a result, further retail development would be justified.

In general, it is difficult to measure this leakage precisely; however, the generally accepted method used by economists to try to “estimate” the “magnitude” of this leakage is based on a “per capita” type of analysis as follows. In this context, “retail sales leakage” is defined as the difference between the total county experience, on a per capita basis, and the local city experience, on a per capita basis, for a particular taxable retail sales category. For example, if the total county retail sales experience was \$50 per capita and for the same retail sales category the local city experience was \$40 per capita, then the difference of \$10 per capita would represent the “leakage” from the city or 20% of what should have been captured based on the total county experience. On the other hand, if the local city experience was \$60 per capita, then this would imply that the city experience was better than what it should be based on the total county experience; hence, in this case, there would be no “leakage” and an implied “capture” of sales from outside the city.

Taxable sales data by county and city in the State of California is provided both quarterly and annually by the State Board of Equalization in the following categories: (1) Retail Stores—Apparel Stores, General Merchandise Stores, Food Stores, Eating and Drinking Places, Home Furnishings and Appliances, Building Materials and Farm Implements, Auto Dealers and Auto Supplies, Service Stations and Other Retail Stores; (2) Non-Retail—Business and Personal Services, Manufacturing, Contracting, Wholesaling, and Other.

Based on this approach and using actual retail sales data provided by the State Board of Equalization, Ultra-Research, Inc., a 19-year old, Anaheim based economic services corporation, annually conducts a detailed leakage analysis of the 100 cities comprising Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. This article addresses the recent findings based on calendar year 2002 (the most recent year for which complete data is available) for the thirty-four cities in Orange County.

The county-wide taxable sales (total of retail and non-retail) per capita was \$15,186. Twelve of the 34 cities in the county had taxable sales per capita in excess of the county indicating no “leakage” on a “total basis” (hence, a “capture” of sales from other cities). These were Brea, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Irvine, Laguna Hills, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, San Juan Capistrano and Tustin. With regard to retail stores only, only Costa Mesa and Tustin showed no retail stores sales leakage, followed by Orange with an estimated one percent retail stores sales leakage (primarily in the General Merchandise Stores category).

At the other end of the spectrum, those cities in Orange County that generally don’t have a major commercial retail base and/or a tourist/visitor attraction would be expected to have relatively small taxable sales per capita thus implying significant taxable sales leakage (and, hence, sales tax leakage) to other cities. These were Villa Park (84%), Laguna Woods (67%), Aliso Viejo (57%), Stanton (50%), San Clemente (50%), Rancho Santa Margarita (45%), Yorba Linda (45%), Seal Beach (42%), and Dana Point (41%).

Examination of the estimated leakage in specific retail categories using the approach outlined above has value to planners in the following ways. It can be used to identify commercial “holes” or sources of sales tax loss, to provide data/information as a starting point for market studies and retail needs assessments, to provide data/information to support commercial planning efforts, and to develop metrics to measure economic impacts and progress over time.

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To obtain copies of the 2002 results for the Orange County cities, contact Ultra-Research, Inc. at 714-281-0150, via FAX at 714-281-2549 or via e-mail at [ultraresch@cs.com](mailto:ultraresch@cs.com).

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## CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

refer to it as an adult disease. If current trends continue, by the time today's kids reach middle age, one in four Americans will have diabetes and suffer co-morbidities such as blindness, kidney failure and early death. Obesity is costing us billions each year. A recent report put California's obesity-related medical expenditures at \$7.7 billion.

One of the best preventive measures for obesity is physical activity. The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or more days of the week. With this come several major health benefits including lowered risk of: heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, colon cancer, diabetes, depression and anxiety.

If 10% sedentary adults began walking, the U.S. would save \$4-\$6 billion in annual health care savings. Despite this, we are a nation of couch potatoes. Over 60% of adults fail to get the recommended level of physical activity and 25% get no leisure time physical activity. Children too are increasingly sedentary: 35% get no regular vigorous physical activity.

### Community Design as a Barrier

Are we designing and engineering physical activity out of our lives? Research from multiple disciplines would say yes. A person's immediate neighborhood environment is one of the strongest predictors of whether they will be physically active. Studies show that people won't walk in neighborhoods that lack sidewalks and adequate pedestrian facilities; have long distances between places of interest; and when they fear being hit by a car. Yet, these are the types of communities that we've built with sprawl and auto-oriented planning. Education and other efforts to get Americans moving can't be effective when neighborhood environments act as barriers to walking and bicycling as a part of daily life.

### "Calling All Planners"

In addition to the health impacts described here, there is evidence that community design affects other health issues including social capital, violence, and children's concentration and cognitive functioning. However, "when there are shared causes, there can be shared solutions." Smart Growth, pedestrian-oriented communities related design strategies hold promise for mitigating these negative health impacts of the built environment. This calls for a shift in community design practice and policy and the "reintegration" of public health as a priority in land use and transportation planning.

