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# Letter from the President

*Written by: Allison Mouch, AICP*

For those who do not know me, I came to the planning profession (and Montana) in a rather circuitous route. As a child growing up in northwest Ohio, I always knew I was living in the wrong part of the country - I spent most of my formative years devising elaborate plans to move west. After completing my undergraduate work at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where I majored in architecture, I spent six months decompressing in Jackson, WY, spending my days wrangling horses - and tourists - in Grand Teton National Park. I returned briefly to Ohio, working as a consultant for the Toledo Area Metroparks, developing the framework for the Northwest Ohio Greenways Initiative. After nearly a year in the consulting world, I packed up and headed to Charlottesville, Virginia, where I obtained my graduate degree in urban and environmental planning from the University of Virginia. During my time in the mid-Atlantic, I worked as a land planner for a private developer specializing in equestrian community and trail design (I rode horses competitively from the time I was 8; it seemed like a dream job!). During that same timeframe I also worked for the Institute for Environmental Negotiation in Charlottesville, helping facilitate collaboration between local governments, community leaders, business organizations and key stakeholders on environmental policy and planning decisions. As I approached the completion of my graduate degree, I began to put my grand plan to head west in motion, applying for planning jobs up and down the West coast... fortunately, a small advertisement for a planning position in Flathead County caught my eye, and, after traveling to northwest Montana I never looked back. I spent four challenging and rewarding years working as a planner in Flathead County, focusing on long range planning efforts including the update of the County's Growth Policy and various neighborhood plans. In March of 2012, I accepted the position of Planning Bureau Chief with the Community Development

**(continued on next page)**

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Spring is in the air in Montana, and it seems only appropriate to be releasing our 'first edition' of the Western Central Chapter's updated newsletter. I am so happy we are able to reintroduce this forum for communication, collaboration, professional development, chapter announcements and more to our membership, and hope the format and content will promote dialogue and continue to highlight the great work that's being done in the West. A big thanks to our newsletter editor Ashley Kaisershot and to all of our contributors on this first edition - I look forward to many more!

Since our last newsletter was published, membership on the Western Central Chapter Executive Board has changed considerably; it therefore seemed important that each of our Board members have an opportunity to introduce themselves, their background and professional interests.

We hope this will help you get to know each of us better, and have a sense of who is representing your interests as member of APA.

Division of the Montana Department of Commerce, where I currently manage the Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP), the Montana Main Street program, and administer a variety of planning grant programs throughout the state. I currently sit on the Board of the Montana Association of Planners, and serve on the City of Helena Zoning Commission. In my free time (when I have any), I enjoy running excessively long distances throughout the intermountain west – often with my English Pointer Paxson – along with camping, hiking, biking, skiing, fishing, and floating with my husband (also a planner). We own a 133 year old home in Helena that requires a great deal of love & attention, but provides me with the opportunity to get back to my architecture roots. So there's the crash course on me – read on to learn about the rest of our Board members!

Moving forward, this column will provide an opportunity for me to update you all on regional and national news, information and resources from APA, and to discuss issues or topic areas relevant to our four-state region. As many of you know, the National Planning Conference was held in Seattle, April 18th-21st. According to APA representatives, Seattle boasted the 2nd highest attendance in history (Las Vegas in 2008 was the highest on record), with over 6,400 planners descending upon the city to learn, explore and collaborate.

During the leadership meetings held both Friday and Saturday, I had the opportunity to meet with Brian Campbell, FAICP, our newly-elected Board Director for Region V, as well as other Chapter presidents from throughout the region. During this time we discussed increasing opportunities for collaboration among our respective states. I am especially excited by Brian's enthusiasm and his commitment to visit each chapter during his term, in an effort to increase awareness of issues unique to the Western Central region at the national level, and to better connect our membership with resources available through APA.

I also had the opportunity to hear from APA and AICP leadership on specific initiatives that APA will be implementing in the coming year. These include changes intended to streamline the AICP Certification

Maintenance (CM) registration and reporting process for events and speakers; establishing a new platform for legislative issues, as well as coordinating legislative liaisons for each Chapters to utilize when working on policy issues at the state level; and the introduction of the new Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Division (est. in February 2015).

Finally, the Western Central Chapter will be participating in the consolidated election process hosted by APA this year. In most respects it will operate very similarly to our last election cycle (in 2013), with an electronic ballot made available to all voting members online. This helps us streamline our processes at the Chapter level, and ensure a consistent, equitable election. The major difference will be in timing; nominations are currently being accepted and can be submitted via the online system (<https://www.directvote.net/nominate/Login/Login.aspx?e=133>). Once nominations have been received, the WCC Election Committee will submit selected nominees to APA for inclusion on the electronic ballot. Voting will take place beginning in August and run through early September, after which time the results will be announced to the membership. The newly-elected President and Vice-President will take office on January 1st, 2016. This change to align our Chapter with APA's consolidated election process was a requirement, and will result in modest changes to the Chapter's bylaws, to reflect the streamline process. More information on the by-law modifications will follow via email or in the Summer 2015 edition of the newsletter.

Best wishes for a productive summer and continued fulfillment in the important work you do.

Until next time,

Allison

## Newsletter Information

This newsletter is published by the Western Central Chapter of the American Planning Association on a quarterly basis. Circulation is to the APA members of the Western Central Chapter (WCC). The WCC Executive Committee welcomes submission of original articles, editorial letters, project profiles, planners on the move items, calendar items, and any other information of interest to both professional and citizen planners. Submissions should be made to:

Ashley Kaisershot  
Newsletter Editor  
e: [ashley.kaisershot@gmail.com](mailto:ashley.kaisershot@gmail.com)

2015 WCC Newsletter  
Schedule  
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August 1, 2015

WCC Disclaimer: The views expressed in the articles published on the website or in the newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the WCC APA. Any questions or comments may be directed to the newsletter editor of the president of the WCC.



### **Past President**

Ken Markert, AICP

*Community Planning Consultant*

MMI Planning

Cody, Wyoming

Ken Markert, AICP, is a consulting planner doing business as MMI Planning in Cody, Wyoming. Ken's work includes preparing zoning ordinances, comprehensive plans, and citizen opinion surveys, and serving as an expert witness in legal proceedings. He has been practicing rural county and small town planning since 1984, working in Virginia, upstate New York, and Wyoming. In 1996, Ken came to Wyoming to become the Park County planner. Seven years later he started MMI Planning.

Ken holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in Biology as well as a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree. He is past-president of the Western Central Chapter. Ken formerly served on the Wyoming Planning Association board, City of Cody Planning Board, and was the Wyoming Planning Association's "Planner of the Year" in 2003. In 2012, his "Town of Basin Master Plan" won the Wyoming Planning Association's Rural Planning Project of the Year award.



