



Sustainability Committee Proposal Summary

APA California Chapter Northern Board

April 15, 2011 (adapted from Board Retreat)

In September, the Board received a proposal to establish a sustainability program to amplify effective sustainability planning in the Northern Section. Because the topic was consistent with one of the Board's action areas, the Board authorized a newly formed Sustainability Proposal Committee (Scott Edmondson, Hanson Hom, Katja Irvin, Kay Cheng, Justin Meek, and Tania Sheyner) to prepare a proposal. Over the past three months, the Committee developed questions for the Membership Sustainability Survey, developed the program proposal, and analyzed the sustainability survey results for program implications. This memo summarizes the Committee's two products (attached).

Survey Results. The results indicate some skepticism about "sustainability" as the latest buzzword, indicating the program should attempt to develop a shared language and common understanding of sustainability's as a distinct challenge facing planners, decision makers, and stakeholders. Respondents stated a need for specific information and technical analysis, practical solutions, networking and coordination with multiple stakeholders, and education/outreach to elected and appointed officials and to the public. The responses indicate that web-based information and self-learning resources would be most useful, and that workshops should have a specific focus and/or promote networking. Lastly, the survey results identify a specific set of sustainability topics of interest to our members that the Committee and Board can address in program materials and workshops. The survey was sent to all APA Northern members with a current email address on file (approximately 1,500 members). The 190 responses constitute a 12-13% response rate and used in formulating the program proposal.

Program Proposal – *Establish a Sustainability Planning Learning/Practice Network.*

Sustainability's wide-ranging, evolving, multi-faceted challenge makes it difficult to treat as an established disciplinary field of knowledge and practice, and hard to respond to effectively. In such circumstances, an appropriate concept and response is that of a sustainability learning and practice network. In such a network, members can access current but evolving knowledge and capacity when needed; members' innovation and success can be shared to advance understanding and practice; and next-generation knowledge and practices can be tapped as they evolve; revolving around members' changing needs and challenges. The Committee proposes to develop such a network as the best way to address members' needs expressed in the survey and the challenges of effective sustainability planning.