



# Alberta Planning Exchange

Community  
Planning  
Association of  
Alberta FALL 2015

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By Tom Burton, CPAA Chair

We had another successful conference in Red Deer in April. With that being said, there is a change of the guard so to speak. The past chair Gloria Wilkinson has moved onto greener pastures, enjoying her retirement. Gloria has provided many, many years of volunteering for CPAA. Her guidance and leadership has been very beneficial in leading CPAA. Congratulations Gloria and enjoy your retirement.

I'm looking forward to the opportunity of chairing a very enthusiastic group of people.

Our Conference & Education committee has analyzed the results and provided feedback to the board on continuing improvements to the conference. We have already developed the theme '**The Shift: What to do When Things Change**' and are incorporating ideas to make May 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 2016 conference even more successful than the previous ones. The 2016 conference once again will be held at the Black Knight Inn in Red Deer.

Thank you for your feedback from the conference! Congratulations to Sally Rosson, Municipality District of Greenview, winner of the free 2016 conference registration. Todd's name was drawn from the many feedback forms submitted.

The theme is one of many discussed and the board feels it is very appropriate with what happened during the 2015 provincial election in May. CPAA, like many non-profit organizations, will be facing the challenge of having the government know and understand the benefits of a provincial based development organization that supports both Urban and Rural issues. Our directors are elated with the opportunity of working with the new government.

Our strategic retreat in June enabled the new board to become acquainted with each other and to continue the discussion of the advancement of CPAA in the future. We are working towards key

goals; including enlarging our membership, connecting with educational organizations and any other interested people.

Networking opportunities with new or existing friends and students has proven beneficial in the past and will also continue in the future. The board will continue to have dialogue with students from the Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge. This dialogue will help the future planners of Alberta understand the challenges they will be facing once they graduate.

Enjoy the fall everyone, and hopefully the province will see a little moisture after such a dry year.

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Photo from CPAAfrica.com and Wikimedia.com

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Photo from CPAA website

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CPAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### Chair

**TOM BURTON**

Tom is a fifth term elected official, currently serving as Deputy Reeve for the Municipal District of Greenview #16. Tom, also, in his third term as the Director of District 4 of the Alberta Association Municipal Districts & Counties. Tom has been a member of the DeBolt Fire & Rescue since 1993 serving as Chief since 1995 and an EMR since 2001.



### Past Chair

**GLORIA WILKINSON**

Gloria is a retired municipal politician who has been active with CPAA since 1989. She has served on both municipal and health boards over the years and as a 'regular' volunteer for many community groups.



### Vice Chair (North)

**LARRY ARMFELT**

Larry is a Councillor of Northwest, Baptiste/Island Lake Area in Athabasca County.



### Vice-Chair (South)

**DREW HYNDMAN, RPP, MCIP**

Drew has been practicing planning at Rocky View County since 2001 and recently accepted a position with the Town of Cochrane. Raised in the Calgary area, Drew has always maintained a strong passion and personal connection to the rural areas surrounding the city.



### Treasurer

**EDGARD FARAH**

Edgard is an Architect, Urban Designer, and a Planner with both international and local experience in town planning and urban development. Edgard is a planner at the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo working on long range/comprehensive planning projects.



### Director

**GARRETT TOMLINSON**

Garret is the Reeve of Northern Sunrise County. He began working with the Lubicon Lake Nation in 2004. Garrett studied Political Science and Native American Studies at the University of Lethbridge. He is an EMT, and he and his wife are local business owners.

CPAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Director**

**DARYL BEESTON**

Daryl is currently a Councilor with the County of Grande Prairie, Division 2. He was formerly an owner of an oilfield service company and President of the Grande Prairie Regional Agricultural and Exhibition Society.



**Director**

**CANDACE BANACK, RPP, MCIP**

Candace Banack is a Development Planner with the Town of Cochrane. She works on various long range and current planning projects within the Town. She currently resides in the City of Airdrie.



**Director**

**ERIN O'NEILL, RPP, MCIP**

Erin is the Manager of Land Acquisition and Issues Management with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo in Fort McMurray. She has previously worked as the Manager of Planning & Development with the Town of Sundre and as a planner in Fort McMurray and the City of Ottawa.