### **Vice President**

Allison B. Brekke, AICP

*Associate Planner*

City of Bozeman - Department of  
Community Development

Allison (Bristor) Brekke is originally from the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland and moved to Montana about 12 years ago after completing a Masters of City Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. When Allyson first arrived in Bozeman, she served as the City of Bozeman's Historic Preservation Officer and held that position for four years before being promoted to an Associate Planner in 2006. In 2010, Allyson agreed to serve as the City's Neighborhood Planner in addition to her Associate Planner duties. She continued the neighborhood work until April of this year. Allyson is now primarily working on both current and long range planning initiatives within the Bozeman Community Development Department, as well as serving as the planning staff liaison to the City of Bozeman's North 7th and Northeast Urban Renewal Boards and the Beautification Advisory Board. When not in the office, she enjoys throwing weights around at her local Crossfit box as well as mountain biking, downhill skiing, and hiking/running with her family.

Allison is in her fourth year serving as the Vice-President for Western Central Chapter of the American Planning Association and assists the President when necessary as well as keeps the Western Central Chapter website maintained and up to date. Prior to serving as the Vice-President for Western Central Chapter, Allyson was the chapter's Newsletter and Website Editor and held that position for approximately three years.



### **Treasurer of WCC**

Jeff Bollman, AICP  
*Area Planner*  
 Montana DNRC

Jeff is currently a Land Use Planner with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Southern Land Office in Billings and is responsible for helping manage +/-380,000 surface acres of school Trust lands in a seven county area that includes Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Musselshell, Big Horn and Treasure Counties. He primarily deals with special use leases and easement/right-of-way requests but also is involved in developing real estate projects on Trust land, as well as reviewing renewable and oil and gas energy projects. Prior to joining DNRC, Jeff was a Senior Planner/Zoning Coordinator with the Billings-Yellowstone County Planning Department where his main responsibilities focused on current planning, mostly zoning administration, but also included building permit review, annexation and subdivision.

Outside of the office, Jeff enjoys long distance road and trail running in marathon and ultra-marathon distances; with his current goal of reaching 100 marathons/ultras by September 2015 (he is currently at 92).

Jeff was born and raised in north central Indiana and has lived in Billings since 1992. He has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Design and a Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development from Ball State University in Muncie, IN.



### **Secretary of WCC**

Megan Nelms, AICP  
*County Planner & Zoning Administrator*  
 Campbell County, WY

Megan Nelms is a life-long Wyoming resident and has been County Planner & Zoning Administrator in Campbell County, Wyoming for 8 years. She received her Masters in Rural Sociology specializing in Community Development in 2010 from South Dakota State University and became a member of AICP in 2013. She is responsible for all development review in Campbell County, including zoning, subdivisions, code compliance, GIS and addressing.

Megan currently serves as Secretary for the Western Central Chapter. She is responsible for maintaining minutes for all board meetings and serves on various committees and other duties for the Chapter.

She also currently serves as President of the APA County Planning Division and Vice President of Western Planning Resources. She is Past President of the Wyoming Planning Association.

She is also a recent new mom to 7 month old son Kade!

# Changing Times for Suburban Counties; Best Practices to Help Ease Transitions

Written by: *By: Robert Wible,  
National Partnership to Streamline Government  
Principal, Robert Wible & Associates*

Editorial Notes: *Megan Nelms, AICP  
President, County Planning Division/National Association of County Planners*

The following article was developed from a request by Mr. Wible in regards to “finding out how others get it done.” We all understand what we do as planners, but sometimes the information, even in the digital age, on how to best accomplish your goal can be hard to find. The networking, discussions and concrete work on “best practices” is scattered.

We offer the following as a starting block for these discussions and exchange of information. What can you offer to help answer these questions? How can we assist our fellow planners to get the information out there and accessible? While the questions and articles are asked focusing on counties, all types of governments and jurisdictions face these issues, especially those of us in the Western Central Chapter. I look forward to hearing your responses and interacting with fellow Planners. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with your ideas, questions and comments about this article, and the West Central Chapter at [MBL08@ccgov.net](mailto:MBL08@ccgov.net).

## Challenges

A combination of forces ranging from formatting a response to global warming to stimulating the economic recovery of the nation from the “great recession,” are stressing the zoning, land use and planning systems largely adopted in the 1920’s and then modernized in the 1960’s and 70’s.

Jurisdiction after jurisdiction are looking to become both more environmentally and economically sustainable by adopting new technologies and growth models and in many cases looking to streamline their overall planning, land use and zoning processes making access to them and proceeding through them seamless to their citizens and nowhere has this been more challenging than in suburban counties which encompass and surround our major cities. Suburbs that witnessed incredible growth in the post – World War II era into the 1990’s and now with new extensions of mass transit into these once bedroom communities, they are experiencing urbanization along those transit corridors. Adding to this challenge, are both aging infrastructure and aging and retiring work force of county planning, zoning and land use officials who when they leave will take with them the institutional memory of “how things work,” in the county.

Several such counties are looking to learn from the experiences of others as to what changes can and should be made to better serve both their citizens and their business communities. How best do you balance environmentally responsible growth with the sense of community especially where long established suburban neighborhoods find themselves desirable locations for more concentrated development? How do you transfer institutional memory to the new work force you seek to attract and hire?

How do you make government bureaucracies more transparent and seamless to the public and business community you serve?

The following are some specific areas where your colleagues in counties across the nation are seeking your input as to best practices or case studies you have developed in your community in response to these forces. In coordination with the Western Central Chapter, we are requesting any of you who have a best practice or case study in these areas to share to send them into WCC Secretary Megan Nelms at [MBL08@ccgov.net](mailto:MBL08@ccgov.net).

## Sample Areas:

### Breaking down or assuring smooth coordination between Organizational Silos:

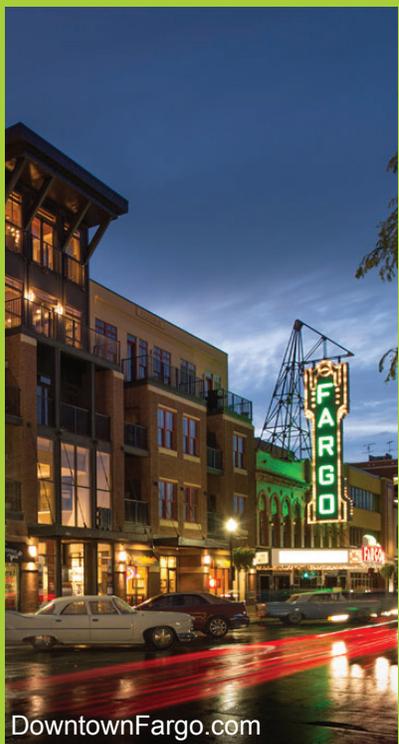
Land use programs typically involve many different entities such as environment, fire, building code, forestry, transportation, public works, which presents the challenge of avoiding silo disconnects. All strive for seamless process flows for the developer and the public. Are there any case studies or best practices of counties which have addressed this issue by either structural changes in county organization or effective cross-agency work flows? Or assigning a project manager or similar role that shepherds the project through the process? **(continued on next page)**

## Photo Submission

The WCC Executive Committee welcomes and encourages photograph submissions of supporting project graphics such as GIS maps, master plans and renderings as well as photographs that depict our region to be included in the upcoming quarterly newsletters. Images can be submitted by both professional and citizen planners, as well as associated professions.

