



American Planning Association

**California Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

**TO: APA California Chapter Board**

**FROM: Nick Maricich, National Policy and Legislation Representative**

**DATE: January 24, 2020**

**SUBJECT: Summary of APA National's 2019 State Legislative Summit**

**Recommended Action:**

**Direct the National Policy and Legislation Representative to continue to participate in and support APA's State Government Affairs Program.**

**Background:**

APA's State Government Affairs Program has expanded in recent years to provide support for chapter level policy and advocacy programs across the country. As part of these efforts, APA National has held a State Legislative Summit each of the past two years. The most recent event, held over two days this past December in Richmond, Virginia, brought together delegates from over 20 chapters to discuss common state-level policy issues, share perspectives from APA's work at the federal level, and provide training on successful advocacy strategies.

As part of this event, National APA staff conducted a legislative workshop with a focus on the development of a State Platform around housing. The goal of a State Platform is to serve as a mechanism for guidance and resource development for chapters working on a common issue. A State Platform is not intended to replace chapter legislative priorities, but to maximize the impact of chapter engagement and deepen the understanding of the value of planners for state legislators. In particular, National APA staff want to support identifying, using, and shaping planners' stories to influence policy, and to orient advocacy efforts towards outcomes and the distinct value of good planning.

National identified a number of existing tools and policy guidance to support these efforts, including the following:

- Housing Policy Guide (recently updated in 2019)  
<https://planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/housing/>
- Planning For Equity Policy Guide (new, adopted in 2019)  
<https://planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/equity/>
- Planning Home initiative  
<https://planning.org/home>
- Educational publications, including Zoning Practice and Planning Advisory Service (PAS)  
<https://planning.org/publications/>

The State Platform on housing is being drawn from existing approved Policy Guides and structured around three critical ways that states can shape housing reform:

1. Support designing, building, and maintaining of safe and resilient housing
2. Promote innovative funding and finance approaches
3. Enable local governments and code reform

These three categories aim to address aspects of state housing reform that are particularly relevant to planning, including state involvement in land use and zoning, narratives around the cost of housing and eliminating planning tools as a way to reduce housing cost, and the narrative of planning as a regulatory barrier to housing. In particular, the State Platform seeks to position the planning profession, in statehouses across the country, to be looked to as part of the solution to our pressing housing challenges.

Some of the key strategies discussed at the Summit for improving state-level advocacy on housing included emphasizing the role of planners in serving the public interest, and the alignment of this role with that of state legislators, as well as soliciting information from local planners on success stories that can be used in state conversations.

While APA California already has a robust state policy and advocacy program, including member legislative review teams and established and effective lobbying activities, the Summit highlighted the potential value of expanding grassroots engagement efforts to maximize the impact of chapter-level advocacy work. The Summit concluded with a training session focused on this topic, emphasizing how sharing local stories with legislators can be especially persuasive in triggering an emotional response and connection to an issue. National has tapped into this strategy through the use of the Planners Advocacy Network and the integration of a Grassroots Platform with federal lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill. The State Government Affairs team plans to continue working with local chapters to offer support and guidance in these areas throughout the coming year.

Fiscal Impact:

Travel expenses estimated at approximately \$1,000 annually to send a California Chapter representative to participate in the annual State Legislative Summit.

Attachments:

None.