

# NEVADA PLANNER



American Planning Association  
**Nevada Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

A Publication of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association

## FALL 2010

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**inaugural issue**

# LOOKING FORWARD

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

GREG TOTH, AICP  
NEVADA CHAPTER PRESIDENT

**I**t's finally here – the Chapter newsletter is back! I'm not sure how long it's been but let's just say it's been a very long time. I'll be writing this "Letter from the President" for each issue. But since this is the first issue there's really no set format or "program" for me to follow as far as a topic. I'm sure that will develop over time. For this inaugural issue, I'll just make this a sort of mini "State of the Chapter" letter.

2007/2008 was an incredible time for the Chapter. Membership soared to its all-time high of 500, and everyone was energized and centered on that one great task: the National Planning Conference. Member involvement on the Local Host Committee was incredible and made the conference an amazing success – the highest-attended conference in APA history (over 6,500). *WE* did that. The Nevada Chapter, one of the smallest chapters ever to host the national conference, helped deliver the most successful one to date.

**We all know what happened after that. I won't drone on about how "times are tough" because we all know that, but I do want to give you an accurate assessment of where the Chapter is.** Membership is down to around 350. That of course means our dues income is down. On top of that, **APA National's income is down, forcing it to charge the Chapters fees for services they had previously been able to provide free of charge.** This is what led to the decision to cancel the complimentary subscriptions to *The Western Planner*, and ultimately the creation of this newsletter, *The Nevada Planner* (which we plan to publish quarterly).

But this is yet another amazing opportunity for the Chapter. **While it's not nearly as complex as a national conference, this newsletter is *ours*, something to energize us again, something around which we can rally again. I'm very excited about the possibilities, and I'm hopeful that the Chapter will see a level of excitement and energy approaching what we saw in 2007 and 2008.** The newsletter can be a way for us to become better connected, which was and continues to be my main goal as your President.



There are also many other positives to report. The Executive Committee will revive the yearly Chapter Work Plan this fall, **so you'll be seeing an email from me in the near future about that. Next year we'll tackle the Long Range Chapter Development Plan.** Once those are in place, our Chapter will comply with the three largest requirements (the newsletter being the 3<sup>rd</sup>) of **APA's Minimum Performance Criteria for Chapters.** The Chapter has sponsored locations for members to attend APA Audio Conferences in both the north and the south (see Upcoming Events). And although we already announced it, this bears repeating: six of our members took and passed the AICP exam this May – a 100% pass rate! The National pass rate was 62.5%. So overall the state of the Chapter is good, and will soon be even better.

I hope you enjoy reading this Inaugural Issue of *The Nevada Planner*, **and I hope you'll be moved to write articles, take pictures, or find some other creative way to become involved.** Just let us know your ideas. And, as always, I welcome your comments and suggestions about all things Chapter-related.

Thank you and God bless Nevada!

Greg Toth

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**FACT PLANNING**  
Statewide, Nevada communities only recycle 21% of their waste. This is less than the national average of 33% and far less than the leader San Francisco at 72%.

# WHO's WHO

## NEVADA CHAPTER LEADERSHIP:

President	<b>Greg Toth</b> , AICP   City of Henderson greg.toth@cityofhenderson.com
Vice President	<b>Robert Summerfield</b> , AICP   City of Las Vegas rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov
Secretary	<b>Sandra L. Monsalve</b> , AICP   Washoe County smonsalve@washoecounty.us
Treasurer	<b>Alexandra Profant</b>   The Tahoe Foundation nevadaplanning@me.com
Past President	<b>Adrian Freund</b> , FAICP   Washoe County afreund@washoecounty.us

## NORTHERN SECTION OFFICERS:

Director	<b>Andy Durling</b> , AICP   Wood Rodgers, Inc. adurling@woodrodgers.com
Assistant Director	<b>Sondra Rosenberg</b>   N.D.O.T. srosenberg@dot.state.nv.us
Secretary	<b>Stacie Huggins</b> , AICP   Wood Rodgers, Inc. shuggins@woodrodgers.com
Treasurer	<b>Angela Fuss</b> , AICP   CFA, Inc. afuss@cfareno.com

## SOUTHERN SECTION OFFICERS:

Director	<b>Courtney Mooney</b> , AICP   City of Las Vegas cmooney@lasvegasnevada.gov
Assistant Director	<b>Richard Rojas</b> , AICP   City of Henderson richard.rojas@cityofhenderson.com
Secretary	<b>Nathan Goldberg</b>   City of Las Vegas ngoldberg@lasvegasnevada.gov
Treasurer	<b>Jody Donohue</b>   City of Henderson jody.donohue@cityofhenderson.com

## APPOINTED LEADERSHIP:

Professional Development Officer	<b>Catherine Lorbeer</b> , AICP   City of Mesquite pdo.nvapa@gmail.com
Representative to Western Planning Resources	<b>Mike Harper</b> , FAICP faicp04@msn.com
Planning Official Development Officer	<b>(Vacant)</b> <i>Contact Greg Toth with interest.</i>

## PUBLISHING & GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Acting Editor	<b>Robert Summerfield</b> , AICP   City of Las Vegas rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov
Designer	<b>Dawn Okerlund</b>   City of Henderson dawn.okerlund@cityofhenderson.com

# NORTHERN SECTION NEWS

ANDY DURLING, AICP, LEED® AP  
DIRECTOR, NORTHERN SECTION

## Northern Nevada Transportation Collaborative – Sustainability Summit 2010

**T**he Northern Section has partnered with RTC, NDOT, UNR, and many others to form the Northern Nevada Transportation Collaborative (NNTC). As Northern Nevada faces the challenges of diversifying its economy and exploring additional regional investments such as geothermal and other renewable energy resources, the NNTC seeks to find transportation solutions that will contribute to economic prosperity and livability. The NNTC was created to address regional transportation issues for livability and sustainability. To accomplish this, the NNTC and its partners will host the Sustainability Summit 2010 aimed at promoting a dialogue between private and public sector stakeholders.

