



Michigan Association of Planning
A Chapter of the American Planning Association

Social Justice and Planning Policy

Adopted on January 7, 2013

Summary and Background

Both professional planners and those otherwise involved in the planning process have social equity obligations. The *AICP Code of Ethics* states that it is the obligation of certified community planners to “seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration.” Further, the *AICP Code of Ethics* urges “the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.”ⁱ However, any and all participants in the planning process, whether certified planners, other professional planners, or elected or appointed officials, should abide by “Ethical Principles in Planning.”ⁱⁱ As developed by the American Planning Association and adopted in 1992, these principles state that all planning process participants should “strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons.”

Social Justice ~ Just and fair inclusion. A socially just society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goal of linking social justice and planning is to create conditions that allow individuals and communities to reach their full potential.

Adapted from PolicyLink

The responsibility of planners to address social justice, as expressed in the *AICP Code of Ethics* and in “Ethical Principles in Planning,” stems from the unique position that planners have to advocate meaningful policy changes on behalf of those in systematically disadvantaged positions. This type of advocacy work has a long history in urban planning and is, in large part, responsible for the emergence of the field. Pioneers of U.S. planning, such as Jane Addams, Benjamin Marsh, and Catherine Bauer Wurster, and more recent heroes, such as Paul Davidoff and Norm Krumholz, are leading examples of social justice advocates and have set precedence for the charge of planners to best promote the “health, safety and general welfare” of a community.

Planners serving as social justice advocates are especially important today as the nation's demographics shift toward a country with richer racial and ethnic diversity, yet more severe economic differences. Specifically, in the state of Michigan, where the unemployment rate is

MAP's Social Justice Goal

To increase awareness about the consequences of historic and ongoing land development decisions that result in systemic social and environmental injustices; to provide the planning community information, tools, education and advocacy that will result in systemic change towards social justice.

As part of this goal and through this policy, MAP advocates for meaningful citizen engagement in planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in designing transportation systems.

Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, religious communities, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and people with disabilities.

one of the highest in the nation, the economic disparities between rich and poor are extreme, and the state is racially segregated with minority communities being concentrated in poor urban centers. Thoughtful and inclusive planning can help address these issues by establishing policies and processes that increase the level of value placed on social justice practices at our capitol and within the state's cities, villages, and townships.

Through this policy, MAP provides both support and a call for Michigan planners to integrate social justice advocacy into their daily work. By adopting this policy, MAP seeks to reestablish social justice as central focus in the field of planning and offers the interrelated topics of *General Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Health, Safety and Crime, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Environment, and the Diversification of the Field* as areas where planners can begin this work. Overall, this policy is designed to:

- Improve professional planning practice to create a more socially just and

equitable society;

- Advocate planning practice and public policies that will reduce inequality;
- Assist planning professionals and their planning community partners in understanding the causes and consequences of inequality;
- Support broad based representative participation in the planning process to address inequality;
- Support necessary research, training and technical assistance that assist the planning community in developing and implementing planning practices and policies that are likely to result in a more socially just and equitable society;
- Work collaboratively with other public, private, and non-profit organizations that share these principles;
- Recognize the nation's shifting demographics away from a white majority and help direct the transition towards a new multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial paradigm;

- Help planners think about how to pursue equitable economic development policies that aim to support all socio-economic classes, particularly low-income residents;
- Provide direct assistance to planning professionals who, in working to create a more just society, may be terminated or have their professional careers jeopardized; and
- Help encourage underrepresented groups to become involved in the field of planning.

Social Justice Problem & Policy Statements

General Land Use

Problem Statement

National, state and local policies and regulations have resulted in disinvestment in our central cities and older suburban areas while subsidizing suburban growth. The loss of population in such central urban areas has decreased the tax base and property values, leaving the existing infrastructure without adequate funding for proper maintenance and placing a strain on local government resources. Further, because of this type of development, our state is suffering from diminishing rural landscapes, segregation by race and class, the location of hazardous and unwanted land uses in lower-income urban areas, and the lack of access to important systems such as transportation and healthy food. Adding to these problems is the minimal inclusion of disadvantaged groups in planning processes, the lack of regional strategies, and planning initiatives that may support gentrification that causes displacement or may not protect low-income neighborhoods or housing.

Policy Statement

Social justice considerations should be central to all land use planning initiatives and be intentionally inclusive of all stakeholders.