### San Diego's City of Villages

**The City of San Diego recently adopted "City of Villages", a Smart Growth vision for its General Plan update. In developing the Plan, the planning department faced significant opposition from sectors of the community and needed to make a strong case. In a strategic move, the department invited a local public health professional to participate in the Plan's citizen advisory committee. This marked a first for the City and for most local governments. While many factors contributed to final adoption of the Plan, bringing in a stakeholder to provide the public health data, rationale and strategies was an important step. The credible, neutral voice of public health helped validate the planning department's recommendations.**

## INTEGRATING HEALTH INTO COMMUNITY DESIGN

The tools, policies and practice standards for integrating health into community design are still emerging and will no doubt require collaboration and a degree of trial-and-error on the part of planning and public health professionals. However, to begin thinking about this, we can consider three principal levels in the land use and transportation planning process where public health issues can be addressed and "healthy planning" can take place.

### Upstream Level: Policies, Practices and Processes

Public health concerns and healthy community design principles can be integrated into the overarching policies and vision of growth for a jurisdiction and into the practices and processes that put that vision into action. For example, health can be integrated into:

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## CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

- General Plans
- Community Plans
- Bike & Pedestrian Master Plans
- Regional Transportation Plans
- Regional Comprehensive Plans
- Zoning codes
- Street design standards

Marya Morris, of the American Planning Association, has noted in her research that most General Plans include “health” as an implicit rather than an explicit goal. If mentioned at all, “health” is usually referred to as protection from environmental pollutants rather than prevention of the vast array of built environment-related health impacts. General Plans that have been updated with a pedestrian-oriented and Smart Growth vision rarely use this broad concept of community health as a rationale for the growth strategy. Cities and regions that have a sprawl and auto-oriented growth plan are actually pursuing practices known to be detrimental to the health of their communities.

The priorities and policies of Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) fundamentally affect the safety and health of communities and, are therefore, important points to integrate a broader notion and priority for health. RTPs usually, if not adequately, address pedestrian safety. However, they fail to address the role that transportation policy plays in promoting sedentary lifestyles, obesity, diabetes and other problems. Despite the health benefits of creating more walkable communities, most RTPs in California give very low priority to non-motorized transportation.

### Midstream Level: Current Development Projects

Capital improvement projects, redevelopment projects and the development review process all present opportunities to interject health concerns and healthy community design strategies. Compared to the other three levels, this is the least explored arena for public health involvement or using the public health argument. One exception is the TriCounty health department and planning agency in the Denver area of Colorado.

#### Development Review in Denver

**In most counties, public health agencies are authorized to comment and “sign off” on development projects. But this is usually limited to issues of water quality and septic tanks and takes place at the tail end of the process. For the past several years, environmental health staff from the TriCounty Health Department in Colorado have participated in the county development review team, providing input to the front-end stage and, even, to the pre-development stage. Initially, health agency staff commented only on environmental health impacts. But, as they became more aware and versed in other built environment impacts, they broadened their scope to include other health issues. This unique partnership evolved over time and as a result of good working relationships. Both sides view the public health participation as an important and effective way to integrate health issues and advance healthier community design.**

#### Making Walkability a Priority in Sacramento

**The Sacramento Area Council of Governments recently adopted a new RTP and increased the portion of funds for non-motorized transportation to 2.8%. The allocation is small relative to the dollars going to road and highway development. Nevertheless, it represents a significant shift in priorities and recognition of the need to plan for healthier communities by creating more transportation choices. One of the most important factors behind this shift was successful grassroots advocacy on the part of a unique coalition of health and transportation reform advocates. From the public health side, coalition members included the local chapter of the American Lung Association and the Air Pollution Control District. While bike, pedestrian and transportation advocates have always pushed for greater funding for non-motorized transport, bringing a public health message and voice into the mix made a difference in Sacramento.**

#### Downstream Level: Existing Hardscape Problems

“Downstream approaches” are those that retrofit and improve existing problems in the built environment. They usually address the street and road environment and involve public works or traffic engineering departments and professionals. Downstream efforts don’t necessarily directly involve planners or planning agencies. However, they are important to discuss because this is where most public health professionals are involved and where they first begin working on built environment issues and with community design professionals.

There are many examples of downstream efforts pursued in order to improve community health and safety: residential traffic calming, crosswalk improvements

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## CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

near senior housing, and safe routes to school projects. Pursuing downstream efforts as a way to improve community health is limited in that it only addresses the specific location where the problem exists, and most communities have countless numbers of poorly designed streets, intersections and crosswalks. It also does nothing to change the policies or practice standards and guidelines that traffic engineers and planners use in directing their work. Despite this, downstream and retrofit projects can be important first steps for several reasons. They are an opportunity for residents, schools, community groups and professionals to come together around these issues and begin developing a vision and skills for more involved policy work. They are also opportunities to demonstrate and build excitement for new design practices.