Submissions should be made to:

Ashley Kaisershot  
 Newsletter Editor  
 e:ashley.kaisershot@gmail.com



DowntownFargo.com

### Rewriting Zoning Ordinances

Many jurisdictions are functioning under zoning ordinances originally adopted decades ago (many from the 1960's), with scores of amendments over the years making navigation of the regulations and statutes extremely difficult.

Are there examples of best practices or case studies of how a large urban county went about undertaking a total rewrite of their zoning ordinances to bring them up to date? Or has performed a recent analysis and opted not to rewrite?

### Proffers

Many jurisdictions have some form of proffers as a part of their zoning and land use programs. Is there a best practice in this area for effective, efficient and consistent use of proffers, or alternatives that provide equivalent public benefit with less uncertainty for applicants such as more effective use of impact assessments?

### Effective and Efficient Service Delivery

Are there case studies, models or best practices that show how a county planning, zoning and land use agency is able to de-conflict for their customers overlapping or conflicting comments which are received from other agencies which are involved in the planning, zoning and land use processes? (Examples might include project managers, advocates or ombudsmen who facilitate the resolution of such conflicts where they occur?)

### Load Leveling

Many jurisdictions use third party entities to help address fluctuations in work coming in. Are there any case studies, models or best practices for how counties use outside entities or other means to maintain response targets while work levels fluctuate? Are any roles (e.g. inspectors) more difficult to address than others?

### Staff Incentives

In many county planning, zoning and land use programs there is little motivation for staff to work more efficiently. Are there any case studies, best practices in staff administration that provide effective incentives (particularly non-monetary incentives) that strengthen employee work performance?

### Managing Change

Successful transformation efforts. As the nation's economy continues to recover and economic competitiveness amongst Counties Within a Geographical Region becomes more intense many local jurisdictions are looking into reviewing and where necessary restructuring or reforming their existing planning, zoning and land use processes to make them more effective and efficient.

Are there any case studies or best practices on how to successfully manage change, successfully make such transformations?

### Use of Enterprise Funds

Many counties have gone to either hybrid General Fund/Enterprise Funds or directly to Enterprise funds to operate their planning, zoning and land use programs. Are there any best practices or case studies of most effective funding mechanisms for these critical county programs? Recent examples of jurisdictions that have implemented such a fund?

### Comparisons of Fees

While this is largely only relevant on a regional basis, are there any fee comparison studies which might be available and helpful to a county in a major metropolitan area undergoing urbanization?

I am sure that in addition to the above, you in your community could add other areas where you would benefit from the experiences of others. Let us know and look out in the future for an article about this endeavor!

# Best 2014 Complete Streets Policy - Smart Growth America; Dawson County Montana

Written by: Dianna Broadie, AICP



National Complete Streets Coalition

The National Complete Streets Coalition, a program of Smart Growth America is committed to development and implementation of Complete Streets policies and practices. A national movement was launched by the Coalition in 2004. A complete street is the integration of people, and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of transportation networks. Over 700 agencies have adopted Complete Streets Policies.

Eleven agencies led the nation in creating and adopting comprehensive Complete Streets policies in 2014. These policies are a model for communities across the country. They are:

1. Ogdensburg, NY
2. Troy, NY
3. Lakemoor, IL (tie)
- 3. Dawson County, MT (tie)**
3. Austin, TX (tie) 6. Acton, MA (tie)
6. Middleton, MA (tie)
6. Reading, MA (tie)
6. Salem, MA (tie)
10. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (tie)
10. Stoughton, MA (tie)

To read *The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2014*, see the website below:

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets-2014-analysis>

*Editors Note: Since the release of the article, Glendive City Council has since adopted the complete street policy.*

Who would have thought that a small county in Montana with an estimated population of 9,445 would be chosen for the honor of having one of the better Complete Streets policies? After all, most of our county roads were developed from stagecoach routes and still remain gravel. But we do have the urban core area of Glendive, a portion of which, West Glendive, is County jurisdiction. Just as in large cities it is important to have alternative ways to move around or at least that is what a small core of dedicated citizens firmly believed. The effort was distinctly "grass roots". As a certified planner, I would love to claim responsibility but my primary role was encouragement and helping explain process. Before I was hired at the County, a group of citizens had formed a group called Build Active Glendive (BAG). The formation of this group resulted from a Montana health initiative which offered grant funding to encourage active community design.

The group noted that newer development was being allowed without a requirement to install sidewalks. The group was motivated to get such a policy adopted in the Glendive area which involved both the City and the urban unincorporated area of West Glendive that lies in the county.

Although Glendive is not in the epicenter of oil development, because of its proximity to the oil fields, there was pressure from new development that was being placed on the Glendive area by the oil development to the north in Montana and to the east from North Dakota. At the same time, Montana Department of Transportation was looking at studies of two of the main corridors through town. The time was ripe for adopting a policy pro-active for building a multi-modal transportation network.

Training was offered through the State grant that presented the concept of Complete Streets as a means to start encouraging a stronger look at pedestrian/bike trails as an alternative to automobile travel. Two of the members, Jeanne Siefert, then head of the county Health department and Jen Fladager, who works in the health department, then researched adopted policies from other places and settled one from the City of Peru, Indiana as a starting point for a draft and borrowed from other policy language both inside and outside Montana. Some of the policies had to be modified due to the rural nature of the Glendive area particularly when it came to applying exceptions.

The Commissioners could see the need for such a policy.

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Photos courtesy of  
Dawson County, MT

The year before two transportation grants, one for the County connecting an elementary to a housing area and one for the City on one of its main streets were not chosen. They knew that having policies in places strengthens grant funding so were supportive.

The same individuals are now trying to get such a policy adopted for the City of Glendive. Although they started with the same policy, this hit a bump in the road (no pun intended). An individual attended a Council meeting objecting to the policy on the grounds of Agenda 21 claiming it was a communist plot.

This threw everyone including myself as none of us had even heard of it. There was also a mix-up as to whether to adopt by ordinance or resolution. In Montana cities adopt policies by resolution and code by ordinance. It originally went to the ordinance committee and ended up being reviewed by the City attorney who suggested it should be a resolution. At our next BAG meeting where the mayor was present, I suggested if it was a resolution that it didn't have to wait for the next ordinance committee meeting. It instead went to the streets committee which has since recommended its adoption. As a concession to the objector, it was renamed to the "Safe and Accessible Street" policy helping

disconnect it from the property rights agenda but only after pointing out that the policy has everything to do with the Glendive community and mobility and nothing to do with some larger agenda. The individual was also told they were welcome to attend one of the BAG meetings to allow them to voice their concerns which they did.