The effort to advance socially just land use planning should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in transportation planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in land use decisions. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups.
- b. Emphasizing land use connections with other community systems, such as food and transportation, and other lifeline services, in comprehensive plans.
- c. Directing growth towards existing urban centers to help maintain and increase their viability.
- d. Assuring that low-income residents continue to have choices about where they live while receiving adequate public services. Examining planning and zoning documents and development proposals to determine whether these support, as cited above, the need to promote “social and economic integration” of all races and income groups (AICP Code of Ethics) and to “expand choice and opportunity for all persons,”

particularly the disadvantaged (APA Ethical Principles in Planning), and people with disabilities.

Transportation

Problem Statement

The condition and type of transportation facilities available affects how residents and visitors move throughout our communities and determines the level of access people have to places, such as work, school, and recreational resources. When transportation facilities and policies overwhelmingly support private car usage, people who utilize public transportation as their primary means of transportation face a disadvantage. Furthermore, as fuel costs rise, car dependency places a higher financial burden on individuals and families who have no other transportation choice.

Policy Statement

Planning professionals should help enable all people to have equitable access to jobs, education, community amenities, and necessary goods and services by planning interconnected, multi modal, accessible systems.

The effort to advance socially just transportation planning should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in transportation planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in designing transportation systems. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and people with disabilities.
- b. Developing plans that connect with state-wide public transportation systems so that residents and visitors can travel throughout Michigan conveniently, cleanly, safely and affordably.
- c. Emphasizing land use and transportation connections (e.g. Transit Oriented Design), open to low- and moderate-income people, in comprehensive and transportation plans.
- d. Exploring and planning for transportation systems that reduce road congestion and fuel dependency by providing connected choices of transit, rail, walking, and biking networks.
- e. Improving the connection between transportation planning and community development tools (e.g. land use, affordable housing, and job creation), so that transportation investments serve social equity, economic recovery, health, active living, and environmental protection, sustainability and community resilience goals.
- f. Assuring financing arrangements for public transportation that allow for provision of services in low-income areas through strategic / community partnerships .

Housing

Problem Statement

Housing is a key indicator of a community's overall quality of life. Housing style or type, quality, and location affects access to jobs, schools, and other amenities, in addition to providing opportunities for people to interact and contribute to the overall functioning of a community. However due to lack of affordability, inadequate housing stock to suit specific needs (e.g. universal design, senior friendly housing), and housing policies or practices which are exclusionary by race or class, members of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups face limited access to decent housing. Furthermore, as basic living costs rise and communities face serious economic challenges, the realization of safe, decent, affordable housing will become increasingly difficult for more individuals and families. The APA "Policy Guide on Housing" recommends that planners address the following questions: "Are housing prices and rents escalating and pricing people out of the for-sale and rental markets? Is affordable rental housing being lost due to age and neglect, or to expiring government subsidies and contracts, or to more attractive higher market rates or conversion to other uses? Which properties are at risk of loss from the affordable housing stock? Is there adequate emergency or transitional housing for the homeless? Is the local housing market being impacted by the quality of neighborhood public schools? Is new housing accessible to persons with disabilities or adaptable so that persons may age in place? Are key community workers such as teachers and police officers able to live in the communities they serve? Are new immigrants or aging baby boomers or the changing composition of households creating a demand for the design of new housing types?"

Policy Statement

Housing policies and plans should support the development of strong, vibrant, safe neighborhoods that provide a diverse mix of housing options adequate for all ages and income levels. Housing developments should also be accessible to jobs, schools, and other community institutions and amenities.

The effort to advance socially just housing planning should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in housing planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in housing initiatives. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and people with disabilities.
- b. Developing policies that enforce anti-discriminatory housing laws, holding landlords and financiers accountable.
- c. Developing planning documents and housing policies that require a mix of housing within a community to accommodate all types of residents, including those of low income. Utilize housing needs and provision data to guide effective policy making to provide all needed housing segments.
- d. Encouraging communities to invest in infrastructure improvements that prevent or reduce blighted conditions and enhance safety and livability.

- e. Helping make connections with senior support programs, after-school programs, and other social service organizations that provide services in vulnerable neighborhoods.
- f. Working with non-profit housing associations, community development corporations, social service providers, and other public and nonprofit agencies to create more affordable housing options and assist low-income persons in gaining equity in the housing stock of a community.
- g. Working with others across a region to create partnerships for equitable housing policies in all parts of a region.
- h. Working to develop and enforce codes that assure decent rental housing.
- i. Incorporating provisions found in the APA Policy Guide on Smart Growth, issued April, 2012.