**Director**

**ROD MCDERMAND**

Rod is a Councillor of Division 1 of Lacombe County. Previously he has served as the Past Chair of Alberta Blue Cross, Past Chair of the Management Employment Pension Board and the Past Director of CEIDY. Rod is a grain farmer in Lacombe County.



**Director**

**LUIS ESTEVES**

Luis is a Senior Planner With Scheffer Andrew Ltd. He has worked as a land use planner in both the public and private sectors for the past nine years. He has worked in both rural and urban settings, which has provided him with the opportunity to see issues from a variety of perspectives. He feels that community planning needs to be approached in a multi-disciplined and multi-faceted manner that encourages collaboration amongst a variety of stakeholders



**Director**

**NICK LAPP, RPP, MCIP**

Nick is the Director of Planning and Development at County of Grande Prairie No. 1.

CPAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONTINUED..



**Director**

**GENEVA CHAUDHARY**

Geneva has a degree in Human Geography and is also a Master of Planning graduate from University of Calgary. She has over five years of government administration experience from working at the City of Edmonton.



**Student Director**

**JESSI FRY**

Jessi has a Bachelor of Arts and has previously worked in journalism and disability management. She is currently completing her final year of a Master of Planning at the University of Calgary. Jessi enjoys volunteering for affordable housing projects and is interested in healthy and accessible communities. She most recently worked as a student planner for the City of St. Albert.



**Student Director**

**ANDREW CHELL**

Andrew Chell is a fourth-year BA Planning student at the University of Alberta. He is the Civic Affairs Director for Duggan Community League, and is the treasurer of the Geography and Planning Students' Society at the U of A.

Checkout the New CPAA Website

CPAA has launched a new website at the April 2015 conference. Members are reminded to visit the new CPAA website at <http://www.cpaabiz>

#### OFFICERS OF THE BOARD 2015 -2016 & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair	TOM BURTON
Vice-Chair (North)	LARRY ARMFELT
Vice-Chair (South)	DREW HYNDMAN
Treasurer	EDGARD FARAH
Past Chair	GLORIA WILKINSON

#### OTHER COMMITTEES 2015-2016

##### CONFERENCE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Erin O'Neill (Co-Chair), Rod McDermand (Co-Chair)  
Nick Lapp

##### NOMINATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Daryl Beeston (Chair), Larry Armfelt, Drew Hyndman

##### SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

Candace Banack (Chair), Drew Hyndman, Luis Esteves

##### OUTREACH/COMMUNICATIONS

Garrett Tomlinson (Chair), Edgard Farah, Geneva Chaudhary,  
Andrew Chell, Jessi Fry

Anshu Gupta (Newsletter)  
[anshu.ingo2008@gmail.com](mailto:anshu.ingo2008@gmail.com)

#### CPAA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

We are pleased to announce 2015 recipients of the CPAA Scholarships. The receivers of this year's awards are Stephen Yu, Brittany Davey, and Sandra Shanoada.

**Stephen** is a student who is in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Masters of Planning program at the University of Calgary. He is interested in transit and transportation planning. He will be published in the upcoming issue of Plan Canada.

**Brittany** is a student who is in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Faculty of Science - planning program at the University of Alberta. She is interested in ecological planning and is an intern with the City of Edmonton.

**Sandra** is a student who is her 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Masters of Planning program at the University of Calgary. She is interested in urban design, environmental planning and both urban and rural development.

Congratulations, Stephen Yu, Brittany Davey and Sandra Shanoada!

# Planning vs Economic Growth: CPAA Annual Conference 2015

by Erin O' Neill, RPP, MCIP, Conference Co-Chair

When the 2015 conference theme was chosen, Planning vs. Economic Growth: How do we bridge the gap, CPAA had not predicted an economic downturn. We chose the theme so we could learn best practices from our colleagues about interesting ways growth was funded, what we could do to grow our communities and how planning and economic growth could work together for the betterment of the Municipalities. The economic downturn happened and the conference gave us an opportunity to learn from Todd Hirsch about where the economy was growing; talk to our colleagues about what can be done in these economic times, while learning about what has been done in the past. We thank all of you for joining us for CPAA 2015 and making our conference a success.

Looking forward to 2016 and with our change in government, we ponder... "The Shift: What to do when things change?"