In the interim, the group worked on a pedestrian path plan map which is likely to be incorporated into the Growth Policy (comprehensive plan). They took this to health fairs and public market places where people noted missing paths or could comment upon the proposed paths to better the map. It was a start towards implementation even though a policy was not fully developed.

One of the lessons to be learned from this is to network with other departments. This effort came out of a health initiative, not from the Planning Department. Even if it had, other departments such as health and public works would need to be involved for a well-rounded effort that is more effective.

Also, network with other like-minded organizations. In this case, Bike-Walk Montana helped with case examples. Another point is that having a vision does assist grant funding. The County is now moving forward on a grant funded opportunity that will engineer and possibly complete a portion of the original school path. The path plan will more specifically pinpoint where monies might be more effectively spent.

Some efforts such as the original grants jumped ahead of the policy in an effort to get things done. This was not all bad as it spurred elected officials to see the need for policy direction.

The other is not to be afraid of the opposition. Try not to alienate them and try to listen to what they have to say. However, clearly state your objective, without necessarily convincing them of your point but educating the public and making it relevant to your area. As I noted before, the exceptions needed to be tailored. To avoid extra work look at what others have done and then make it fit your community. As a planner even if you are not the initiator, you can help others in the community understand the process to make adoption easier.

Our community was surprised when we found out that we were noticed by Smart Growth America because unbeknown to us Bike-Walk Montana had nominated us. We were proud to get the acknowledgment and only hope we can move forward with those pieces of implementation that a community our size can accomplish.

Dianna started her career as an at home mother and citizen activist on a planning commission in Kirkland, Washington. She then decided that she wanted to complete her education and went back to school to complete a degree in Planning Studies. Shortly before graduation she landed an internship with the City of Redmond in their traffic planning department. This was merged into the long range planning department where she went on to develop skills in GIS and coordinate and write portions of the newly required Comprehensive Plan under the Growth Management Plan. Her work was to coordinate with utility providers both outside and in the Public Works Department as well as preparing various zoning updates. Her job later evolved to development of the historic preservation plan for the City as well as to manage the transfer of development rights program, annexation, and growth projections. She then moved to Flathead County to try her hand at rural planning. Deciding she enjoyed rural planning she accepted the job of Planning Director for Miles City and now is the primary planner for Dawson County.

# Rapid City, SD: A Small Town Doing Big Things

*Written by: Sarah Hanzel*



Photos courtesy of the Rapid City Visitors & Convention Bureau.

Sarah Hanzel is a Long Range Planner with the City of Rapid City. She received her Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and her Bachelors of Science in Social Economics from the University of Northern Arizona. In her role at the City, Sarah works on projects involving Historic Preservation, Tax Increment Financing, Annexation, and other long range planning studies. Sarah plays cello with the Black Hills Symphony and loves spending time in the Black Hills with her friends, family and Boston Terrier, Ruby.

South Dakota is known for iconic monuments, breathtaking views, extraordinary landscapes, and friendly folks. We are the State of "Great Faces, Great Places." In Rapid City you are sure to find all of this and more. The great faces of Rapid City are numbered by the 72,000 residents that call it home, and approximately 3 million more people that come to visit each year. The many great places of Rapid City are not as briefly summarized.

The sense of place in Rapid City is strongly influenced by the surrounding topography and geological features of the Black Hills and the Badlands. One of the most defining features of Rapid City itself is the Hogback Ridge, and the valley or "the gap" created by Rapid Creek flowing through it.

"The gap" has long had a role in supporting human life. There is evidence that this area was used as camping and gathering grounds by the Cheyenne and Lakota Sioux Indians. It is also where Rapid City's modern history begins. In the late 1800's an influx of settlers arrived to the area during the Gold Rush. The City's original founders set up camp, taking shelter under the rocky cliffs and resources from Rapid Creek. The township of Rapid City was laid out and officially incorporated in 1882.

Today, interpretive displays at Founders Park tell the story of early Rapid City. Over time Rapid City grew through the valley on both sides of the ridge, with "the gap" connecting east to west.

For over 130 years, our community has been growing with a strong connection between outdoor recreation and quality of life. From Rapid City, you are only minutes away from multiple and diverse environments including forests, streams, prairies, fossil beds, and caves. These areas are prime destinations for wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking, kayaking, rock climbing, hunting and camping.

But a person doesn't need to leave the City limits in order to see the rugged stone outcroppings, smell the ponderosa pine, and hear the murmur of a cold brook. The City's extensive system of urban parks, recreational facilities, and open space includes an 8 mile paved bike path along Rapid Creek, and over 30 miles of wilderness trails and scenic overlooks atop the Hogback Ridge at Hanson Larsen Memorial Park and the Skyline Wilderness Area.

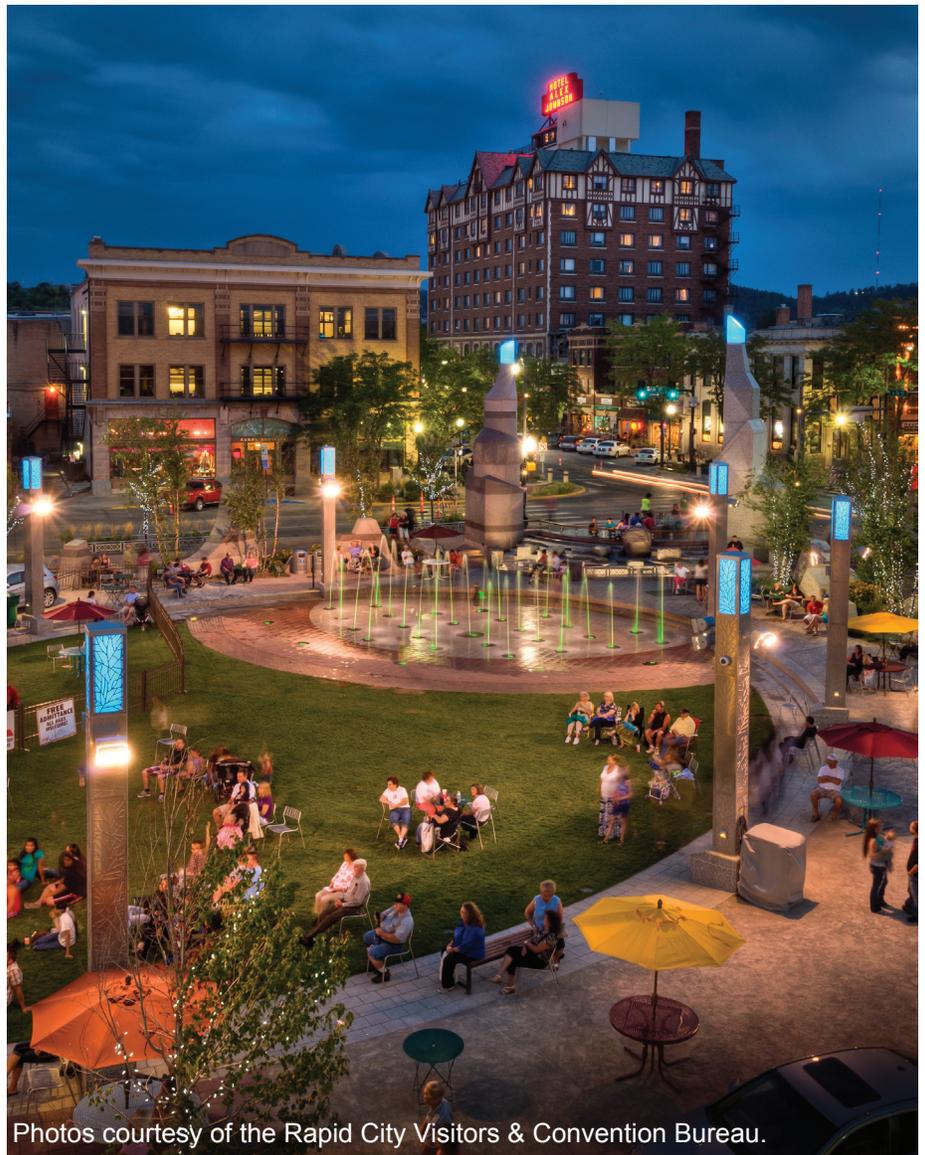
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These trails are easily accessible from the City's historic commercial and residential center as well as many other neighborhoods. Prominently overlooking the City are Rapid City's own iconic monuments: a family of five, 80 year old concrete dinosaurs that live in the City's beloved Dinosaur Park.