The Summit will be held December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> at the Joe Crowley Student Union at the University of Nevada, Reno. As sponsors and major contributors to the NNTC Sustainability Summit 2010, the Northern Section officers have worked very hard with the programming committee to ensure that the content of the Summit will provide vital educational resources for our members, as well as fulfill necessary Certification Maintenance (CM) credits at a very reasonable cost. Look for an email in early October with more detailed information regarding registration and additional key information.

## Brownbag-It

**W**e are excited to announce the Brownbag-It program. The Section Board has received feedback and requests from members for a regular program aimed at education and networking. As an initial step in implementing this idea, we have planned an inaugural Brownbag lunch event on October 19<sup>th</sup>. We are planning quarterly lunches at locations throughout northern Nevada that will provide an opportunity to receive free CM credits and to network with fellow planners.

Our first installment will feature Dr. John Sagebiel, Environmental Affairs Manager at the University of Nevada and local representative of the United States Green Building Council. He will be discussing the myths and realities of green building. Look for an email with details on time and venue coming soon!

If you or your company/organization is interested in hosting a Brownbag-It program at your location or you have a topic that you would like to present, please contact Angela Fuss (afuss@cfareno.com) for assistance.

# SOUTHERN SECTION NEWS

COURTNEY MOONEY, AICP  
DIRECTOR, SOUTHERN SECTION  
NATHAN GOLDBERG  
SECRETARY, SOUTHERN SECTION

**T**he Southern Section continues to look for avenues to help further educate and promote both the APA and AICP. The Section has put on a luncheon each month so far this year and, with the exception of October, will continue to do so moving forward. We attempt to provide CM credit opportunities as often as possible with these luncheons and have had a fair amount of success. This year we have offered a total of six CM credits through the monthly luncheons, including 1.5 each in Law and Ethics. The section also held a Summer Mixer at the Blue Martini bar at Town Square on the south strip in July as an opportunity for a purely social get together.

The luncheons have provided us the opportunity to partner with UNLV, the RTC of Southern Nevada, and NV Energy. One of our goals is to further our networking with other organizations that may share similar goals such as AIA, USGBC, and ASPA. This type of networking and interaction can bring organizations together and help us achieve goals that we share in common as well as give everyone involved a better opportunity to know what is all happening in the area and learn of new opportunities and meet new people.

The Southern Section is hosting in the annual State Conference at the Historic Fifth Street School in Downtown Las Vegas from Wednesday September 29<sup>th</sup> to Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>. The Conference will be a great opportunity to obtain CM credits, learn about many new aspects of Planning in Nevada, and to meet with your peers. We hope that you attend and look forward to seeing you there.

# A Look to the Past with an Eye on **THE FUTURE OF PLANNING** in the Las Vegas Valley

Elizabeth M. Sorokac, Esq. *in collaboration*  
with Margo Wheeler, AICP

**T**he past seven years have been a time of tremendous change in the planning world of the Las Vegas Valley: unprecedented growth and then a steep decline in development, all within that short period of time. These historic highs and lows have required both the public and private sectors to constantly adapt to new conditions. Many of the members of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association may be thinking about what the past seven years have taught us about the future of planning in the Las Vegas Valley. This article presents and examines the experiences of both a Las Vegas Valley land-use attorney and the Director of the City of Las Vegas Planning & Development Department to offer some perspective on the topic.

## **Suburban-Community Development**

Prior to and during the growth cycle of 2003-2006, developers purchased large tracts of land, consisting of hundreds or even thousands of acres, to master-plan it with the goal of creating "communities." Each one had an eye toward emulating Summerlin—the most successful project of this type in Southern Nevada. Each of these projects was a partnership between the developer and the controlling jurisdiction with the almost impossible goal of accommodating the valley's unprecedented growth. The guiding principle during this time was to find the fastest way to get something done. Examples of these types of projects include Lone Mountain, Cliff's Edge (now known as Providence), Southern Highlands, and Mountain's Edge, among others.

I was intimately involved with several master-plan developments of this kind. Each community formalized its negotiations with the controlling jurisdiction through a development agreement. It contained community-specific timelines and standards agreed to in exchange for amenities and quantifiable contributions that benefitted the community and the controlling jurisdiction. Attention was given to every planning detail, including acceptable uses, architectural guidelines, development standards, and landscape designs, to create a unique look and feel to each community. After approval of the development agreement, the controlling jurisdiction monitored the progress of the community; and the dialog between the developer and the controlling jurisdiction was ongoing as development continued. The paramount concern throughout the process was to get things done quickly and efficiently.

## **High-Rise Development**

Another phenomenon during the growth cycle was building higher instead of wider. High-rise developments were proposed in downtown Las Vegas, on the Strip, and in more suburban areas of the Las Vegas Valley, which had convenient access to the freeways and were within a reasonable distance of the Strip. The "Manhattanization" of the Las Vegas Valley was another attempt to keep up with growth with an eye toward creating a different kind of community. Many of the same amenities were offered to residents of high-rise buildings as were offered to those of the suburban-style communities, but they were offered on a vertical platform instead of a horizontal one. Examples of these types of projects include Soho, Allure, Juhl, and Panorama, as well as casualties of the economy, like ManhattanWest, The Curve, and others.

In my experience with high-rise development, the approval process was similar to the large acreage communities but differed regarding the type of advanced planning needed, as the projects generally involved a small number of buildings instead of thousands of homes within suburban-community developments. The high-rise projects were formalized through a development agreement with density accommodations and an agreed-to timeline in exchange for amenities and quantifiable contributions that benefitted the community and the controlling jurisdiction. With high-rises, however, detailed design standards controlling the layout and look of the community were not needed. In the City of Las Vegas, though, many of the existing high-rises were approved through a somewhat different route—a disposition and development agreement, whereby the City of Las Vegas sold the land to the developer for high-rise development.

