

# NEWS & VIEWS



American Planning Association  
Economic Development Division  
Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Economic Development Division  
of the American Planning Association

Winter 2016

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*News & Views*, published periodically, is the newsletter of the Economic Development Division of the American Planning Association. We welcome articles, letters, suggestions and information regarding workshops and other educational opportunities for economic development professionals. Please forward your submissions by email to our Editor (addresses below).

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## Economic Development and the Value of Place

by Andy Struckhoff

An important part of the economic development practice is improving quality of life. The International Economic Development Council defines economic development as “a program, group of policies, or activity that seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community, by creating and/or retaining jobs that facilitate growth and provide a stable tax base.”

Business activity creates jobs, which mean income, which creates wealth, which raises the quality of life, which attracts more business activity and so on and so forth in a virtuous economic development cycle. Dr. Mike Wilkerson, of ECONorthwest, and Andy Struckhoff, of PGAV Planners, explored the notion of the value the quality of a place has with respect to economic development.

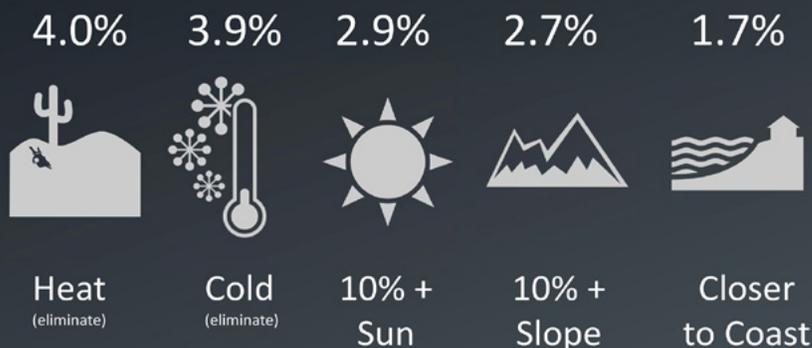
So much of the economic development practice focuses on taxation and business costs; on lowering taxes and business costs to increase business activity. But is there a positive correlation between lower taxes and higher economic growth? A review of economic growth alongside tax rates indicates that periods of lower taxation do not necessarily correlate positively with economic growth. In fact, during the last 40 years, as the top marginal income tax rate nationwide grew from 33.3% to 35%, the rate of real GDP growth increased.

At a local level, we can look to areas of high taxation compared to areas of relatively lower taxation and review growth in GDP. In such

(continued on page 3)

### The Second Paycheck

#### Percent of Income Willing to Pay for Natural Amenities



ECONorthwest  
Source: Albouy, David. *Are Big Cities Bad Places to Live?* 2012

PGAV

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## FROM THE EDITOR



As the one and done interim editor, I am relieved to announce we finally have another exciting, but long overdue, newsletter. It has been a very busy winter as I am sure it has been for most of you as well.

A few things to note: We are now accepting applications for our Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award (see p. 9). Information may also be obtained and downloaded from our [website](#). Many thanks go out to Margaret Cowell and John Provo for chairing the Holzheimer Memorial Student Scholarship for Economic Development Planning and Hunter Award, respectively. We would also like to thank everyone who responded to our call for editorial board nominations and speaking bureau participants. We are in the process of following up on these items and will be in touch soon.

We hope you have already made plans to attend the Phoenix Conference on April 2-5, 2016. The Economic Development Division will be sponsoring the following sessions:

### Monday April 4 Downtown Revitalization Through Education and Research – 8:30-11:30 a.m. (Mobile Workshop – Check Availability)

Take a walking tour of the Arizona State University Downtown Phoenix Campus and Phoenix Biomedical Campus, the focal point of creativity and innovation in downtown Phoenix. Experience how economic development, public-private partnerships, historic preservation, and quality of life connect.

### Creating Place With P3s in Economic Development Discussion – 9:00-10:15 a.m.

Learn how planners can play a role in public-private partnerships (P3s) that create large-scale, economic development. Explore how these roles create place that is reflective of the community.