Much of the City's park land and green infrastructure emerged out of disaster. In June of 1972, Rapid Creek experienced one of the most devastating floods of U.S. history; 238 people lost their lives and thousands of homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. Valiant efforts on behalf of the citizens and the City to recover, rebuild, and remember the flood remain an integral part of the community. For example, the City acquired nearly 70 acres of property in the floodway to designate as Memorial Park, as well as the Leonard Swanson Memorial Pathway bike path to always remember the victims.

Recently Memorial Park underwent a substantial renovation with the construction of "Memorial Park Promenade," an ornamented boulevard that connects Memorial Park and the City's Civic Center to the bustling downtown. However, the Promenade is more than a sidewalk that connects two places. The path functions as a public gathering space in and of itself complete with seating, lighting, seasonal landscaping, playgrounds, and fishing docks overlooking Memorial Pond. This project is one representative example among many public-private partnerships that have successfully carried out the visioning, design, financing, construction, and maintenance of some of Rapid City's cherished places.

Perhaps the most cherished place you can visit in Rapid City is downtown. Recent private and public investments have revitalized the central business district.



Photos courtesy of the Rapid City Visitors & Convention Bureau.

At the heart of downtown is Main Street Square, a one acre asphalt parking lot that was transformed into a public plaza. There are over 200 events that take place in the Square each year that are professionally managed by Destination Rapid City. All seasons of the year The Square hosts music, theatrical performances, markets, and festivals. During warmer months the Square features interactive dancing water fountains. When the weather cools down, it is reassembled into an ice skating rink.

The Square is also the location of one of the largest public art projects underway in the United States, called the Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind & Water. More than twenty large granite boulders in the Square are being carved by master stone sculptor Masayuki Nagase in an effort spanning multiple years. Starting in June, Mr. Nagase can be seen in the square at work with chisel and hammer most days of the week.

The sculpture project is one of many tangible exhibits of art and cultural expression that flourish in Rapid City and in the Black Hills. Plans are currently underway to build a sculpture within Halley Park in "the gap." The space's design was inspired by the Lakota's creation story and will be used as a contemplative space to memorialize 20th Century Native

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## Western Central Chapter Welcomes Kaisershot as Newsletter Editor

With a passion for both graphic design and planning, the WCC is excited to introduce Ashley as our newsletter editor for our spring submission.

Ashley graduated from North Dakota State University (Go Bison!) with a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design. Since then she has been working as a planner at a private consulting firm and has recently placed her roots at SEH in Bismarck, ND.

With proud roots on a farm in southern Minnesota, Ashley has a strong passion for rural development and deep knowledge in sustainable communities. You'll also find her advocating for creative and artistic planning data to be presented to the communities we work in, and strives to raise the bar with the relationship between planning and art. Additionally, her team-approach cannot be overlooked.

She looks forward to working with area planners and learning how planning topics vary in the four state region. During her free time you'll find her training for upcoming local races. Be sure to wave to her as you pass her on the running trails along the Missouri River in Bismarck, North Dakota!

The WCC looks forward to many successful newsletters in the future!

Americans. The downtown area is home to many other well established cultural markers including the Dahl Fine Arts Center, the Journey Museum, the Performing Arts Center, and the historic Elks Theater.

The atmosphere downtown is enhanced by a mixture of architectural styles and a vibrant streetscape. Modern day commercial uses breathe new life into many of the City's well preserved historic buildings that date from 1884. The Historic Hotel Alex Johnson was built in 1923 and defines the City's skyline with a highly unique combination of German Tudor and skyscraper design elements. Eclectic boutiques, antique stores, art galleries, toy stores, confectioneries, a winery, and breweries are intermixed with restaurants featuring a vast array of cuisine. East meets West at the local Indian and Nepalese restaurant, Katmandu's Bistro, where you can order tandoori pheasant for dinner. Interspersed among storefronts and street corners downtown are 43 life sized bronze figures of every one of the past U.S. Presidents.

Rapid City is known for more than its wealth of recreational and cultural assets; it also has much to offer in the form of industry and education. South Dakota is consistently ranked in the top five States for setting up and conducting business. Our local economy is fueled with a talented and skilled workforce that targets industries such as energy, business services, health care and life sciences, financial and insurance, and manufacturing in a progressive business friendly economic climate. Leading the community in innovation and entrepreneurialism is the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, a four year degree college with a national reputation. The school has generated more than 16 startup companies coming mainly from efforts of the faculty and alumni of the school.

Economic growth in Rapid City is evidenced among other things by the development of Rushmore Crossing, the largest retail development project in Rapid City since 1978. The new big box retail stores, as well as other shops are restaurants easily accessible from Interstate 90, reinforce Rapid City's prominence as a commercial hub supporting a 200+ mile trade area.

Despite a growing economy and provision of urban amenities there is a definite small town culture in Rapid City that remains constant: traffic and parking are easily navigable compared to larger metropolitan areas; the air is clean; strangers are friendly; schools and neighborhoods are safe; business leaders enthusiastically promote community projects; the staff at your favorite restaurant knows your family by name – the list could go on.