Following the necessary approvals, the dialog between the developer and the controlling jurisdiction was ongoing as required permits were pulled at various stages of development. With high-rise projects, the need to resolve quickly issues that arose during construction was even greater than with the suburban-style communities because an entire building had to be completed before any space in the building could be occupied.

## Moving Toward the Future

In 2007, residential development slowed, and by 2008 it essentially stopped. The seemingly never-ending processing of subdivision maps finally came to a halt and, according to Ms. Wheeler, today there is an inventory of nearly 6,000 approved, but unpermitted, residential lots. The high-rise developments met a similar fate. With the credit crunch and the consumer desire for high-rise properties cooling, many approved projects were never commenced or were only partially completed. Notwithstanding the large inventory of approved residential lots and high-rise developments, the need to process approvals quickly and efficiently has not waned.

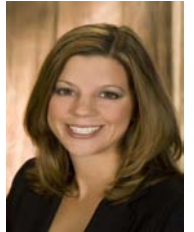
The development community continues to urge the local jurisdictions to streamline processes so projects can move forward quickly. The local jurisdictions in the Las Vegas Valley have responded to this need by making changes in department operations and project processing. For example, under Ms. Wheeler's direction, the City of Las Vegas is currently working on, among other things, the following projects: 1) revising and reorganizing the City of Las Vegas zoning code for presentation in the Fall of 2010; and 2) developing an electronic plans-check system. Changes have recently been approved to allow the administrative processing of revisions to approved, residential subdivision maps and to give the Planning Commission, a board under the City Council, the power to approve non-legislative planning items as final action.

As a land-use attorney, many of the projects I now represent are less grandiose than before, but are just as important as ever to my clients. In the last two years, my practice has focused more on small projects and preserving previously approved entitlements. Recently, I have represented such projects as: a remodel and addition to a nine-unit apartment complex; use permits for the storage of resort-size palm trees and high-rise construction crane parts; a gas station, convenience store and car wash; and many extensions of time that maintain approved entitlements until the economy justifies moving forward.

The Las Vegas Valley development community is in a stage of preparing and rebuilding for the future that will come. Property owners still own land, but they have revised their vision of what the highest and best use of that land is due to the changes in economic conditions and growth patterns. The focus of development has gone from creating communities for new valley residents to improving and serving the communities that already exist in the valley. An acre of land is no longer a great location for a high-rise development, but it may be a great location for a project that will serve the area


that surrounds it. The projects being proposed and built have been adjusted to something more realistic and geared toward existing neighborhoods. Developers and local jurisdictions are also preparing for the next growth cycle. They are learning how to do more with less and are developing more efficient and streamlined processes. Perhaps the only constant in this market is that the fastest and most efficient way to get from start to finish will always be an important part of planning in the Las Vegas Valley.

**Elizabeth M. Sorokac, Esq.**, a commercial real estate and land-use attorney practicing in Southern Nevada is an owner and founder of the Reisman Sorokac law firm. Ms. Sorokac's legal experience includes positions with local government, boutique litigation and transactional-law firms, a large corporate firm, and functioning as in-house counsel for Southern Nevada's largest master-plan community developer.




**M. Margo Wheeler, AICP**, is Director of the City of Las Vegas Planning & Development Department. Ms. Wheeler joined the Planning & Development Department in 2001 and was appointed Director in January 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Cal State University, Los Angeles and her Masters degree in Urban and Regional Studies from University of Southern California. She has been the department head in five California cities. In addition to leading planning departments, her scope of responsibility has included building, redevelopment, housing and grants, and public works.





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# Urban Forestry and PLANNING

Paul Andricopulos, AICP, LEED® AP

**A**t first glance, the term urban forestry might seem an oxymoron: taking care of a forest in the city? When one thinks of forestry, the first images that come to mind are of large wooded areas and maybe even a remote ranger station. So what do we mean when we talk about urban forestry? Is there *really* a forest somewhere in the middle of the city?

**Actually, “urban forest” is a term to describe the cumulative trees and green spaces throughout our community, especially in public spaces.** Urban forestry, therefore, is the practice of managing our urban trees and green spaces. Proper selection, planting, care and maintenance of those trees are critical to their success. So why is this important for city planners?

Too often, city planners only see trees as another aesthetic requirement for development, similar to architectural standards that are prevalent in many municipal codes. However, trees should be viewed as assets to a community. In fact, it has been said that trees are the only municipal asset that appreciates over time. When you look at the cumulative benefits they provide, it is easy to see why their value increases as they grow.

Besides the obvious benefit of providing shade and beautification in our communities or acting as buffers, trees

play a critical role in the sustainability of a community. Trees produce oxygen, clean the air we breathe by filtering particulate matter and sequestering carbon emissions, reduce storm water runoff, and reduce soil erosion. Proper tree selection, placement, and maintenance can also reduce water use! **How is that possible, you say? Don’t all trees require water, especially in cities located in the desert southwest? The short answer is “yes.” The longer answer is “well, that depends.”**



It depends on which species is selected, where it is planted, what the soil conditions are, and how it is maintained. For example, in Southern Nevada a desert-native species that is drought tolerant will use dramatically less water once established than a species that is not desert adaptable. Also, the frequency and length of watering, as well as the placement of the irrigation emitters, will have an effect on the **tree’s overall need for water.** The implementation of sound urban forestry principles will help the trees to thrive while reducing water use.

Did you know that trees can also increase building energy efficiency? **That’s right! Again, it comes down to proper tree selection, placement, and maintenance** (read: urban forestry). Placing appropriate deciduous trees on the south and west sides of a building will provide much-needed shade and cooling during the hot summer months—saving on cooling costs—and will let light and heat through to the building during the cold winter months—saving on heating costs! Simple, age-old strategies that are part of the broad repertoire of urban forestry principles.