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Erin O' Neill, RPP, MCIP  
Manager Land Acquisition & Issues Management,  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

[Erin.O'Neill@rmwb.ca](mailto:Erin.O'Neill@rmwb.ca)

## Call for Presenters - 2016 CPAA Conference

### The Shift: What to do when things change?

Has your Municipality been involved in a different practice? Have you tried something unconventional? How have your practices shifted over time and what impact has it had? Do you know a speaker you would like to hear from or a topic you would like the conference committee to explore? Are you interested in presenting at the 2016 Conference where we will examine what we can do when things shift? Contact Erin O'Neill at [erin.oneill@rmwb.ca](mailto:erin.oneill@rmwb.ca) or [780-743-7893](tel:780-743-7893)

# The Active Neighbourhoods Toolkit:

By Celia Lee, Sustainable Calgary

*Engaging and practical guide towards achieving healthier, safer, and more sustainable communities in Alberta*



How can our communities contribute to public health, wellness and safety? Respond to traffic congestion? Work towards the overall sustainability of our City?

These are questions that inspired the development of Active Neighbourhoods Canada, a collaboration between Sustainable Calgary, the Montreal Urban Ecology Centre, and the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation.

Active Neighbourhoods Canada (ANC) is aimed at re-imagining the way we design and share public space, particularly roads and pathways. It envisions liveable neighbourhoods that support walking, cycling and other means of active transportation, through community-led urban design. As sedentary lifestyles pose an increasing threat to public health – children and adults alike – this project considers whether our built form offers choices in the ways we get around.

Sustainable Calgary, being one of the three pillars of ANC, is working alongside communities in Calgary and Alberta to explore these themes, hands-on. With the help of 8 different participatory urban planning tools, communities are identifying strengths and weaknesses in their neighbourhoods, exploring design solutions for identified problem areas, and working towards the implementation of at least one design change within 2 years.

Sustainable Calgary is releasing the Active Neighbourhoods Toolkit for participatory community planning, as an outcome of their work with ANC. This engaging and practical toolkit contains 8 different public engagement strategies to help guide communities in Alberta towards healthier, safer, less congested, more walkable, more liveable, and sustainable communities.

The Active Neighbourhoods Toolkit, aimed at identifying community strengths, weaknesses and priorities, will be available shortly on [sustainablecalgary.org](http://sustainablecalgary.org). For further information, or for guidance using the toolkit, please email [celia@sustainablecalgary.org](mailto:celia@sustainablecalgary.org)

## Active Neighbourhoods Toolkit : List of Tools



1. Community Mapping
2. Walk Audits
3. Location Observation
4. Count Audits
5. Emotional Mapping Walk
6. Business Surveys
7. Empathy Walk
8. Household Survey

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Celia Lee  
Sustainable Calgary  
[celia@sustainablecalgary.org](mailto:celia@sustainablecalgary.org)

# Planning vs Economic Growth: Winning Essay 1

By Stephen Yu, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year MPlan student, University of Calgary

## Diversity and Innovation

The importance of diversity and innovation is a theme shared across most professions. As planners, community leaders, and professionals, we promote diversification through mixed-use developments, organizations with members of diverse backgrounds and interests, and workforces with various skill sets. The 2015 CPAA Conference, "Planning Vs. Economic Growth," exuded the importance of diversity and innovation through its range of presentations and speakers. The Conference saw presentations on public engagement, economic growth, and homeowner protection, and speakers ranging from economists, planners, and engineers. Regardless of one's education or profession, there was always something to be learned at each of the sessions offered.

At first glance, this year's theme "Planning Vs. Economic Growth" seemed to focus on the conflict between planning and economic growth. However, it is actually a question of how planning and economic growth work together in a partnership that is mutually beneficial. In the current state of Alberta's economy, it is important that communities continue to create policies that support all types of industries. A criticism that Alberta often faces is its reliance on the oil and gas industry. However, the current boom and bust cycle has revealed that Albertan communities are not as reliant on the oil and gas industry as we are led to expect. This is because of the adaptability and growth of other industries during a bust. The boom bust cycle of Alberta is an anticipated aspect of the economy that has caused communities to focus on the other strengths they have to offer.