Health

Problem Statement

Vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and low-income residents, have less access to health care and amenities that provide healthy options, such as fresh foods, safe places to exercise, quality health services, non-motorized transportation facilities, and clean and safe environments. In addition, low-income neighborhoods tend to be more exposed to polluted and dangerous environments.

Policy Statement

Planning professionals should make efforts to recognize and understand the structural and systemic causes of health inequities and work to ensure that all people have access to opportunities that provide for optimal health.

The effort to advance socially just opportunities for health includes:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in healthy community planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in healthy opportunities for them. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Planning for neighborhoods and worksites to be free of environmental toxins and pollution.
- c. Providing public transportation options that address the needs of people trying to access health facilities and nutritional resources.
- d. Developing land use plans that provide access to food outlets and health care providers for vulnerable populations as well as for other areas of the community.
- e. Helping to create walkable communities for families of all income levels.
- f. Developing plans that provide for recreational opportunities in low-income neighborhoods.

- g. Supporting development tools and policies that encourage equitable access to food, health and wellness resources.
- h. Anticipating and recognize public health challenges like global climate change and developing policies and plans that mitigate the potential long term negative effects these public health threats on low-income persons.

Safety and Crime

Problem Statement

The disinvestment in urban communities, coupled with practices discriminatory by race and class, have contributed to increases in crime and violence in low-income urban neighborhoods. In addition, areas experiencing rural poverty are also experiencing an increase in crime. Residents of these communities live in environments that often are blighted and polluted and experience political and economic disenfranchisement. These conditions foster crime, which is exacerbated by the minimal or no public safety services in these communities.

Policy Statement

Planning professionals should recognize and understand the structural causes of crime and advocate for plans that help to reduce crime, particularly in low-income, minority neighborhoods.

The effort to advance socially just opportunities for safe communities should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in community planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in safety and crime prevention initiatives. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Recommending design criteria incorporated into city landscape and park design guides that can help prevent crime, and into local site plan review standards. This practice is known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- c. Extending efforts to influence the private sector by recommending landscape and development guides for shared public spaces that reduce criminal opportunities.
- d. Modifying building codes and building standards for new construction to include security issues.
- e. Coordinating groups of police and other members of the criminal justice profession to work on crime prevention solutions.
- f. Maintaining a balance between security measures and personal freedom.
- g. Supporting the safe and appropriate reintegration of ex-offenders into the daily life of a community.
- h. Supporting public/private partnerships for the planning and development of youth centers to alleviate the criminal activities most prominent between 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

- i. Establishing local blight elimination programs to remove unsalvageable abandoned and vacant buildings which attract illegal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution
- j. Assisting and promoting the protection of intact neighborhoods that are able to host community-based initiatives and organizations that provide necessary informal monitoring of residents and “others.”

Economic Development

Problem Statement

Economic development and opportunities are often lacking in urban areas, particularly in communities that have significant populations of racial and ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Many urban areas have experienced divestment, employment loss, and slow economic growth. The nation’s economic recovery and long-term competitiveness is centered on strong local economies and neighborhoods. The ability to accumulate wealth, access financial capital and lending opportunities, increase business ownership, and access higher education has proven to be key to maintaining the long-term economic vitality of communities and populations; yet, the dearth of these opportunities in disadvantaged communities has proven to be devastating.

Policy Statement

Economic development and prosperity building opportunities for disadvantaged and minority populations should be encouraged and promoted through the conscious and intentional planning of the built and social environment in areas where disadvantaged populations have limited access to financial capital, banks and other lending institutions, higher education, and essential businesses resources. Federal investment and philanthropic support is also vital to the promotion of economic development as it leverages additional private sector support.

The effort to advance economic development in a community should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in economic development planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in economic development initiatives. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Enhancing opportunities to improve that community’s ownership and or stake of essential, wealth building resources and assets.
- c. Encouraging and promoting entrepreneurship and business ownership in community development plans
- d. Supporting creative alternatives to traditional financing options and improving access of the underserved populations to critical business resource networks in the community
- e. Improving access to higher education by encouraging partnerships among the community, employment centers, and local educational institutions.

- f. Mapping community assets and assessing employment opportunities associated with proposed development projects.
- g. Assessing the employment opportunities for a wide range of skill levels and helping identify resource barriers.
- h. Promoting local prosperity and economic growth through proven federal community investment programs that provide strategic, flexible, and effective investment in economically distressed communities.\
- i. Collaborating with the local or regional workforce development agencies.

