

PLANNING DEFINITIONS

Comprehensive Plan: A long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community or region. The plan should include a detailed analysis and recommendations of the community's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities and land use. These plans take into account the goals of the community; the ideals for land use development; and the local and state policies.

Zoning Ordinance: The major regulatory mechanism used to control the development of land. It is the dividing of land into districts and the establishment of regulations governing the use, placement, spacing and size of land and buildings.

Variance: A relaxation of the local zoning regulations. Variances are only permitted for dimensional (i.e. height, setbacks, building size, etc.) standards and not for a particular land use.

Conditional or Special Use Permit: A use permitted in a particular zoning district only upon showing that such use in a specified location will comply with all the conditions and standards for the location or operation of such use as specified by a zoning ordinance and authorized by the designated hearing body or official.

The following terms are defined for the State of Washington in RCW 58.17.020:

Subdivision: The division or redivision of land into five or more lots. A plat is a map showing the divisions into lots, blocks, streets, alleys or other divisions.

Preliminary Plat: A neat and approximate drawing of a proposed subdivision showing the general layout of streets and alleys, lots, blocks, and other elements and requirements set by state law and local regulations.

Final Plat: The final drawing of the subdivision and dedication prepared for filing for record with the county auditor and containing all elements and requirements set by state law and local regulations.

Short Subdivision: The division or redivision of land into four or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites or divisions for the purpose of sale, lease, or transfer of ownership; cities may use this process for divisions up to nine lots.

Short Plat: The map or representation of a short subdivision.

Binding Site Plan: A drawing to a scale specified by local ordinance which identifies the areas and locations of all streets, roads, improvements, utilities, open spaces, and any other matters specified by local regulations; contains inscriptions or attachments setting forth such appropriate limitations and conditions for the use of the land as are established by the local government body having the authority to approve the site plan; and contains provisions making development be in conformity with the site plan.

Lot, Tract, or Parcel: A fractional part of divided lands having fixed boundaries, being of sufficient area and dimension to meet minimum zoning requirements for width and area.

Block: A group of lots, tracts, or parcels within well defined and fixed boundaries.

Certificate of Exemption: Allows the creation of tracts 5 acres and larger to be exempt from subdivision requirements of state law.

Ethical Principles of Planning

- Serve the public interest
- Recognize the rights of citizens to participate in the process
- Give full, clear, and accurate information
- Expand choice and opportunity
- Assist in the clarification of goals
- Make information available to the public
- Protect the integrity of the natural environment and the heritage of the built environment
- Pay attention to the interrelatedness of decisions
- Achieve high standards of proficiency and integrity
- Exercise independent judgment
- Disclose personal interest and define it broadly
- Abstain from participation when you have a personal interest
- Seek no gifts or favors
- Do not participate as an adviser, decision maker, or advocate on a policy decision in which you have previously taken a public position
- Do not use or disclose confidential information
- Do not misrepresent facts
- Do not participate unless you are prepared
- Respect the rights of all persons

Ethical Principles in Planning

Adopted by the American Planning Association

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This statement is a guide to ethical conduct for all who participate in the process of planning as advisors, advocates, and decision makers. It presents a set of principles to be held in common by certified planners, other practicing planners, appointed and elected officials, and others who participate in the process of planning.

The planning process exists to serve the public interest. While the public interest is a question of continuous debate, both in its general principles and in its case-by-case applications, it requires a conscientiously held view of the policies and actions that best serve the entire community. Section A presents what we hold to be necessary elements in such a view.

Planning issues commonly involve a conflict of values and, often, there are large private interests at stake. These accentuate the necessity for the highest standards of fairness and honesty among all participants. Section B presents specific standards.

Those who practice planning need to adhere to a special set of ethical requirements that must guide all who aspire to professionalism. These are presented in Section C.

Section D is the translation of the principles above into the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The Code is formally subscribed to by each certified planner. It includes an enforcement procedure that is administered by AICP. The Code, however, provides for more than the minimum threshold of enforceable acceptability. It also sets aspirational standards that require conscious striving to attain.

The ethical principles derive both from the general values of society and from the planner's special responsibility to serve the public interest. As the basic values of society are often in competition with each other, so do these principles sometimes compete. For example, the need to provide full public information may compete with the need to respect confidences. Plans and programs often result from a balancing among divergent interests. An ethical judgment often also requires a conscientious balancing, based on the facts and context of a particular situation and on the entire set of ethical principles.

This statement also aims to inform the public generally. It is also the basis for continuing systematic discussions of the application of its principles that is itself essential behavior to give them daily meaning.