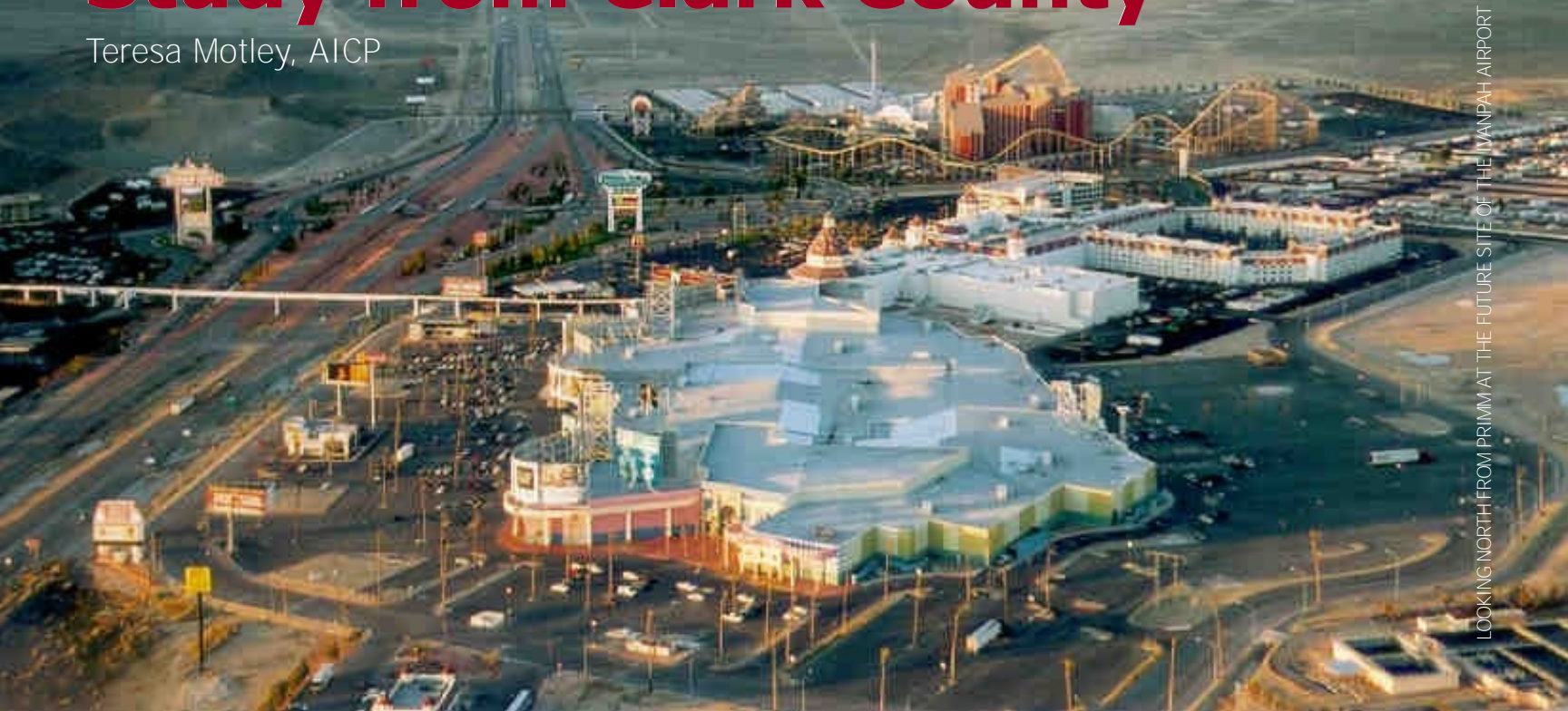
So how can planners help to implement urban forestry in their jurisdictions? **I’m glad you asked! There are some excellent resources out there.** The Southern Nevada Arborist’s Group, the Nevada Shade Tree Council, the Nevada Division of Forestry, and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension are all willing to help promote urban forestry. Some good print resources include *Cleaner Air Tree by Tree* and the 2005 Centennial Edition of *Trees for Tomorrow*, both of which are available for download from the Nevada Division of Forestry web site at [www.forestry.nv.gov](http://www.forestry.nv.gov). The American Planning Association’s Planning Advisory Service has also published a report entitled *Planning the Urban Forest*.

Once you understand the value of urban trees and start implementing good urban forestry principles, I guarantee **you’ll never look at a tree the same way again.** You might even want to hug one!

**Paul Andricopulos, AICP**, is a Planner for the City of Henderson, where he has worked for the Community Development Department for the past 10 years. He is also the Chair of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition’s Regional Urban Forestry Work Group.

# Adapting Long-Range Plans to Economic Realities: **A Case Study from Clark County**

Teresa Motley, AICP



LOOKING NORTH FROM PRIMMAT THE FUTURE SITE OF THE IVANPAH AIRPORT

## Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the Clark County Department of Aviation (CCDOA) concluded that the McCarran International Airport (LAS) could not accommodate projected long-term demand for commercial air service in the region. Based on historical growth patterns, projections for future growth, and the physical constraints of LAS, the County anticipated LAS would exceed capacity shortly before 2020. Planning and construction of a major airport takes decades. Accordingly, CCDOA began planning for a new commercial service airport in the Las Vegas metropolitan area to supplement the available capacity at LAS. The forecasted need was further confirmed in 2005 when the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recognized Las Vegas as one of eight metropolitan areas needing additional capacity by 2020.

After more than a decade of planning for a new commercial service airport, the County faced an unexpected dilemma. Historically, the rate of increase in aviation demand in the Las Vegas area has exceeded the national average, and tended to be relatively recession-proof. Unlike past recessions, **however, the current recession's lingering effects have resulted in stubbornly persistent decreased demand for air service at LAS. This has complicated CCDOA planners' ability to accurately forecast future demand, and has called into question the time frame in which a new airport will be**

Consequently, this year CCDOA had to reconsider how to continue planning for a major public infrastructure project that was expected to take almost two decades to plan, design, and build. The long lead time required to construct a new facility can be extraordinarily difficult to reconcile during an economic **downturn of unknown proportions. Planners' uncertainties** regarding how to model future demand add to the complexity. **This article explores Clark County's approach to dealing with this issue.**

## Planning the Ivanpah Airport Project

In 1997, Clark County embarked on the lengthy process to find a site, obtain approvals for, and design and build a supplemental commercial airport. Among various locations considered, it became apparent that the Ivanpah Valley was the most promising site for a new airport. The Ivanpah Valley is located within 30 miles of downtown Las Vegas, has favorable topography and orientation, and is adjacent to existing transportation infrastructure including Interstate 15 near the California-Nevada border.