Rapid City is must-see town in a State that has much to offer. The community is a complex and ever evolving collection of people and places that have been called many things including the Gateway to the Black Hills, the City of Presidents, and the Star of the West. Rapid City is part small town, part emerging urban center - a small town doing big things.

Photo A: Time-lapse View of Rapid City from Vertex Sky Bar Atop the Hotel Alex Johnson in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Photo B: Main Street Square on the Corner of 6th Street and Main in Rapid City, South Dakota



# The Dramatic Change in US Street Design: Wider, Faster, and More Deadly

*Written by: Mike Zimney*

The shifting baseline syndrome was developed by Daniel Pauly to explain how marine scientists often underestimate changes in fish populations because they gauge current populations against shifting reference points, thus the changes doesn't look great until compared against the original starting point. Consumer's response to the price of gas epitomizes the baseline theory. It was not long ago when \$2 per gallon gas was outrageous, but after living with nearly \$4 per gallon gas, the recent drop in prices to nearly \$2 is viewed as a bargain. We are basing our pricing expectations on the recent norm, not the price from the early 2000s when a gallon was \$1.

A shifting baseline is the same reason neighborhood streets built in the 1920s were commonly 24-26 feet wide, but today many municipal standards require local streets to be wider than 40 feet. While this is a dramatic change in street design, it's rarely questioned because the width has gradually increased over the last 60 years.

America's street design change started in the 1960s, but events in the earlier part of the 20th century set this in motion. First, cars became affordable and filled the streets. Next, the abundance of cars were driven by a population with

limited skills behind the wheel combined with a lack of driving laws, which led to crashes, injuries, and deaths being all too common.

Beginning in the 1930s, the passive design of our streets—where the design of the road, not the action of the driver—was deemed to be the best method for reducing crashes, in other words, “The driver must be externally restrained from killing himself.” The highway system was seen as the logical first set of roads to be targeted with the passive street design approach – “highways can be made fool-proof...to make accidents almost impossible [when] obstructions in and alongside of the highways [were] removed...sight lines provided...proper curves and banks built...parking near the curb eliminated.” This very design philosophy was applied to the interstate system built in the 1950s, and as predicted by the engineers, it led to a significant decrease in crash rates for the interstate system compared to the rest of the highway system.

The success of the interstate system in reducing fatalities led to engineers asking why not apply this “interstate approach” to city streets, and in 1966, Kenneth Stonex, a General Motors employee who designed

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the Proving Ground Track testified to that very fact, “We must operate 90% or more of our surface streets just as we do our freeways... [converting] the surface highway and street network to freeway and Proving Ground road and roadside conditions...” This was indeed the paradigm shift in street design philosophy, after which the mantra of engineers designing city streets is wider, straighter (large radius sweeping curves) faster (high design speeds), and safer (remove roadside hazards) to create “forgiving” streets. Eric Dumbaugh, a professional traffic engineer, is among a growing number of engineers questioning the logic of applying the interstate

designed using the passive approach—wider lanes and removal of roadside hazards. One would expect the comparison section of roadway should be safer, but he found the livable section safer in all respects (midblock crashes, injuries, fatalities, bike/pedestrian injuries, roadside, and vehicle collisions). It’s theorized these contradictory results in crash data are the result of the posted speed limits and roadway often communicating contradictory information, “The result is that the majority of drivers in urban areas disregard posted speed limits, and seem to learn to disregard road signs altogether...” Furthermore, R.B. Noland, a transportation



approach to city streets. Dumbaugh has researched the impacts of applying highway designs to our city streets to test if this approach does actually result in safer streets. “While the logic behind the passive approach has a high degree of face validity, it overlooks several important questions: how do average drivers adjust their behavior to forgiving design values? What about specific at-risk subpopulations?” To test this assertion he analyzed five years of crash data on two sections of East Colonial Drive in Orlando, Florida. The “livable” 0.9 mile section has roadside development abutting the sidewalk, 11-foot lanes, on-street parking, and trees. The comparison section was similar in cross-section, speed limit, average daily traffic, and length, but was

researcher, found what engineers characterize as roadside hazards on our urban streets—trees, cars, planters, buildings—don’t make an unsafe environment, but instead warn drivers to use caution and slower speeds. He also explained new roadway improvements showing an increase in crashes and injuries suggested “higher design standards [allow] drivers to increase their speeds on roads and reduce their levels of caution.” Unfortunately, many municipalities have bought into the bigger is better mentality when it comes to street width standards based on highway design mentality. It’s a mentality worthy of reexamination not only because of safety implications, but because in most cases cities requirements for local streets

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are not consistent with recommended engineering practices.

Often when narrower streets are proposed to increase walkability, safety, and livability of cities, they are opposed based on the assumption such streets are illegal and do not conform to recommended engineering standards. Engineers are generally a conservative group and they don't feel comfortable deviating from guidelines. Nor do the cities themselves like to deviate from standards because it could potentially increase the threat of lawsuits if there were a crash on a new narrow road. The fact of the matter is the AASHTO Green Book, ITE, and ASCE all support narrow streets, and in most cases cities current overly wide street requirements are not consistent with any engineering guidelines.

When designing local streets, the Green Book states, "overriding consideration is to foster a safe and pleasant environment whereas the convenience of the motorist is secondary". The guidelines for local urban streets are as follows: design speed 20-30 mph, level of service D, lane width 9-11 feet. Further, it also recommends the use of lower values when social, economic, and environmental impacts are critical, which is often the case in a residential setting. It's also specifically supports narrow neighborhood streets: a two-way, 26-foot road with two parking lanes and one unobstructed lane is typical, can accommodate the passage of fire trucks, and has a remarkably low level

of inconvenience.

Based on these guidelines, it is very easy to drive through many new neighborhoods to see how city mandated designs do not conform to the Green Book. While old neighborhood streets are consistent with the Green Book, yet are perceived as being deficient in design.

ITE also questions the logic of the bigger is better mentality "The tendency to equate wider streets with better streets and design for free-flow traffic is a highly-questionable practice" and recommends 22-26 foot local streets with on-street parking. ASCE also recommends narrow (22-24 foot) residential streets with on-street parking and has a nearly identical viewpoint on wide streets "...to design traffic and parking lanes as though the street were a "micro-freeway" is a highly questionable practice."

The current approach to designing our residential streets like mini-highways was borne with the best intentions in mind. However, there's growing evidence this approach should be left to the design of highways and our city streets should be narrow, grided, tree-lined, with short setbacks, and on-street parking to not only create safer streets, but welcoming and walkable streets. A sobering fact worth noting, in 1966 the year marking the paradigm shift in US street design, the US had fewer transportation fatalities per capita than all developed countries

except the United Kingdom.