### Linkages Between Housing and Economic Development – 4:15-5:30 p.m.

This session will provide an overview of housing as an economic development issue. Learn from two case studies highlighting the issue and two techniques for demonstrating the importance of housing in economic development.

### Division Reception (and Business Meeting) – 6:30-8:30 p.m.

### Tuesday April 5

### Modernizing an Urban Airport for Growth – 7:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

Having a major airport near downtown modernizes and connects its growing urban environment. See how Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport uses planning for regional multimodal transportation, renovating terminals, accommodating major sporting events, and preparing for airport land reuse.

### New Life for Old Buildings – 7:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Since 2008, Phoenix’s adaptive reuse program has provided regulatory relief and streamlined the development process for renovating existing buildings for new uses. The workshop will visit three projects and evaluate opportunities and challenges associated with reusing existing buildings for new uses.

*(continued on page 3)*

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE VALUE OF PLACE, CONT. FROM P. 1

communities as Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, California, and Seattle, Washington, local economies have grown more quickly than other communities such as Cincinnati, Ohio or Denver, Colorado, which have comparably lower tax rates. There are many reasons why some local economies are healthier than others. One major reason is “quality of life,” or, in other words, the characteristics of a place that make it an attractive place in which to live and raise a family.

Place value was measured quantitatively by David Albouy in his paper, “Are Big Cities Bad Places to Live?” In this paper, Albouy quantified the amount of income workers are willing to pay for natural amenities: 4% for less heat, 4% for less cold weather, 3% for more sun, 3% for nearby mountains, and 2% for proximity to the coast. Clearly, workers find value in these natural amenities and are willing to accept lesser income in exchange for the characteristics that enhance their quality of life. In this sense, a place has a direct value.

Many workers will select a location over a job; they will select a location that provides the quality of life they desire over a job or higher salary. Certain places create more demand for real estate and higher real estate values as well. Proximity to parks, walkability, retail density, education quality, and proximity to a central business district are all qualities that will create higher

**Proximity to parks, walkability, retail density, education quality, and proximity to a central business district are all qualities that will create higher demand over places that lack or are further away from these quality of life amenities.**

demand over places that lack or are further away from these quality of life amenities.

As such, in economic development practice, focusing on placemaking can lead to job growth. Likewise, focusing on job growth can fuel placemaking. Where economic development leaders focus their efforts depends on their community’s comparative strengths and weaknesses — where they and their fellow stakeholders determine they need to focus their efforts to yield the greatest return on investment. One might argue that placemaking is a long-term effort that lays the groundwork for long-term job growth and business development or attraction. However, while engaged in such a long-term strategy, perhaps a community must also focus on business retention, attraction, and expansion efforts so as to nurture and grow the community’s job base. ■

EDITOR’S MESSAGE, CONT. FROM P. 2

Enjoy the articles from Andy Struckhoff and Bob Lewis that examine the impact and role of taxes and subsidies on economic development, a topic that will be sure to excite during this political season. I hope to see everyone next month in Phoenix. Please feel free to reach out to the division with any questions or comments you have. ■

  
Lance Harris, AICP



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# New Government Accounting Rules Require Disclosure of Economic Development Incentives

by Robert M. Lewis, AICP, CECd

*When I first joined a phone conversation where “GASB” (pronounced GAS-bee) was being discussed, I immediately conjured a vision of The Great Gatsby. What’s he got to do with economic development, other than he spent a lot of money? I quickly learned that GASB stands for the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, and all of us in economic development need to pay attention RIGHT NOW.*