Because all potential airport sites in the Ivanpah Valley were owned by the federal government and managed by the Department of Interior through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the County sought federal approvals for the necessary land transfers. Federal legislation to allow Clark County to acquire the Ivanpah site was first introduced in 1998. In the legislation, Congress recognized that Clark County was the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country and that **"exorbitant growth" made the need for another airport in the Las Vegas area "absolutely critical."**

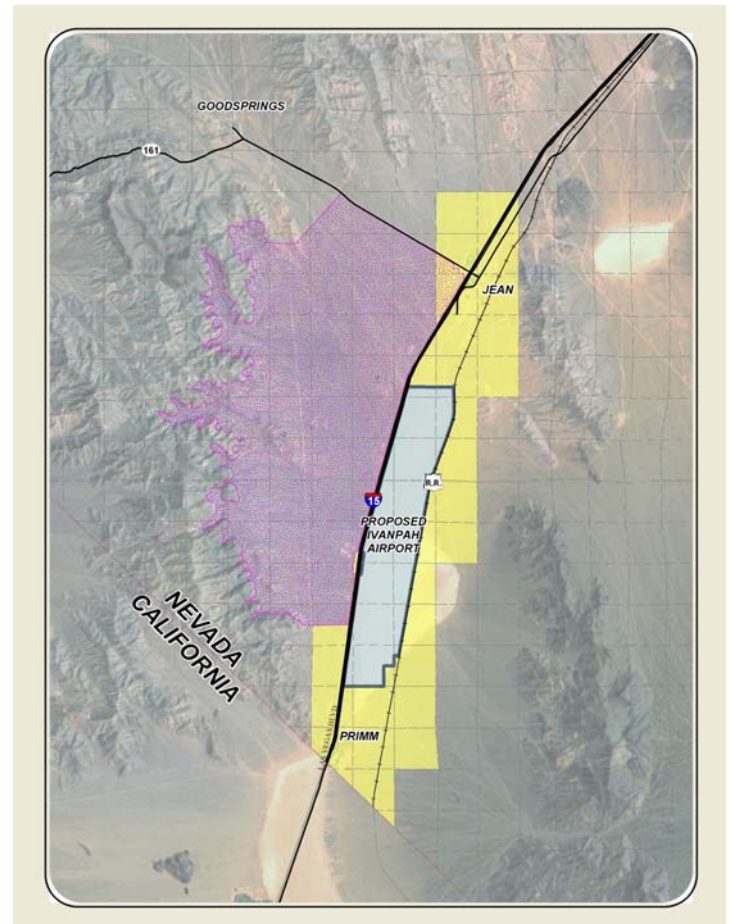
The Ivanpah Valley Airport Lands Transfer Act was enacted in 2000 and provided for transfer of title of the Airport site to the County. A subsequent 2002 federal statute (Title V of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act) provided for transfer of additional land to the County for a noise overlay district, upon final federal approval of the Airport. In 2004, upon meeting conditions required in the 2000 Act, the County acquired title to the site in the Ivanpah Valley for the new airport.

At the same time, the County began to assemble a team of local and national planning firms to assist with the enormously complex planning tasks associated with a project of this magnitude. The Ivanpah Valley airport site was a greenfield site and there was little existing infrastructure to support the proposed airport. Creating the required infrastructure necessitated long-term planning for, among other things:

- infrastructure for stormwater and flood control (the site is partially located in a 100-year floodplain)
- coordination regarding air quality issues in an ozone nonattainment area
- surface transportation access via Interstate 15 and construction of new access road
- other transit or rail options for access to the airport
- relocation of high-voltage transmission lines
- construction of utilities, including water, sewer, and power; and
- coordination of land use planning between the County Department of Comprehensive Planning and the BLM to ensure that nearby development is consistent with relevant land use and management plans

In May 2005, the Clark County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution concluding that forecasted demand could not be feasibly accommodated by expanding commercial service at LAS, and a new supplemental commercial service airport designed to serve primarily long-haul service was the only option for augmenting existing capacity at LAS to accommodate the exorbitant growth anticipated for the region.

In late 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the BLM, acting as joint lead agencies (JLAs), initiated preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for **the new airport (now referred to as the "Southern Nevada Supplemental Airport" (SNSA)).** The EIS is being prepared by the federal agencies and is funded by Clark County.



From 2005 until 2009, CCDOA recognized that forecasts for continued growth in the region meant that the County would have to work efficiently to have the new airport ready in time to prevent a critical lack of capacity in air service. Because so much air travel to Las Vegas is for leisure or optional business that is sensitive to delays, the County needed not just to accommodate projected growth, but also to maintain an acceptable level of service (minimizing delays, providing efficient passenger processing, and adequate landside facilities). As a result, planning activity proceeded under a sense of urgency, with a number of planning actions proceeding simultaneously. While the JLAs and the EIS consultant worked on the EIS, the County continued its own planning for the airport layout and associated infrastructure. At the same time, FAA conducted an airspace study to assess the complicated airspace issues in one of the most crowded air corridors in the country. Preliminary design also started for a new arterial highway to serve the airport. In addition, the County worked with BLM to identify and protect public lands that would be needed for off-site infrastructure.

# CLV Makes DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS More Efficient

Margo Wheeler, AICP

**T**he Development Review Process Efficiency Analysis Report prepared by Kirchoff & Associates for the City of Las Vegas has provided an outstanding opportunity to put the spotlight on long-needed coordination improvements to processes within the City. With the emphasis placed on this important aspect of the Planning & **Development Department's work and coordination from the City Manager's Office, there is renewed hope that positive change and real progress will result.**

Each of the findings made in the Development Review Process (DRP) report is the seed of an opportunity that allows for substantive changes. For example, the DRP report referred to a 2007 change recommended by the **department to allow the city's Planning Commission to take final action on Special Use Permits (SUP).** The proposed amendment was favorably recommended by the Planning Commission but not acted upon by the City Council.