### COLLABORATING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

The good news for planners is....you don't have to do *this* alone! Indeed, these issues are too big for any one discipline to solve in isolation. Moving forward calls for new collaborations between planners, public health, transportation professionals and others. As partners, public health brings many skills and assets to the table:

- They are a credible advocate for the health and wellbeing of the community;
- They are a neutral and skilled convener and can bring diverse groups together;
- Public health can provide the "health" rationale backed up by data and scientific rigor;
- They have access to under-represented stakeholders; and
- Working as multidisciplinary teams opens up new funding streams.

To be effective, community design and public health professionals need to learn the issues and the strategies. They need to learn about each other's infrastructure, processes and roles. This is beginning to happen through national conferences. But, local professional associations and agencies need to foster local level collaboration by offering multidisciplinary training, forums and opportunities for shared problem solving.

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## City Parks Forum Publishes Series About Creating Healthier, Safer Communities

**CHICAGO, ILL.** - The City Parks Forum, a special initiative of the American Planning Association (APA), has published a second series of briefing papers that show mayors, city managers, planners and others how to use healthy parks to create safer neighborhoods, protect and enhance urban environments, improve learning among children, and improve public health.

The benefits that urban parks provide to communities are like the compounding interest that accrues from a savings account," said City Parks Forum Director Mary Eysenbach, "they just keep adding up. These briefing papers provide examples how cities across the country are using parks to help solve difficult urban issues."

For example, the paper on using parks to create safer neighborhoods describes how Macon, Ga., Mayor C. Jack Ellis led an effort that used the renovation of the Village Green park to help reduce crime in the adjoining neighborhood. Another paper describes how Atlanta, New York and Philadelphia have used park resources to reduce the health impacts of air and water pollution.

Other briefing papers published by the City Parks Forum show how parks can be used to promote community revitalization, enrich community engagement and spur economic development. Copies of the briefing papers are available through APA's website at [www.planning.org/cpf/briefingpapers.htm](http://www.planning.org/cpf/briefingpapers.htm).

APA launched The City Parks Forum in 1999 with two grants totaling \$2.55 million from the Wallace Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The program has helped mayors and park officials in mid-sized cities across the country use urban parks to improve the quality of life in their communities. Other park resources available include technical reports, case studies and proceedings from six Forum-organized conferences involving mayors from 25 cities.

### Heather Sowers, Assistant Planner City of Fullerton

#### **Where did you grow up and how did you get interested in planning.**

I grew up in a small town in central Pennsylvania. As a child I had no knowledge of the planning profession; career discussions focused on the “traditional” paths. After completing an undergraduate degree in accounting at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA, I began a career in public accounting where I obtained my CPA credentials. Six years ago I moved to Southern California. After spending several whirlwind years experiencing professional life inside a technology startup I found myself ready for new opportunities. I stumbled upon the planning program at UC Irvine while considering the possibility of graduate school to facilitate a new career direction. I was attracted to the multiple disciplines touched upon by the courses in the planning program and the diversity of the subject matter in comparison to my undergraduate business courses. Studying planning, I decided, would help me develop a whole new skill set with which I would be able to interact with the world around me.

#### **Describe your career path.**

After five years in the accounting profession, I entered the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at UC Irvine. I was fortunate to be able to network with several practicing planners (and APA members) while in graduate school to begin to gain an understanding of the career opportunities in the profession. Based on these discussions I pursued a public sector internship after a year in graduate school and was able to begin working for the City of Fullerton. The internship experience was invaluable and enabled me to obtain my current position as Assistant Planner. As Assistant Planner I am able to work in both current and advanced planning on a wide variety of projects. I enjoy working with the public as well as with other City departments and feel stewardship responsibility to work for the continuous evolution of the City.

#### **What are your most notable professional accomplishments?**

Specific professional accomplishments will come with time. As a “young professional” however, I feel a continued accomplishment as I face the challenges of learning a new job and proving my abilities, while being an active participant in the local planning community and maintaining a balanced life outside of work (I am an avid triathlete and cyclist).

Problem solving with property owners to meet their needs within the City’s parameters has been very rewarding as has being able to identify project sites within the City. I never thought I would feel such a sense of ownership over a storage area for grocery carts!

#### **Why did you join APA and why should others join?**

As a professional, I feel that it is important to be involved with the related organizations for continuous professional development and networking opportunities. I was introduced to APA in graduate school orientation and joined after additional recommendations from other APA members. I think that APA provides an important source of information, especially for “young professionals” – we didn’t learn EVERYTHING in school and we surely don’t know all there is to learn. APA publications and programs provide insight into the issues and opportunities in practice. APA Events provide the chance for planners to share their experiences and speak the same language.



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