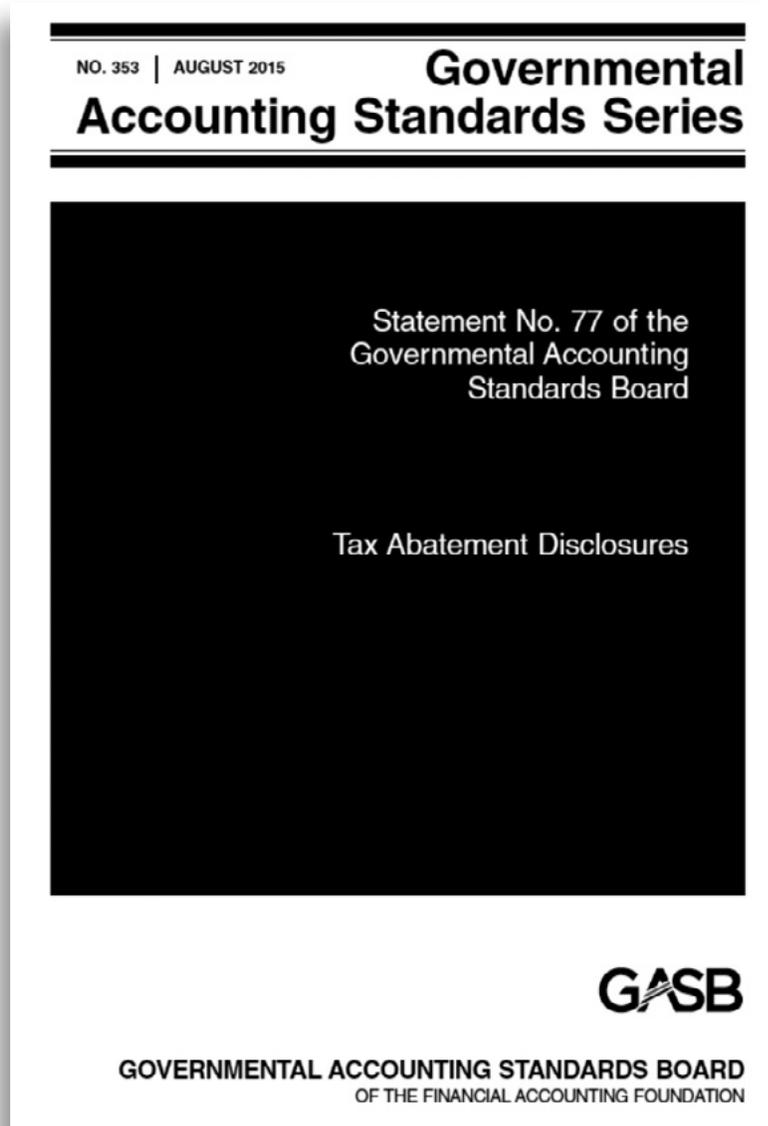
Organizations like Good Jobs First (GJF) have been concerned about the lack of consistent and readily available information on “tax expenditures” by local and state governments to incentivize economic development. In effect, they — and we as planners — insist on more transparency and good data. Meanwhile, GASB has also been studying the challenge of how to require more information in annual financial reports so that the public can determine if and how well their incentives are paying off.

A very good research report was published by GJF in 2013 (“Show Us the Local Subsidies”). It evaluated the online availability of incentives data for the 25 most populated cities and counties. Frankly, I think GJF was pleasantly surprised that several of our big places do a remarkable job in this regard. But that only reinforced the argument that more — even all — cities and counties could do remarkable reporting on their incentives programs.

In August of last year, GASB released its Statement No. 77 on “Tax Abatement Disclosures.” GASB is a non-profit organization that sets standards which virtually all local and state governments abide by, sometimes enforced in state law, but most often enforced by auditors and credit rating agencies: Abide by GASB rules or your ratings will drop. The tax abatement disclosure requirement went into effect for accounting reporting periods after December 15, 2015 (yes, right now!).

Tax abatements? I thought we were talking more generally about economic development

*(continued on page 6)*



NEW GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING RULES, CONT. FROM P. 5

**Facts About GASB:**

- The independent organization that establishes and improves standards of accounting and financial reporting for U.S. state and local governments. ([www.gasb.org](http://www.gasb.org))
- Established 1984.
- Recognized as official source of generally accepted accounting principles for state and local governments.
- NOT a unit of government itself. Part of private, not-for-profit *Financial Accounting Foundation (FAF)*.
- Funding from an accounting support fee established by Congress.
- Enforcement
  - No federal laws
  - Laws of some states
  - Annual auditing

incentives. In fact, yes, we are. GASB, in this context, considers a tax abatement as any reduction in future tax revenues that would otherwise accrue to, say, the government’s general fund. Thus, if a project is granted property tax abatement as an incentive, there is an amount of property taxes foregone for some period in the future which the local government will not have available for other purposes. GASB notes that it is important for the public to be made aware of such foregone revenue because there may be other expenditures in the community that might also have to be foregone because of a lack of revenue. That’s not necessarily a bad thing; communities need to make scarce resources decisions all the time. But better decisions are made with fuller information.