Historic Preservation

Problem Statement

Residents and policy makers have often perceived old buildings and districts as a detriment to their communities. Historic structures require a great deal of time, effort, and funding to maintain and repair and many of these buildings and districts are in low-income, minority, and immigrant communities. As such, they tend to be easy targets for everything from teardowns replaced by “McMansions” and gentrification to major infrastructure or transportation projects where wholesale demolition not only presents a waste of resources, but also results in the dispersion of established communities and the cultural resources and institutional memory they carried with them.

Policy Statement

Planning professionals should make a concerted effort to recognize the value of historic buildings and districts, including those in low-income areas, and explore ways in which they can be retained, recognized, adapted into new uses, and integrated into the community.

The effort to engage in the historic preservation of buildings and districts includes:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in historic preservation planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in historic preservation decisions. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Identifying buildings and districts of potential historic and cultural value, particularly to minority-race and –ethnicity or low-income populations, and determining which would benefit from or contribute to the community if purposeful protection were provided.
- c. Seeking local or national historic designation, which recognizes that a building or district adds significant value to the historic, architectural and/or cultural heritage of a community.
- d. Initiating community engagement to help determine the value of historic resources and the possibilities for adaptive reuse.

- e. Working with public and nonprofit preservation organizations and agencies to educate the public about the financial incentives of historic preservation, such as federal tax credits, historic preservation grants, and other funding opportunities.
- f. Promoting the economic and ecologic benefits of preservation.
- g. Establishing working relationships with architects and developers with experience in historic preservation and adaptive reuse.
- h. Drafting ordinances, text amendments, and other regulatory policies that preserve the historic resources of our communities.

Environmental

Problem Statement

Low-income, urban communities have a disproportionate number of incinerators, landfills, waste sites, high-pollution industries, and large scale transportation facilities. This negatively affects local food and ecological systems and can cause long-term health problems that may impede individuals from actualizing their full potential.

Policy Statement

Planning professional should follow the principle of *Environmental Justice*, which is defined by the Environmental Protection Agency as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

The effort to advance socially just environmental planning should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in environmental planning, policy, and project selection, giving citizens a voice in the fate of toxic facilities and materials. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, LGBT individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Developing, funding and implementing programs that help clean up polluted areas in all communities, especially in low-income neighborhoods.
- c. Establishing policies and ordinances that reduce the probability of private abandonment of industrial and commercial facilities in distressed areas.
- d. Recommending land uses that enhance access to green infrastructure.
- e. Developing and applying for programs and resources that encourage green businesses to locate in communities especially in low-income communities.
- f. Exploring urban agriculture as a way to reclaim vacant property.
- g. Developing blue/green infrastructure plans which evaluate blue / green assets and manage them to maximize ecological, economic and cultural returns

Diversification of the Field

Problem Statement

Urban planning is a field with low racial and gender diversity. The most recent APA Salary Survey (2010) shows that 63% of the planning profession is comprised of men and 90% of planning professionals are white. Without diversity, the profession suffers from a limited perspective and a lowered ability to represent and assist the diverse communities that we hope to serve.

Policy Statement

Planning professionals should understand the need to diversify the field and play an active role in making this happen. As noted in the APA Ethical Principles of Planning, all planners should “strive to increase the opportunity for women and members of recognized minorities to become professional planners.”

The effort to diversify the planning profession should include:

- a. Fostering meaningful citizen engagement in planning initiatives and educating participants about the planning profession during these initiatives. Meaningful citizen engagement should include the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as low-income people, youth, seniors, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) individuals, underrepresented religious communities, ethnic and racial minority groups, and people with disabilities.
- b. Targeting underrepresented groups during urban planning recruitment and career development initiatives.
- c. Encouraging the incorporation of urban planning education into K-12 school curriculums.
- d. Encouraging urban planning programs at colleges and universities to recruit and support students from underrepresented groups.
- e. Professionally mentoring members of underrepresented groups, including those already in the profession.
- f. Demonstrating that urban planning can help address the concerns of people living in distressed communities.
- g. Developing a recruitment strategy

ⁱ American Institute of Certified Planners, “AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct,” revised October 3, 2009, <http://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicscode.htm>.

ⁱⁱ American Planning Association, “Ethical Principles in Planning,” adopted May 1992. <http://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicalprinciples.htm>