Although oil and gas is the leading industry in the province, lower fuel prices and the falling Canadian dollar has benefited the forestry, agriculture, and tourism industries; industries that are prevalent in smaller and rural municipalities. Being the second, third, and fourth industries in Alberta respectively, the province relies heavily on these industries in order to create a stronger and diverse economy. Alberta's ability to adapt and innovate during times of bust has attributed to its strength in comparison to other provinces. While diversity is not a new idea for communities to use to respond to economic downturns, it is a technique with a proven track record. When the Alberta economy experiences a bust, it turns to diversification as an opportunity to become more innovative and to develop its strengths in other industries. A bust should not be seen as an unfortunate incident, but rather as an opportunity to build a better community. It can be used to turn a community into a destination in the province by researching and investing in emerging, and innovative, industries.

## Building a Partnership between Planning and Economic Growth

At the beginning of a session, the speaker mentioned how it was unusual for a planner and an economic developer to share a stage together. Playing upon the conflict between planning and economic growth, the comment revealed the importance of a partnership between planners and developers. Ben Petch of Scheffer Andrew Ltd. and Larry Horncastle of Keystone Strategies Inc. stressed the importance of finding ways to build that relationship. The opportunity for planners and developers to create a mutually beneficial relationship exists in their passion for the prosperity of a community. As both aim to add value to the community, the social interactions between planners and developers must be realized. By improving these social interactions, we will be able to innovate, create stronger communities, and improve the welfare for residents who reside within them.

Working as an interdisciplinary team, effective planning and economic development can attract the right businesses to your community when the process is consistent and easy to understand. When the process is slow and difficult for developers, communities open the doors for the money to leave. How can a strong relationship between planners and developers address the situation? Planners can assist developers by providing them with the tools to create destinations and places with identities.

## UPCOMING PLANNING EVENTS



Alberta Bicycle  
Commuters Conference

### Annual Alberta Bicycle Commuters Conference

- ⇒ September 26-27, 2015
- ⇒ Coast Canmore Hotel and Conference Centre
- ⇒ The aim of this conference is building momentum for biking by connecting cycling communities across the province, by promoting safe roads for everyone and sharing best practices.
- ⇒ For more information visit: <http://albertabicyclecommuters.weebly.com/>



Alberta Development Officers Association

Photo from adoa.net

### 2015- Alberta Development Officers Association Conference

- ⇒ September 27-30, 2015;
- ⇒ 6:00 pm, Slave Lake Inn and Conference centre, Slave Lake on 27<sup>th</sup> September
- ⇒ The conference is themed on "Resilient Communities: Change, Challenge and Opportunity".
- ⇒ For more information visit: [www.adoa.net/](http://www.adoa.net/)

# Winning Essay 1: Continued..

By Stephen Yu, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year MPlan student, University of Calgary

This can be achieved through policies that help attract businesses and focus on the outcomes, rather than regulations. The policies also need to consider the impacts on current businesses and ensure that they support their retention. While communities generally focus on the attraction of new businesses, it is equally, if not more important, to retain and nurture existing businesses. Existing businesses contribute to the identity and unique characteristics that you are trying to establish and contribute to the success of diversifying your economy.

## Addressing Growth Externally and Internally

Building and maintaining relationships with businesses is an important factor for economic growth. However, a community must also consider the effects of their growth on the surrounding communities. The City of Calgary is one of the fastest growing municipalities in North America, making the strategies that have implemented to become valuable tools for emerging and growing communities. In the case of the City of Calgary, the growth management strategy utilizes multiple initiatives that work together to ensure growth occurs in a way that contributes to the quality of life. High-level policies guide the direction of growth, while infrastructure strategies, and guidelines for compact and complete communities act as agents of change. However, without geographical or political constraints, Calgary faces the possibility of developing into the valuable agricultural lands in the surrounding communities. With the importance of the forestry and agricultural industries in diversifying the economy, an alternative avenue is required to protect these assets threatened by future growth. Considering the regional context, municipalities need to collaborate for the mutual benefit of the Alberta economy. Kathy Dietrich of the City of Calgary stressed the importance of both internal and external collaboration when it came to managing growth. Municipalities, small and large, offer the economy different strengths and their combination of strengths will allow Alberta to prosper in future economic downturns. Responding to the economic growth of surrounding communities will provide opportunities for collaboration and innovation that can strengthen both communities.