In 2010, after more than 40 years of the current faster, wider, straighter street design mentality, the US now has the highest transportation fatalities per capita of developed countries, while the UK never adopted this approach and still has the least fatalities. The US also has one of the highest fatality rates based on exposure rates (76% higher than the UK), thus eliminating the argument that fatalities are higher because American's drive more.

Mike Zimney is a Urban Planner in Fargo, North Dakota. He has more than 10 years of professional planning and GIS experience and has provided comprehensive planning, urban design, ordinance development, and master planning for city, county, and tribal governments. Mike is involved in a variety of land use and transportation related planning projects throughout the region, providing both planning and GIS-related analysis. Prior to working for a private consulting firm, Mike was the Cass County Planner, where he authored a new county comprehensive plan and subdivision ordinance. These documents addressed the extensive development pressures along the urban fringe of the Fargo metropolitan area and successfully implemented progressive policies to achieve efficient and orderly growth patterns by educating the public and elected officials on the long-term financial implication of uncontrolled growth.



DowntownFargo.com

**North Dakota State Conference (NDPA) Annual Conference**

Fargo, North Dakota  
September 24th, 2015

The North Dakota Planning Association will be holding its Annual Conference on Thursday, September 24th in Fargo, North Dakota. It is being held in conjunction with the North Dakota League of Cities Conference. Holding the conference at the same time as the League conference proved last year to be an effective way to minimize costs, provide opportunities for attendees to participate in both conferences, and to enhance collaboration between the two organizations. Details for the conference agenda are still being developed, but will include the annual meeting of the NDPA, educational sessions, and time to network.

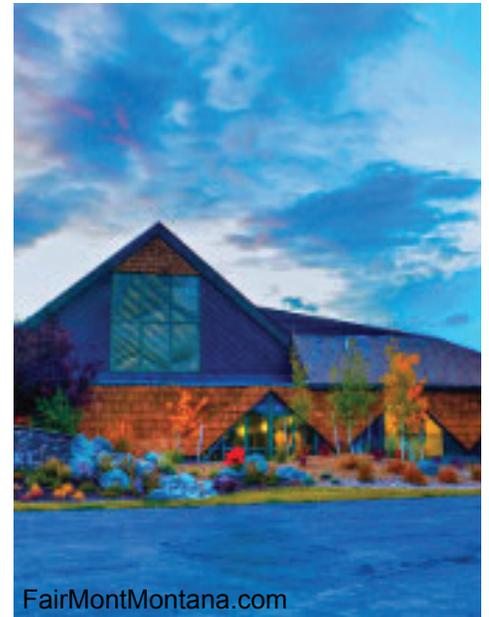
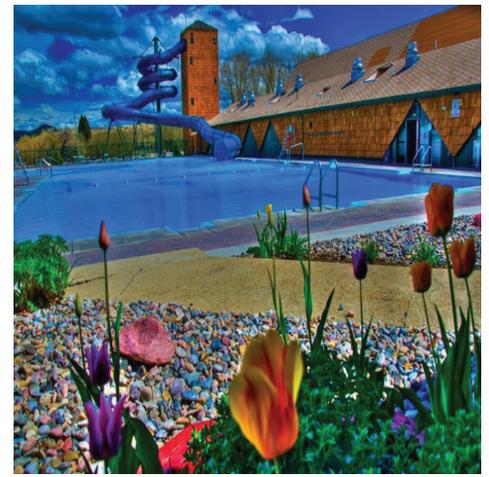


MitchellMainstreet.com

**South Dakota State Conference (SDPA) Annual Conference**

October 27th-28th  
Mitchell, South Dakota

The South Dakota Planning Association will hold its annual conference on Tuesday, October 27th through Wednesday, October 28th. More information on the conference, including a detailed agenda and registration information, will be available in the coming months. The conference is in its final development stages, so be sure to check back to the WCC newsletter or South Dakota Planning Association website for conference details as they evolve!



FairMontMontana.com

**Montana Association of Planners (MAP) Annual Conference**

September 28th-30th, 2015  
Fairmont Hot Springs, Montana

The Montana Association of Planners will host their annual conference at Fairmont Hot Springs in Fairmont, Montana in September. The conference theme – Rediscovering the Treasure State: Planning and Revitalization for Future Generations – will encompass three primary tracts: Growth Policies; Remediation, Restoration and Re-Use; and Collaboration. AICP CM certification will be offered, including law and ethics courses. More information on the conference, including a detailed agenda and registration information, will be available in the coming months by visiting <http://www.montanaplanners.org/?page=conferences>. Hope to see you in Montana in September!

# Conference Season - WYOPASS to Host Western Planner Conference

*Written by: Charles Bloom*



Photo: VisitLaramie.org



Photo: VisitLaramie.org

August 18-21st Wyopass will host the Western Planner at its annual conference this year in the heart of the Wild West - Laramie, WY. The theme of this year's conference is "Planning in the Wild West" and multiple sessions will educate attendees on issues relevant to all states in the west. As a sustaining member of the Western Planner, Wyopass is excited to host all of the Western Planners once again and is ready to defend their title in the Wyoming vs. The World softball game.

Laramie is Wyoming's third largest city and checks in with a population of just over 30,000 people. Laramie is just outside of Denver's Front Range and is located two hours northwest of Denver and 45 minutes west of Cheyenne. Laramie is unique that it is located at 7,220 feet in the Laramie River Valley, and is home to the University of Wyoming Technical Institute, and the 2015 Mountain West Basketball Champion Wyoming Cowboys. Laramie is unique that it is situated between two national forests which provide access to numerous recreational amenities such as camping, mountain biking, rock climbing, world class fishing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and skiing.

#### Laramie Facts:

Laramie has a vivid history that many may not be aware of! Did you know:

- Inadvertently Thomas Edison came up with the idea of the filament light bulb after his fly rod broke in two while fly fishing in the Laramie Area.
- Laramie was the home of the first electrical plant in the Rocky Mountains, Laramie lit up the night sky like a gem, earning the nickname Gem City of the Plains?
- Five Laramie women were the first to serve on a jury.
- Laramie's Louise Swain was the first women in the country to cast a ballot in a general election.

#### *The Conference*

The Laramie conference is brought to provide 41 sessions in three concurrent tracks throughout the three day event. Upon approval of the sessions for CM credits, an attendee may gain up to 17.5 CM's. Coupled with Laramie's low registration costs, \$275, and affordable hotel rate, \$83 per night, this conference is one that Planners cannot afford to miss.