What if the foregone revenue is not called “tax abatement,” however? Is tax increment financing (TIF) also tax abatement? Are tax credits? Well, probably yes, though some refinements in the definitions or even court cases might have to take place to fully understand such implications.

Tax increment financing still requires the developer or property owner to pay the taxes. Thus, they aren’t abated in that sense. But those taxes are *re-directed* from the general treasury to the TIF project. So they might be considered foregone general revenue. Likewise, tax credits are foregone revenue because the owner of the credits does not pay those taxes.

Not so with incentives like grants and loans, according to the GASB rule. Grants and loans emanate from tax revenues already collected. Thus, the governing body

(e.g., city council) has had control of that case and is expending it according to adopted policy and budgets. Theoretically, tax abatements (or tax expenditures, in the parlance of accountants) are never under the control of the governing body because they were never paid directly to the treasury to begin with.

Each year, from now on, the financial statements of the community will document how much money was foregone, in the philosophy that, if such money had, instead, entered the treasury, then the community would have more control over its disposition and might not, in fact, choose to spend it as an economic development incentive.

The determination of what formally constitutes a tax abatement is based on the contract between the government and the recipient of the incentive. The government must agree to forego some revenue in exchange for a promise that some economic development benefit will occur. Thus, the reporting standards also require that the public be informed about how incentives will be recovered from the recipients if the promised benefit does not happen. Didn’t create the jobs you

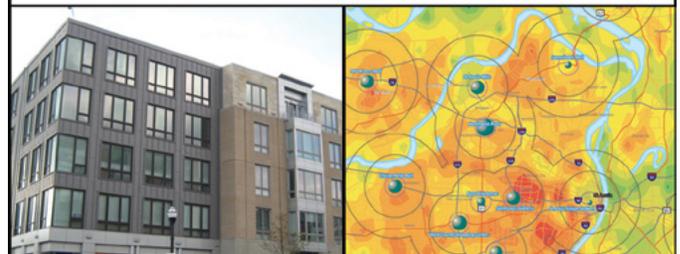
(continued on page 7)



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NEW GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING RULES, CONT. FROM P. 6

promised? Give us back some or all of the incentive. In our business, we call those clawback provisions.

To this point, we planners and economic developers really should have no complaints. More transparency, more community information for public debate, and so on. That’s messy, but democratically healthy.

Reporting of the incentives, however, can be consolidated for all incented projects in the community. Thus, the effects of single projects are hidden in the collective data. Is this a good thing? The amount of foregone revenue for that year is known, but who that foregone revenue is benefiting may not be. But what if there is only one such project in your smaller community? Disclosure of the tax abatement might reveal too much proprietary information, right?

This challenge may yet need more guidelines. In any event, it might have a negative impact on deal negotiations if the prospect is afraid that too much information about its development will be revealed. Maybe, however, that’s a good thing. If a business or property owner seeks public incentives but doesn’t want to share financial data with the public, then that may be a project the community shouldn’t want.

Of some consternation is that the GASB rule itself doesn’t require data or statements about indirect or multiplier benefits that are anticipated as a result of the incentives. Yes, communities need to report how their clawbacks will work, but not how other tax revenues might increase as a result of the subject tax abatement.