Internally, the development of a new project can also present itself as an issue when a strong opposition emerges. Oppositions can emerge on new developments due to heritage preservation, sentimental value, or simply the fear of change. Understanding what these concerns are specifically contributes to the success or failure of a project. Jonathan Schmidt of McElhanney Consulting Services Ltd. covered two case studies where public engagement bridged the gap between all parties. Effective engagement requires both high-tech and high-touch methods. These methods should be interactive, able to develop a dialogue about the needs and values of the community, and able to promote these values. This is where digital tools and a physical presence are used collaboratively to engage the public. However, the approach that should be taken in any engagement process relies heavily on the target audience. High-tech approaches are favourable when attempting to reach a broader audience. This can be accomplished through surveys, social media, or websites for example. In contrast, a high-tech approach allows you to invest time with the stakeholders who are interested in the project. It also creates an opportunity to remain innovative and improve the project through co-design or charrettes. This process allows you to address any concerns by changing words into mutually agreed upon images. Another important aspect of public engagement is realizing that the opposition may also have differences among themselves. By providing alternative options in the design, community priorities can better be met while ensuring that the economic growth will continue.

## UPCOMING PLANNING EVENTS



**International CPTED Association**

Photo from CPTED website

## 2015 CPTED Conference

- ⇒ October 19-20, 2015
- ⇒ Coast Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre in Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- ⇒ This 2 day conference will feature a look at the current trends in CPTED, 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation CPTED, SmartGrowth and other exciting and important research areas that affect you, the community leader, LE/Security Professional, Planner, government official or NGO.
- ⇒ For more information:  
<http://www.cpted.net/event-896310>



Photo from ARPAonline.ca

## 2015 ARPA Conference

- ⇒ October 22-24, 2015
- ⇒ Lake Louise, Alberta
- ⇒ The conference focuses on recreation because recreation has the potential to address many socio-demographic challenges such as increased sedentary behavior, obesity, decreased contact with nature, threats to the environment, and inequities that limit participation.
- ⇒ For more information:  
[arpaonline.ca/events/energize-conference](http://arpaonline.ca/events/energize-conference)

# Winning Essay 1 Continued...

By Stephen Yu, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year MPlan student, University of Calgary

## Lessons Learned

Although Alberta communities are currently facing economic challenges, it is important to maximize the opportunities to innovate. Changing the mindset of communities to realize the opportunities during economic downturns can become Alberta's competitive advantage. The conference sessions offered communities innovative approaches that are currently being used within the province. The boom bust economy provides a constant reminder of the importance of diversity and innovation. While oil and gas plays a major role in Alberta's economy, it should not always overshadow the strengths of other industries. Encouraging research and development in emerging industries can provide innovative solutions to the challenges being faced today. Without attempting to achieve innovation, the opportunity to become a leader in a new industry is lost.

When it comes to planning for economic growth, diversity should be considered in all aspects. Whether it is the industries you have specialized in, the skill sets of the workplace, or the approaches used in public engagement, the importance of diversity is seen in all aspects. Recognizing the importance of partnerships, both internally and externally, is also vital to a community's success. From planners, economists, developers, to politicians, we each play an important role in the future of Alberta. As we move forward, focusing on all of our strengths will bridge the gap between planning and economic growth.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Stephen Yu  
2nd year Masters of Planning student at University of Calgary.  
He is interested in transit and transportation planning. He will be published in the upcoming issue of Plan Canada.

## UPCOMING PLANNING EVENTS



## 2016 Municipal Internship Program Host Invitation Letter

- ⇒ October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015
- ⇒ CAO's application sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> July for host invitation
- ⇒ To be a host for the 2016 Administrator, Finance Officer or Land Use Planner Municipal Internship Program. The host application deadline is Oct 1, 2015, with interns starting at their respective organizations in May 2016.
- ⇒ For more information:  
<http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/ms/internship>

# Planning vs Economic Growth: Winning Essay 2

By Brittany Davey, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student of Faculty of Science (Planning), University of Alberta