A. The planning process must continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest.

Planning Process Participants should:

1. recognize the rights of citizens to participate in planning decisions;
2. strive to give citizens (including those who lack formal organization or influence) full, clear and accurate information on planning issues and the opportunity to have a meaningful role in the development of plans and programs;
3. strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons;
4. assist in the clarification of community goals, objectives, and policies in plan making;
5. ensure that reports, records, and any other non-confidential information which is or will be available to decision makers is made available to the public in a convenient format and sufficiently in advance of any decision;
6. strive to protect the integrity of the natural environment and the heritage of the built environment;
7. pay special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions and the long-range consequences of present actions.

B. Planning process participants continuously strive to achieve high standards of integrity and proficiency so that public respect for the planning process will be maintained.

Planning Process Participants should:

1. exercise fair, honest and independent judgment in their roles as decision makers and advisors;
2. make public disclosure of all "personal interests" they may have regarding any decision to be made in the planning process in which they serve, or are requested to serve, as advisor or decision maker (see also Advisory Ruling Number 2, "Conflicts of Interest When a Public Planner Has a Stake in Private Development" under Section D);
3. define "personal interest" broadly to include any actual or potential benefits or advantages that they, a spouse, family member or person living in their household might directly or indirectly obtain from a planning decision;
4. abstain completely from direct or indirect participation as an advisor or decision maker in any matter in which they have a personal interest, and leave any chamber in which such a matter is under deliberation, unless their personal interest has been

made a matter of public record; their employer, if any, has given approval; and the public official, public agency or court with jurisdiction to rule on ethics matters has expressly authorized their participation;

5. seek no gifts or favors, nor offer any, under circumstances in which it might reasonably be inferred that the gifts or favors were intended or expected to influence a participant's objectivity as an advisor or decision maker in the planning process;

6. not participate as an advisor or decision maker on any plan or project in which they have previously participated as an advocate;

7. serve as advocates only when the client's objectives are legal and consistent with the public interest;

8. not participate as an advocate on any aspect of a plan or program on which they have previously served as advisor or decision maker unless their role as advocate is authorized by applicable law, agency regulation, or ruling of an ethics officer or agency; such participation as an advocate should be allowed only after prior disclosure to, and approval by, their affected client or employer; under no circumstance should such participation commence earlier than one year following termination of the role as advisor or decision maker;

9. not use confidential information acquired in the course of their duties to further a personal interest;

10. not disclose confidential information acquired in the course of their duties except when required by law, to prevent a clear violation of law or to prevent substantial injury to third persons; provided that disclosure in the latter two situations may not be made until after verification of the facts and issues involved and consultation with other planning process participants to obtain their separate opinions;

11. not misrepresent facts or distort information for the purpose of achieving a desired outcome (see also Advisory Ruling Number 4: "Honesty in the Use of Information: under Section D);

12. not participate in any matter unless adequately prepared and sufficiently capacitated to render thorough and diligent service;

13. respect the rights of all persons and not improperly discriminate against or harass others based on characteristics which are protected under civil rights laws and regulations (see also Advisory Ruling Number 1: "Sexual Harassment").

C. APA members who are practicing planners continuously pursue improvement in their planning competence as well as in the development of peers and aspiring planners. They recognize that enhancement of planning as a profession leads to greater public respect for the planning process and thus serves the public interest.

APA Members who are practicing planners:

1. strive to achieve high standards of professionalism, including certification, integrity, knowledge, and professional development consistent with the AICP Code of Ethics;

2. do not commit a deliberately wrongful act which reflects adversely on planning as a profession or seek business by stating or implying that they are prepared, willing or able to influence decisions by improper means;

3. participate in continuing professional education;

4. contribute time and effort to groups lacking adequate planning resources and to voluntary professional activities;

5. accurately represent their qualifications to practice planning as well as their education and affiliations;

6. accurately represent the qualifications, views, and findings of colleagues;

7. treat fairly and comment responsibly on the professional views of colleagues and members of other professions;

8. share the results of experience and research which contribute to the body of planning knowledge;

9. examine the applicability of planning theories, methods and standards to the facts and analysis of each particular situation and do not accept the applicability of a customary solution without first establishing its appropriateness to the situation;

10. contribute time and information to the development of students, interns, beginning practitioners and other colleagues;

11. strive to increase the opportunities for women and members of recognized minorities to become professional planners;

12. systematically and critically analyze ethical issues in the practice of planning, (See also Advisory Ruling Number 3: "Outside Employment of Moonlighting").

Section D consists of the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Advisory Rulings, and Procedures.