#### *Sessions:*

The Opening Keynote Speaker for the Conference will be Shawn Reese the Chief Executive Officer of the Wyoming Business Council. Shawn was Governor Matt Mead's policy Director prior to joining the Council. The Wyoming Business Council was founded in 1998 by the State of Wyoming tasked with focusing on building a strong job creation base in Wyoming. The Business Council functions as the economic development agency of the State of Wyoming. The mission of the Wyoming Business Council is to facilitate the growth of Wyoming's economy. It focuses on building and strengthening the existing business and industry groups under energy, agriculture, travel and tourism. To accomplish its goals the Wyoming Business Council helps retain and expand existing Wyoming businesses and industries; recruits targeted businesses to the state; and works with communities to develop infrastructure to become business-ready. Shawn's opening keynote will address the economics of the West and will highlight Western Planner state's individual contributions to the economy of the west.

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Elizabeth Garvin Esq. AICP, will provide an overview of the legal topics addressed in the The Western Planner Journal's RMLUI Legal Corner column for 2014 and 2015, including: Koontz v. St. Johns River Water Management District (improper exactions), Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust v. United States (rails-to-trails), local government use of social media and the creation of Second Amendment rights, zombie subdivisions, zoning for water conservation, dark skies communities, digital sign regulations, and impacts of the sharing economy on local governments. The Legal Corner will highlight the main legal issue(s) of the topic, discuss what the issue(s) means in the context of local government planning and land use, and identify local policies and actions that might be subject to the legal doctrine along with potential considerations for updating those policies or actions.

Dr. William Gribb, University of Wyoming, and Amber Travsky, Real West Natural Resource Consulting, highlighting the development of the Medicine Bow Rail Trail and the ensuing Supreme Court Case (Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust et al. v. United States).

Multiple mobile tours are prozed to get attendees outside and experience Laramie. Mobile Tours including downtown-centric tours, historic district tours, Laramie River Restoration project, a Cheyenne Brownfield Tour, Biking the Medicine Bow Rail Trail, the University Cave Automatic Virtual Environment, and a tour of the University of Wyoming which in recent years has seen over 500-million dollars in public and private funds invested.

### *The Reception*

The reception will be held at the Wyoming Territorial Prison and Park which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Wyoming Territorial Prison is an imposing stone structure built in 1872 (restored in 1990) and for 30 years it held the West's most violent and desperate outlaws (including the notorious Butch Cassidy) during the dramatic time of Wyoming's territorial days and early Statehood. This is the only federal penitentiary to have been built in Wyoming and is one of the oldest buildings still standing in the state. Full conference registration gains you access to tours during the duration of the conference and through the weekend following the conference.

At the reception dinner will be served and Ayres Associates will be hosting the Bar. A local rock and roll band, the Flashbacks, will be performing covers of classic hits of the 70's, 80's, 90's and even hits of today.

### *"Wyoming" vs. "The World" Softball Game*

Don't forget to bring your mitt, but if you do, we should have some provided. Will the World be able to avenge last year loss to Wyoming? Show up, play and find out in the friendly confines of the Wyoming Territorial Prison. The losers may end up spending the night in Cell Block A.

### More Information:

Please check the Western Planner Website at [www.westernplanner.org](http://www.westernplanner.org) for more information on the conference, to register and get information regarding hotels and transportation.

## **Planning in the Wild West**

### **For Accommodations:**

Please check the Western Planner Website at

[www.westernplanner.org](http://www.westernplanner.org)

For more information on the conference, to register and get information regarding hotels and transportation.

### **Speaker Series:**

#### **The Opening Keynote Speaker:**

**Shawn Reese**, the Chief Executive Officer of the Wyoming Business Council.

**Elizabeth Garvin, AICP**, will provide an overview of the legal topics addressed in the The Western Planner Journal's RMLUI Legal Corner column for 2014 and 2015.

**Dr. William Gribb**, University of Wyoming, and **Amber Travsky**, Real West Natural Resource Consulting.

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# Things to Do While In Laramie:



Photo: VisitLaramie.org



Photo: VisitLaramie.org

***Ames Monument:***

The Ames Monument was completed in 1882 at a cost of \$65,000. The Union Pacific Railroad Company built this monolithic 60-ft. high granite pyramid. It stands at 8,247 feet, the highest elevation on the original transcontinental route.

***Lincoln Monument:***

Sculpted by Robert Russin, the Lincoln Monument between Laramie and Cheyenne was commissioned by the state of Wyoming in 1959 to honor the 150th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth. The monument marks the highest point on the old Lincoln Highway. It was moved to its present location in 1969, when Interstate 80 was completed. Located at Exit 323

***UW Geological Museum:***

UW Geological Museum has one of only five full brontosaurus skeletons in the world. The museum also houses the skeleton of the predator, Allosaurus, among many others. Admission is free and a perfect adventure for kids and parents alike. Location: University Campus. (Closed Sundays) Phone: 307-766-2646 Web: [www.uwyo.edu/geomuseum](http://www.uwyo.edu/geomuseum)

***Wyoming Territorial Prison:***

Listed on the National Register of Historic places, the Wyoming Territorial Prison is an imposing 1872 stone structure which held violent and desperate outlaws (including the notorious Butch Cassidy). Now a museum, visitors receive a “convict identity” and walk into the strap iron cells where convicts were locked up, worked and lived. Located on 197 acres, the site offers restored historic buildings, museum exhibits, special events and visitor center with gift shop.

***Laramie Plains Museum:***

The Laramie Plains Museum is located in the beautiful and historic Iverson Mansion, which was built in 1892. With tales and artifacts of the railroad and early Laramie as well as Cavalry, Cowboy, and the Girls’ School that was in the mansion for 40 years, the museum showcases area history with hour-long guided tours.

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Photo: VisitLaramie.org



Photo: VisitLaramie.org

*UW Centennial Complex:*

The American Heritage Center is an archival repository of rare books, historical manuscripts and research materials on American history and culture. The UW Art Museum presents exhibitions and related programs on Contemporary Art, Ethnographic Art, and Art of the American West.

*Laramie Mural Project:*

The Laramie Mural Project utilizes local artists to create one-of-a-kind large-scale murals in the heart of downtown that reflect Laramie’s cultural assets. The mural project is a collaboration between the University of Wyoming Art Museum, Laramie artists, downtown business owners and the Laramie Main Street Alliance. Funding for the murals has been provided by community donors through Kickstarter, the Guthrie Family Foundation, City of Laramie, the Laramie Beautification Committee and the Wyoming Arts Council through the generous efforts of the Wyoming Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.

*The Wyoming House for Historic Women*

The Wyoming House for Historic Women is located in Downtown Laramie and contains displays of the thirteen honored women and is the site to various conferences and lectures pertaining to women’s history and issues. The Louisa Swain Foundation was established in 2001 and resulted in the construction of the Museum and Plaza. The centerpiece of the plaza is a life-sized bronze sculpture of Louisa Swain, who on September 6, 1870, became the first woman to cast a ballot under laws giving women full equality to men. Her ballot was cast just one block from the plaza.

Photos: Courtesy of VisitLaramie.org. Visit their website to learn more Laramie’s real history and true adventure opportunities.

[www.visitlaramie.org](http://www.visitlaramie.org)