The uncertainty of the Province of Alberta's economic future was on everyone's mind at the time of the Conference, which meant the theme was extremely appropriate. Questions if there was the potential for a possible recession or economic downturn in our prospering province due to the volatile and declining oil prices? What would be the extent of a recession? What would it mean for our Alberta communities? What would it mean for Albertan unemployment rates? What would this then mean for the housing and real estate market? And as a result what does this mean for growth and development? Would it cease or significantly decline? The theme of the 2015 Community Planning Association of Alberta (CPAA) Conference on *Planning vs. Economic Growth: How do we bridge the gap*, couldn't have been more appropriate. Overall the conference provided some form of answer or solution to all of these questions. The presenters and conference attendees of CPAA conference revealed through the course of the conference time that all of these questions cannot be answered independently but must be understood and answered holistically because they are all impactful of each other and cause various trickle down effects that can affect the entire Alberta community. Through this, the theme of the Conference really portrayed light to the fact that the economy and planning go hand in hand and cannot be segregated as they influence and co-depend on one another and to isolate the two leads to inefficiency, challenges and gaps in community planning and our Alberta economy.

When it comes to Alberta's economy, we are extremely unique. With two exponentially growing cities surrounded by growing surrounding cities and rural communities throughout the province, we are still experiencing exponential growth despite a fluctuating economy. This deems Alberta to have many drawing qualities and as such planning considerations need to focus on the future needs of this growing population. When considering growth and Alberta's economy, it also cannot be considered on just a single community by community basis but instead at the regional level to understand a vast amount of elements that can aid in community building. Communities can work with others at a regional planning level to understand the migration of populations in the area and also learn from other municipalities on whether they experience the same struggles and their ways to mitigate. It can work to alleviate problems and create efficiency and overall all more sustainable and unified, consistent, and efficient planning practices. The CPAA conference is a great opportunity to bring community builders together to share these ideas which was something I experienced first-hand this year.

A major theme throughout the conference was what role the public has in planning. In my opinion, it is not a role that can be defined easily. The public is our client and we are working to ensure the most sustainable, vibrant and prospering communities to meet their needs. The segregation between planning and the public is impossible to obtain if the intent is to serve the public and ensure their needs are met. This theme was presented in the conference program through many presenters discussing the significance of effective public consultation. Public consultation was a large topic and it's challenging to get it right as explained through many first hand experiences and stories from Conference attendees and presenters. A major take away message that I received was that a municipality should work with the public to identify and determine what the significant places are to them and how to effectively plan them.

Something that the Conference made me think about was the difference between a community of individuals and an engaged community. It's about creating an engaged community that wants to be a part of community building and the outcomes on how their community is formed. From this, it comes back to the definition of community and the different scales that this can resonate at. It's more than just the building of a municipal community but about the smaller communities, the neighborhoods, the groups of likeminded individuals and it's about how these communities interact at different levels that planners must also be cognizant of while building communities. We must work to understand how these interactions are formed and how to enhance these community relationships.

Another major lesson I learnt at the conference was that planning is multidisciplinary and it can no longer operate in silos as we need to integrate how we do things and understand the multiple stakeholders involved in decision making. We need to understand all needs and roles of the players involved and always ask if the appropriate players are involved.

It leads to understanding multiple perspectives which is something I learnt from the Conference as how to understand planning through the role of another perspective such as a developer, economist, a consultant, the municipal government, or the community. It is thus necessary to understand all these multiple interests and find ways to manage them and find the common ground. The Conference provides the best opportunity to initiate this process through networking which was the most significant experience to understand how to escape the silos. The networking at the Conference between presenters and attendees provided students as well as professionals the opportunities to learn from others and understand the multiple perspectives even within the room and how to take that back and apply it to their own communities.

With the theme of the Conference being Planning vs. Economy, it brought to attention how do we make planning financially feasible? This formed conversations of how in a time of an economic downturn, where should planning efforts be focused. From this, I came away with the understanding that in times of economic uncertainty, it is important to maintain proactive, long term planning that will continue to look to the long term sustainability and outputs for the communities. This turns to the significance of implementing achievable Municipal Development Plans and Regional Plans that look to creating long term sustaining communities despite the market fluctuations. This leads to show the need for planning to be integrated with the economy and provide plans that reveal how these two are intertwined and how to plan in accordance to the economies fluctuations. Things like looking to redevelopment projects and investment in the proper places by communities.

With this however, I also learnt that it is not just about planning and the economy, there are many more factors to be considered as it is about creating and maintaining a balancing act between multiple elements - the economy, the environment, social, and cultural. The following are all leading to the middle ground, which is sustainable development where planning needs to be at. Planning can't only align with the economy but multiple elements to create sustainable and resilient cities for when areas of these like the economy begin to diminish or are

experiencing difficulties in our communities, the communities are resilient and able to withstand these challenges.