In addition to the SUP changes proposed in 2007, which the DRP report recommended be revisited, department staff added proposed language regarding appeals (also recommended in the report) and expanded from there. On March 15, 2010, TXT-37402 was presented to Planning Commission to make the following changes:

- Allow appeals only when no application procedure exists in code
- Allow application submittals for projects on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands with a **"letter of no objection"**
- Eliminate Resolution of Intent for rezonings
- Eliminate Site Development Reviews (SDR) for condo to apartment conversions

- Allow for minor SDRs (i.e. an administrative review) for up to 5,000 sf of new commercial or industrial development, four or fewer new residential units, and reductions in previously approved SDRs
- Allow increases of up to 10% in density, floor area, or height as minor amendments
- Allow SUPs to change location on the same parcel as a minor amendment
- Allow all SUPs and Variances (VAR) to be final action at Planning Commission with a 10-day appeal period
- **Eliminate neighboring owners' signatures** requirement for administrative deviation submittals
- Standardize the method to exercise SUP, VAR, and SDR approvals and give all such approvals the same time period

As can be seen from the above list, the original DRP recommendations provided the basis for staff to correct and/or improve a number of procedures called out in **the city's Zoning Code and make improvements to the efficiency of the development review process.**

Since these changes have taken place in June, the number of actions being final at Planning Commission has increased from an average of 15% to nearly 50%. This allows better service to applicants in having their requests processed more quickly and significantly **shortens the City Council's afternoon agenda.**

**M. Margo Wheeler, AICP**, is Director of the City of Las Vegas Planning & Development Department.

# National Community Planning Month

Each year APA, its members, chapters, divisions, and professional institute sponsor National Community Planning Month to raise the visibility of the important role of planners and planning in communities across the U.S.

Help elevate the role of planning in your community. Host a planning department or planning commission open house, talk to kids in schools about a career in planning, present a library display about planning and planners, sponsor a neighborhood tour to highlight how planning helps the community.

Watch your email and the Chapter website for information on possible National Community Planning Month events and functions around the state. If you're hosting one, please let



However, in 2009-2010, the economy slowed dramatically and demand for air service declined. Historic models used to predict the likely depth and length of the recession proved to be inaccurate. This serious downturn in air traffic led CCDOA to reassess its planning agenda for the SNSA. To compound the problem of decreased demand, the County had no reliable models to predict when the economy would recover, when air traffic would return to pre-recession levels, or when air traffic levels would exceed the capacity at LAS – all critical factors in the planning process for the new airport project. CCDOA struggled to determine how to adjust its planning effort for a new airport that would still be needed, but not on the timetable that had been assumed just a few years earlier. To abandon planning for the SNSA would result in the loss of millions of dollars and years of time invested in the project. Accordingly, the County decided that the most prudent course of action was to temporarily suspend funding for the federal **government's EIS and to slow down its on-going planning efforts** until more accurate forecasts could be made of future growth.

## **Planning in the Face of Uncertain Demand**

Planners must understand that with a long-term public infrastructure project, they cannot overreact to short-term economic pressures. By the same token, however, it is **important not to “under-react” and fail to adjust in the face of uncertain need for a project.** For projects like the Ivanpah Airport with a planning horizon of 15-20 years, and which require billions of dollars of public and private investment, deciding how to react to the lingering recession and long term uncertainty is particularly delicate. Millions of dollars have already been invested to purchase the site and plan and design the airport. Terminating the project outright would have resulted in the loss these investments. It was also clear that to continue planning to open a new airport in 2018, as originally forecasted, would be imprudent when all available data suggested that a new airport would not be needed until several years later.

**In response, CCDOA selected a “middle ground” that was designed to protect the investment already made but which slowed down the planning to a schedule that more accurately reflected economic realities. As a result, the planners’ focus for the Ivanpah Airport has shifted to three key goals:** (1) **preserving all “non-perishable” work product from the environmental study and planning efforts;** (2) protecting the proposed airport site from encroachment that could impede development; and (3) refining existing forecasting tools to predict when demand for commercial air service would outstrip capacity at McCarran.

Until the path to economic recovery is better understood, planning for the Ivanpah Airport will proceed on a far slower track than had occurred over the past five years. In addition, the County is re-examining opportunities to increase the capacity of LAS through a combination of new technology and new air traffic procedures. One unexpected, though beneficial outcome of the changed economy is that the slower planning schedule for the Ivanpah Airport opens the door to opportunities to maximize capacity at McCarran that were unrealistic under the previously fast-paced plan to open the new airport. For example, optimization of McCarran will be costly and under pre-recession forecasts, would have been imprudent because such actions would have delayed the need for a supplemental airport for only an additional year or two – not long enough to make the investment worthwhile at that time. Under the current and projected growth rate, however, optimizing capacity at LAS will extend its ability to accommodate all Las Vegas commercial air traffic for a longer period of time, making it worthwhile to take such steps.

In the meantime, CCDOA is also taking action to preserve the value of the planning and environmental studies done for the new airport. Although some environmental studies do not have a long shelf-life, much of the work done to date to assess the baseline affected environment in the Ivanpah Valley will be valid when work on the EIS resumes. CCDOA planners are preserving and cataloging this work to maximize its usefulness. The same is true for other planning and site protection work. The airport layout plan, the flood control plans, the design for the arterial highway, and other infrastructure projects will not expire or need to be recreated if care is taken now to preserve their usefulness when the project fully resumes.