Moreover, cities that don’t do full audits can be exempt from the GASB reporting; pressure to do so will have to come from, say, the public. The rules don’t prohibit such reporting. They just don’t require it. We planners and economic developers, therefore, should work closely with our government finance officials to get the whole story into the annual reports. It’s one thing to suggest that incentives are *costing* the community through foregone revenues. It’s quite another to demonstrate what those costs are intended to return, or already have returned, as benefits to the community. ■

### Useful Calendars

**American Planning Association**  
[www.planning.org/events](http://www.planning.org/events)

**International Economic Development Council**  
[www.iedconline.org/Conferences](http://www.iedconline.org/Conferences)

**Lincoln Institute of Land Policy**  
[www.lincolninst.edu/news-events/calendar](http://www.lincolninst.edu/news-events/calendar)

**National Association for Business Economics**  
[www.nabe.com/calendar](http://www.nabe.com/calendar)

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Saturday, April 2, 2016 | 9 a. m.–5:15 p.m.

\$50, including lunch

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### Past Participants Say ...

"Excellent session; this was extremely valuable and helpful for my professional development."

"It's insight that I wouldn't normally have access to, so it really added value for me."

"Now I can decide what to do for the next two years and plan for my future."

#### Faculty

**Frank DeSafey** is president/principal at California-based Sequence Staffing, an executive search firm serving niche environmental, GHG/climate change, and engineering industries.

**Don Elliott, FAICP**, is a director with land-use consulting firm Clarion Associates of Colorado and teaches Urbanization in Developing Countries at the University of Colorado.

**Jeremy Klop, AICP**, is a principal at Fehr & Peers, a transportation engineering and planning firm, and regularly lectures at the University of Southern California.

**Mary Kay Peck, FAICP**, is the founding principal of Florida-based MKPeck Associates, specializing in planning and management services.

**David Siegel, FAICP**, is a senior project manager at Leland Consulting Group, urban strategists and development advisers based in Portland, Oregon.

**Craig Travis**, vice president of recruiting and employment services at Sequence Staffing, is noted for his ability to define job candidates' brands.

## Get Recognized!

# Call for Submissions for the 2016 Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award

We invite you to submit an application for the annual Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award from the American Planning Association's Economic Development Division. The award is named to honor Don Hunter, a long-time planner and economic developer who contributed a great deal of his time and wisdom to the APA. This is a \$1,000 award to a community that shows innovation and success with an economic development plan or project.

The formal presentation will be at the annual APA conference in Phoenix, Arizona, the evening of Monday, April 4, 2016, at the EDD Business Meeting/Reception. The Division will also help with preparing a press release for the winning community and will announce the winner in the News & Views Division newsletter that is sent out to some 1,000 organizations throughout North America. This year's deadline for submission is March 11, 2016.

Please submit via email to the Chair of the Awards Committee: John Provo, Director of Economic Development, Virginia Tech: [jprovo@vt.edu](mailto:jprovo@vt.edu).

Persons submitting nominations must be members in good standing of the American Planning Association. Organizations submitting nominations must employ at least one member in good standing of the American Planning Association. Plans and projects submitted for consideration need not be limited to the United States.

**Application Requirements:** There is no formal application form or fee. Please follow these guidelines:

**Narrative Description of the Plan or Project:** Description (up to 250 words) of the plan or project and describe how the project fits one or both of the following definitions:

- Economic Development: The creation of new employment and wealth-generating activities through the mobilization of human, financial, physical, and natural resources.
- Economic Development Planning: A series of deliberate activities leading to initiatives that enhance the jurisdiction's economic opportunities and quality of life.

**Attachment: Nominee's Fulfillment of Award Criteria:** For each of the following criteria, provide up to a 100-word description of the project. The entire attachment (all six criteria) should be no more than two pages or 500 words.

1. Originality: Unique concept or appreciable refinement of existing techniques or procedures.
2. Transferability: Potential application to other areas or projects.
3. Quality: Excellence of thought, analysis, writing, graphics, and professional character of the presentation.
4. Implementation and Results: Effectiveness of work proposals that have been carried out or show the promise of being carried out.
5. Comprehensiveness: Submittal demonstrates a thorough and in-depth approach.
6. Contribution to Community: Demonstrates application to community needs and desires.