In conclusion, the 2015 Community Planning Association of Alberta provided thoughtful and meaningful conversations and take away messages on how to effectively build communities while changing our views of trying to manage the economy but instead work to ensuring collaboration and working with it to achieve the sustainable and resilient communities.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Brittany Davey

2nd year Student at the University of Alberta, Faculty of Science, - planning program. She is interested in ecological planning and is an intern with the City of Edmonton.

#### UPCOMING PLANNING EVENTS



### Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning Commons, 2015

- ⇒ October 2-4, 2015, hosted by ACSRC
- ⇒ University of Alberta, Augustana Campus in Camrose, Alberta
- ⇒ This event concentrates on subject matter such as rural policy and governance, social policy and services, tapping into natural resources, investment attraction, business succession strategies, infrastructure, transportation and logistics, youth retention and recruitment, etc.
- ⇒ For more information visit: [rplc-capr.ca](http://rplc-capr.ca)



Photo from OLDSCOLLEGE.CA

### Education Courses offered on Land & Environment

- ⇒ FALL/WINTER, 2015
- ⇒ Olds, Alberta, Canada
- ⇒ Available programs include Land Analyst, Land Agent, Land & Water resources and more offering at: <http://oldscollege.ca/continuing-education/land-environment/index>



Photo from ALBERTA MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS WEBSITE

### Familiarize yourself with acronyms and abbreviations used for Planning events, services and organization

- ⇒ For more information: <http://www.cpaabiz/content/bulletins-resources>

# Planning vs Economic Growth: Winning Essay 3

By Sandra Shanoada, 2nd Year MPlan student, University of Calgary

Alberta has a reputation for many things, our rocky mountains, our plentiful agricultural lands, the Calgary Stampede, and a love-hate relationship with the oil and gas sector. Those of us, who have called Alberta home for a couple decades, have been a part of this rocky relationship far too long and the ups and downs often seem second nature, even routine. Yet, those individuals that are new to Alberta, quite often, are much more apprehensive and worried of the economic future when a "typical" bust situation hits our moody province. Both reactions are legitimate in my opinion. Steadiness and certainty in the Alberta economy are two things I have not grown up with in my experience here. For as long as I can remember the oil driven province of ours also has come hand in hand with ultimately very high, and nice on the wallet booms, but not too far behind are the unstable busts. This year's theme of the CPAA Conference "Planning vs. Economic Growth" tackled this substantial and imperative issue in the Alberta climate.

This historical and some could argue expected nature of a boom-bust economy in Alberta has fuelled countless discussions of an unstable approach to business. As noted in the talk by keynote speaker Todd Hirsh, "Planning versus Economic Growth: how do we bridge the Gap?" addressed several concerns that Albertans have of this latest downturn. The cost of oil has fluctuated in recent record. Hirsh explained that as OPEC members led by the powerhouse of Saudi Arabia have decided not to be the guardians of oil prices any longer and allow oil prices to drop at least for the time being. Ten years ago, when oil prices hit the then unprecedented prices of \$42/ barrel, Alberta was sitting pretty and raking in the cash. Today \$50/barrel is unsustainable, what changed? Cost of production is much higher than it was ten years ago therefore cost structures, and wage bonuses will decrease. But on the positive note, when the energy sector declines, Alberta's other economies begin to thrive. Forestry, agriculture and tourism are increasing and set to continue. An economy that is diverse is one that is resilient and sustainable in the long run. Resilient and sustainable economies are concepts foreign to the Alberta landscape. But as planners, I believe we can have a part to play in the economic growth of the province. Not until this conference, did I really begin to understand how this role could be utilized.

Todd focuses the topic of planning and economic growth by framing the question "Alberta Economy 2015, who should worry and who shouldn't?" A question that had me pondering how can we still possibly be asking this question consistently cycle over cycle? It seems the obvious answer to this question is to diversify the economy. Stop the heavy reliance on the energy sector. Hirsh's question had me thinking of a planner's role, and my future role in the economy of the city or town I help to plan. Globally, he discussed examples of what planners should work hard to try not to replicate, and that is, the massively built – and still sitting empty whole cities in China. Their economy is stalled somewhat currently as well, but for different reasons. Locally, it led me to consider the very important role that planners have in the economy of their local city or town, and the duty we have as professionals to do right by the people in these areas in the economic sense. Communities across Alberta must ask how each development will enhance the local economy and provide assets for the community.