In addition, CCDOA continues to work with BLM and FAA to monitor proposed land uses adjacent to or near the airport site. In the absence of a final Record of Decision approving the airport, the County and the agencies must be vigilant in protecting the usefulness of the site as a commercial service airport. This means monitoring to identify potential interference with future airport radar (*e.g.*, from new wind farms), monitoring to identify potential interference with **future pilots’ visual abilities** (*e.g.*, by reflection from new industrial-scale solar power projects), and monitoring to identify potentially competing uses of other sites required for necessary airport infrastructure (such as the flood retention basins and the arterial highway.) It also requires working **closely with the County’s other planning departments** regarding compliance with new ozone standards, and protection of threatened and endangered species such as the desert tortoise.

# CARSON CITY OPENS Business Resource Innovation Center

## Departments team up to better assist local entrepreneurs and businesses

LEE PLEMEL, AICP

**T**he Carson City Office of Business Development, Library, and Permit Center joined forces to open the Business Resource Innovation Center (BRIC) this August. The project is a strategic coordination of city business and development functions to better assist Carson City businesses with everything from concept to licensing.

The BRIC's mission is to provide essential business information, regulator requirements, business planning tools, and business-related programming and instruction. This represents a shift in the redevelopment agency's focus from financial assistance for individual projects to a more comprehensive business assistance program, including:

- A centralized location for planning, building, business license, economic development, and redevelopment
- Library resource functions, such as free public access to computers, a business research library, graphics and design software, and WiFi access
- A business resource technician to assist with marketing and business planning, and research and market analysis Conference rooms available to business organizations for meetings and training

The city also partnered with regional business groups such as the Carson City Chamber of Commerce, Northern Nevada Development Authority, Carson City Downtown Businesses

Association, Carson City Arts and Culture Coalition, and Nevada Small Business Development Center to further coordinate resources.

The BRIC project was made possible by a grant obtained by the library to provide the office space and resources. Grant funding expires in two years, and the City will evaluate the BRIC's success to determine if it should continue to operate as originally proposed.



"It's a work in progress," says Redevelopment Manager Joe McCarthy. "We'll keep responding to the business community's needs and modifying our economic development programs to meet them." McCarthy adds that the agency plans to invest more funds into public infrastructure in the upcoming years. "I want to make the BRIC the business resource hub for the entire community."

The BRIC is located at 108 East Proctor Street, adjacent to City Hall, consolidating the previously isolated permit center with other City offices. For additional information on the Business Resource Innovation Center, contact Lee Plemel, Planning Director, (775) 283-7075, lplemel@carson.org.

**Lee Plemel** has been the Carson City Planning Director for the past two years, and has worked in the city's Planning Division for 9 years. He's been a planner in Nevada for 14 years.

## *Adapting Long-Range Plans to Economic Realities: A Case Study from Clark County | continued from page 12*

### Conclusion

Planning for a massive infrastructure project like a new commercial airport is complex under any circumstances. When economic conditions make established forecasting tools unreliable, that complexity is magnified many times over. When CCDOA embarked on the planning for Ivanpah Airport, it knew that planning and construction would take 15-20 years, and would in all likelihood have to weather many economic storms.

The current recession has turned growth predictions upside down, and has called for a creative and nimble response from the CCDOA's planners. When the County determined that the new airport would not be needed for at least several years beyond 2018, CCDOA carefully and strategically suspended some studies and planning activities and continued others on a slower timetable. The County knows that the Ivanpah Airport will be needed at some point. The uncertainty is when. Therefore, CCDOA has sought to preserve its existing investment and to position itself to resume planning, design, and ultimately construction as soon as reliable economic forecasts predict a need for the new airport.

<sup>1</sup> The planned new airport would be the first major new commercial airport in the nation since Denver International Airport, which opened in February 1995.

<sup>2</sup> FAA, *Capacity Needs in the National Airspace System: An analysis of airport and metropolitan area demand and operation capacity in the future, (2005) at 9.*

**Teresa R. Motley, AICP**, is Airport Planning Manager for the Clark County Department of Aviation and has been with the department for 17 years. As Planning Manager, she oversees a staff of 13 who are responsible for airport-related facilities planning, land use planning, airspace and environmental planning, and noise mitigation and abatement programs. Prior to coming to the Department of Aviation, she spent one year in the Clark County Comprehensive Planning Department, and one year interning for Utah County and the City of Provo, Utah. Originally from Danville, Virginia, she has a Master's Degree in Geography with an emphasis in Planning from Brigham Young University, and is a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives.

## PLANNER PROFILE GREG TOTH

an interview with RICHARD ROJAS, AICP

The Planner Profile for this issue is Greg Toth, a Senior Planner with the City of Henderson's Community Development Department. He has been with the City for over 12 years in both the Long Range and Current Planning Divisions. In addition, Greg serves as the President of the Nevada Chapter.

### Describe your interest in planning.

Ever since I was a kid, I've been interested in buildings. When my family would take road trips, I was always taking pictures of buildings instead of people. I'd draw buildings in my spare time, even during school. I knew the architecture school was the right place for me - that is, until I took an undergraduate class in planning, and attended the University of Michigan. But while I was there, I took an Intro to Urban Planning Class, and something clicked. In my mind, and to quote a famous TV philosopher, "why limit myself to one building when I can design an whole city?" From that point forward I had the planning bug.

### Describe your education in planning.

Following my undergraduate degree in Architecture from the University of Michigan, I knew I wanted to pursue planning. I took one year off to save money by working three jobs - one as a janitor at a tennis club, and another working the loading dock at Hudson's department store, and I interned one day a week at the City of Lansing Planning Department. By the following fall, I started the Master of Urban Planning Program at the University of Tennessee. During my two years, when not rooting for the Volunteer football team, I worked as a graduate assistant at a non-profit design firm and for a rural county planning department.

### Describe your career path.

By the time I was at UT, I knew I wanted to live in Las Vegas. I tapped into the school's alumni network and found an alumni working in Las Vegas (at the Clark County Planning Department) - Don Matson. He helped me get connected with a summer internship at the City of Las Vegas between my 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years at Tennessee. The following spring, buddy sent me a planning job ad for the City of Henderson. With only a credit card and absolutely no cash, I flew out for interviews, crashed on my friend's couch and eventually got the job as Planning Tech. Twelve years and 3 position changes later, I'm still happy to be in Henderson.