**Application deadline: Friday, March 11, 2016**

**Presentation of award(s): April 4, 2016 in Phoenix, AZ**

**THANK YOU! WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR SUBMISSIONS!**



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## Planning Leadership Institute: Be a Champion for Change

Saturday, April 2, 2016 | 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. | CM | 8

\$175, including networking breakfast

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#### Past Participants Say ...

"Amazing relevance to my current situations ... beyond my expectations"

"Content was excellent—a good combination of pushing us and letting us come along"

"A great day of reflection and a place to know you belong to a group of professionals with similar challenges"

#### Faculty

**Facilitator Eric Klein**, a best-selling author and teacher, is a leading voice for greater spirit, meaning, and authenticity in the workplace.

**S. Gail Goldberg, AICP**, is executive director of ULI-Los Angeles and the former planning director of Los Angeles and San Diego.

**Gil Kelley, AICP**, is planning director for the city and county of San Francisco. He advises cities on strategic planning and partnership development.

**Jeff Levine, AICP**, is planning director of Portland, Maine, and managed completion of an award-winning comprehensive plan in Brookline, Massachusetts.

**Theresa O'Donnell, AICP**, is director of sustainable development and construction for the City of Dallas and serves on the Greater Dallas Planning Council board.

## Welcome to Our New Members

Austin Albert	Atlanta, GA	Tarik Milner	Oviedo, FL
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Adleasia Cameron	Ellenwood, GA	Alex Norr	San Diego, CA
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Diana C. Clement	Brooklyn, NY	Manny Patole	Brooklyn, NY
Carroll Edward Collins, AICP	Virginia Beach, VA	Patrick Patterson	Houston, TX
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Nathan Daum	Seattle, WA	Valerie Phillips	Roseville, CA
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Emily Edmonds	Sylva, NC	R. Steve S. Qualkinbush	Northbrook, IL
James Eldridge	Oklahoma City, OK	Spencer H. Richard	San Diego, CA
Jeffrey C. English	College Station, TX	Warren Richard	Augusta, GA
Kara Escajeda	Nolanville, TX	Benjamin Rohr	Janesville, WI
Matrell Everett	Tampa, FL	Elise C. Ross	Glastonbury, CT
Nicole R. Fuller	College Station, TX	Miguel Salinas	Frederick, MD
Michelle Gibbs	Orcutt, CA	Jessica Sarkissian, AICP	Mesa, AZ
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Shannon Jaax, AICP	Kansas City, MO	Matthew Staniszewski	Washington, PA
David W. Johnson	Port Townsend, WA	Susan M. Stimart	Charlottesville, VA
Brennan Kane	Waupaca, WI	Cary Tonasket	Nespelem, WA
Jerome Keene	Fresno, CA	Bob Trescott, AICP	McDonough, GA
Courtney Kietzer	Mankato, MN	Jonathan E. Tuley, AICP	Atlanta, GA
Reneé Kronon-Schertz	Chicago, IL	Steffen Turoff	Los Angeles, CA
Douglas Kubaska	North Smithfield, RI	Niek C. Veraart, AICP	New York, NY
Mary Kuna	Carlisle, PA	David E. Versel, AICP	Washington, DC
Steve Kunst	Wausau, WI	Binyu Wang	Atlanta, GA
Yingyang Lai	Iowa City, IA	Steven Washington	Houston, TX
Patricia Langford, AICP	Chicago, IL	William D. Waters	West Palm Beach, FL
Valentina Gaido Lasserre	New York, NY	Jonathan D. Whitehurst, AICP	Charlotte, NC
Haolun Li	New York City, NY	Neil A. Wilson	Poughkeepsie, NY
Akaii Lineberger	Washington, DC	David Witham	Bismarck, ND
Michael Martone	Montclair, NJ	Jennifer C. Wood	El Dorado, AR
Adam Mawyer	Blacksburg, VA	Thomas Vander Woude, AICP	Homewood, IL
Kristi McClain	Miami, OK	Rob Wright	Kimberly, ID
Deborah Rae Meihoff, AICP	Portland, OR	Xingjing Xu	Gainesville, FL
Portier Michelle	Richmond, VA	Matthew Zapson	Philadelphia, PA
Alexandra P. Miller	New Orleans, LA		