Learning the role of planners in terms of economic growth hit home for me during the presentation of Ben Petch, "Planning = Economic

Growth". Policy can be a powerful implementation tool, or a red tape nightmare. Often, in the realm of planning, policy can be a detriment and thus can be a big setback in the economic sense. A great challenge in planning surrounds the issue of development and economic growth and the role policy and plans play. This notion was brought to light in the talk given by Petch, where he described that policy could hold up developers from getting their projects through and explained the importance in planning to reduce barriers to development. These development projects are assets to the economic market but with hold ups in the approval process, costs can climb too high for a project to even continue and get off the ground. The idea of focusing on outcomes rather than regulation brought forth a bridging mechanism to development and economic prosperity while still maintaining strong planning principles. Innovations in planning around development and policy were cited in the presentation discussing where developers could fund Area Structure Plans (ASPs). Through this model, risk is minimised as the costs are covered and thus a greater chance approval of such developments can occur. Therefore, in this way economic growth and planning go hand in hand. Policy can help drive the local growth of an economy rather than act as a barrier to it.

Where Petch described the barriers policy can provide in development, Challenges with Public a redevelopment project was discussed with Jonathan Schmidt from McElhanney Consulting Services. This discussion centered on the passion and attachment people often hold for publicly owned lands. A sense of identity and history is associated to these lands and thus can become personal too many. Engagement in planning can be seen as a positive to a development project and also a negative, and is thus a hot button topic in planning. Therefore Schmidt's approach to engagement was highly refreshing as it focused on an element that Petch described which was outcome focus rather than a focus on regulations. This method revealed effective engagement from the public. Focusing on asking specific design and use questions to the public allowed for a better understanding of the community's needs and values. In addition, asking specific questions that would help inform the implementation of a variety of designs was executed and presented to the public for their feedback. By offering options that were based specifically on values of the public, achieving results that related back to that sense of place, and personal attachment that was described by the locals was achieved.

Economic growth cannot only be delayed by regulation, but also by engagement that is not executed properly or even engages the public appropriately. This conference shed the light on challenges in planning on the implementation of projects, which ultimately can become an obstacle to economic growth. From the approval of a project through policy, continuing to the initial stages of design and execution of plans with engagement, planning is consistently bogged down in some sort of political workings. Thus the CPAA conference offered new mechanisms to push forward and drive our local economies as planners and supplement economic growth. Policy and regulations along with engagement can be supportive tools, rather than items that need to be checked off and completed.

I believe that, policy and engagement have an incredible and powerful hand in design and planning of communities, parks, and business oriented areas. I have realized that policy can make or break the ease to

which good urban planning attributes can be applied. The policy framework and implementation is a huge issue in planning. A lack of policy interferes with progress, as well as policy that slow advancement. It's incredibly difficult for the planning profession to evolve and meet the goals for the public realm, without a change in the way we implement and execute regulations. To increase the innovation of urban design and livability standards, the policy must work as a tool to help the planning process evolve. When policy is limited to design guidelines for example, there is no assurance in place that developers will create the desired types of developments that as citizens would enjoy living in and visiting. Planning is complex enough, its time our tools help us not hurt us.

If we start planning in a way that views constraints and unappealing environments as opportunities, innovation is bound to ignite. The future of planning is exciting. Policy in planning can be a powerful tool that facilitates and supports development and enhancement of the local

economy. The public engagement process can facilitate excellent conversations and outcomes when values are considered appropriately. The status quo in planning is dangerous. Challenging negative thinking, poor engagement practise and inefficient policy will help the evolution of best practices in planning, develop ideal places to live, work and play, and ultimately help drive local economies.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sandra Shanoada

2nd year of Masters of Planning program at the University of Calgary. She is interested in urban design, environmental planning and both urban and rural development.

# Alberta Planning Exchange Community Planning Association of Alberta FALL 2015

205-10940 166A Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5P 3V5

Vicki Hackl

CPAA Secretary

780.432.6387

780.452.7718 Fax

cpaa@cpaa.biz

<http://www.cpaa.biz>

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