### Describe your most interesting project you have worked on.

While it's not really a "project," co-chairing the '08 national conference was definitely a career highlight. I met so many people from all over the country and got to basically showcase the Las Vegas valley and all the great things we're doing here. As far as projects, it's been exciting to be involved in projects like Green Valley Ranch Station and the M Resort, but the most reward things have been some of the great working relationships I've been able to forge with residents and "regular" customers over the years.

### Describe one of your future planning career goals/aspirations.

As anyone at my current office can attest, I am a huge Olympics enthusiast. Winter games, summer games, you name it - I'm a fan. I enjoy the larger than life spectacle of the games - the competition, the venues and the intensity of the national pride. Someday, I hope to work on planning a future Olympic Games, maybe even when we bring them to Las Vegas. Also I think it'd be fascinating to be a planner for NASA, possibly at Kennedy Space Center or one of the other launch facilities. Planning for spaceflight would be a huge change from planning for subdivisions!

**Richard Rojas, AICP**, is a Planner for the City of Henderson. *For the past two years, Richard Rojas has worked as a Planner in the Long-Range Division of Community Development at the City of Henderson. He also currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Southern Section.*

*Email suggestions or ideas for a Planner Profile for the next issue to Robert Summerfield, Chapter Vice President, at [rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov).*

## notes SOUTHERN SECTION

The Southern Section is beginning to determine luncheon topics for 2011. Here's what's being considered:

- Tonopah Community Gardens (Las Vegas)
- Meeting facilitation/presentation tips
- Politics of planning
- Scenic Byway
- Sports arenas
- High speed rail project
- Hoover Dam bypass
- Airport planning
- University planning
- Status reports from Region VI APA/AICP Reps
- Pros/cons of public participation

If you have any other ideas or suggestions, feel free to send them to Courtney Mooney, Southern Section Director, at [cmooney@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:cmooney@lasvegasnevada.gov).

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Northern Nevada

**October 19**

Northern Section Brown Bag Lunch

- Wood Rodgers, 5400 Reno Corporate Drive, Reno

**November 10**

APA Audio Conference: Regulating Controversial Uses

- Washoe County Community Development Large Conference Room - 1001 E. Ninth Street, Building A, Reno

**December 8**

APA Audio Conference: Staying Out of Court by Avoiding Pitfalls

- Washoe County Community Development Large Conference Room

**December 13-14**

Northern Nevada Transportation Collaborative Sustainability Summit

- Joe Crowley Student Union, University of Nevada, Reno

## Southern Nevada

**September 29-October 1**

2010 Nevada State Planning Conference

- Historic Fifth Street School, Downtown Las Vegas

**October 13**

APA Audio Conference: Planning for Signs & Billboards in a Digital Age

- City of Henderson Community Development, 240 S. Water St.

- City of Mesquite Planning & Env. Resources Department, 10 Mesquite Blvd.

**November 10**

Southern Section Luncheon: Storm Water

- Gordon Biersch, 3987 Paradise Road, Las Vegas

APA Audio Conference: Regulating Controversial Uses

- City of Henderson Community Development

- City of Mesquite Planning & Env. Resources Department

**December 8**

APA Audio Conference: Staying Out of Court by Avoiding Pitfalls

- City of Henderson Community Development

**January 19, 2011**

APA Audio Conference: Retrofitting Corridors

- City of Henderson Community Development

- City of Mesquite Planning & Env. Resources Department

GRATITUDE  
HENDERSON

Thank you to the Henderson Community Development Department for going “halvsies” with the Chapter to offer the full slate of APA Audio Conferences! Additional thanks to the Mesquite Planning Department for offering their Audio Conferences to Chapter members!

FACT

## PLANNING

By 2025, 25% of Nevada’s energy must be provided by renewable resources, according to the State’s renewable portfolio standard.



FACT

## PLANNING

According to Newsweek Magazine, Hewlett-Packard, Dell and Johnson & Johnson are the top 3 American corporations committed to sustainability in 2010.

# NOTEWORTHY INFORMATION

Nevada Chapter  
American Planning Association  
PO Box 95050 MSC 115  
Henderson NV 89009-5050  
[www.planning.org/chapters/nevada](http://www.planning.org/chapters/nevada)

## NEVADA PLANNER

The Nevada Planner is a publication of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association, with a circulation of approximately 400 Chapter members, APA leadership, and Chapter Presidents. It is published quarterly.

## ARTICLES

To submit articles, ideas for articles, letters, announcements, events, photos, or advertisements, please contact Robert Summerfield, Chapter Vice President, at [rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:rsummerfield@lasvegasnevada.gov). The next issue will be published in or around January, 2011.

## CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The Nevada Chapter receives all member mailing and email addresses from the National database. To change your mailing address or email address, please log in to [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org) and update your information there.

Or, mail your changes to:

Member Records Department  
American Planning Association  
205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200  
Chicago IL 60601

# WANTED WANTED

## Seeking Newsletter Editor

Would you like to be Editor in Chief of this fine publication? **We're looking for someone with the desire, experience, and time to take *The Nevada Planner* under their wing.** Our research from other Chapters indicates about 10-15 hours of work are required per issue, and we'll be publishing *The Nevada Planner* quarterly. Job duties include but are not limited to:

- Collect and compile articles, letters, ideas, suggestions, blurbs, pictures, and ads for inclusion in the newsletter.
- Select co-editor(s) and assistants as necessary.
- Work closely with the graphic designer on layout and content.
- Arrange proofreading of all articles.
- Arrange distribution to Chapter members and APA leadership, and posting on Chapter website.
- Report to the Executive Committee at monthly meetings/conference calls.

For more details and if you are interested in volunteering for Editor in Chief, please contact Greg Toth or Robert Summerfield and include a brief explanation of your interest and experience. And thank you in advance!