



AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

To: APA Colorado Members
From: Graham Billingsley, AICP
APA Colorado Chapter President
Date: August 29, 2005
Re: Planning Institute of Colorado

I would like to take this moment to tell you about an exciting new program APA Colorado has been working on. We, APA Colorado, has formed a subsidiary corporation, a 501(c)(6), named the Planning Institute of Colorado. This corporation was created in order to permit activities somewhat outside the scope of a 501(c)(3) which is what APA Colorado is.

The impetus for this is a training program for realtors. As part of the three-phase education strategy developed in 2001, realtors and allied fields were identified as groups for which training could be provided. The hope is that after the initial effort of developing realtor training we'll be able to expand into other training areas.

We have had several discussions with the Colorado Association of Realtors (CAR) about a training program in planning for their membership. They have about 28,000 members of the 35,000 licensed realtors in this state. State law, passed in 2001 requires 24 hours of continuing education every three years. Now that they have been doing this for four years, they find they could use more continuing education opportunities. They expressed great interest in APA Colorado developing a planning training program that would include certification.

The APA Colorado board hired a local attorney, Bill Walters, who specializes in association law and has helped develop certifications and trademarks for several of his clients. His advice was to create a subsidiary 501(c)(6) corporation to handle this training and certification. This advice was based on the need to avoid certain liabilities and tax issues associated with this endeavor, protecting the parent company (APA Colorado).

The new corporation will be composed of seven board members, four of whom will be from the APA Colorado Board, and three others. At this point, we are looking for at least one realtor to sit on the board as well.

We looked at different ways to approach this idea of realtor training. One was in-class room training and the other on-line. On-line is a tremendous advantage for us. We looked at doing that ourselves or contracting with an existing provider.

The program as proposed now is the development of an on-line education program and certification. We have had preliminary discussions with VanEd (<http://vaned.com/>), an on-line education company that is one of the companies CAR uses now for their training, although they do not have an exclusive agreement. VanEd also does appraiser training.

Our thoughts at this point on program structure is the development of three core courses, (1) The planning process; (2) Comprehensive or general planning concepts; and (3) The principles of zoning and subdivision. In addition there will be 12 to 15 elective courses. The core courses will be designed to have about eight hours of student contact; a formula is used developed by a national association of on-line educators to establish this. Electives will be about four hours each. Electives are subjects such as transportation planning, planning history, growth management systems, and current legal issues in planning.

On-line courses will always be available. They will not come and go off the web. Students can work at their pace and test when they have completed the course work. There will be a time limit from start to finish, but it will be reasonable.

The certification will not reference APA, or Colorado APA. It will reference the subsidiary, the Planning Institute of Colorado.

We will pay our instructors for their work in developing the courses. We think at this point we'll pay approximately what an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado gets. In this case, the course will be developed once and then updated over time so this expense is really an upfront expense. There will be a royalty, for want of a better term, paid to the instructor per student enrolled who successfully completes the course up to a set annual amount.

Financially this could be very positive for us. We have done some very conservative estimates, which indicate we could net \$10,000 to \$100,000 per year after the initial program is set up. CAR believes our proceeds will be toward the high end, but we decided to plan for the low end to make sure it would be worthwhile doing and we wouldn't be taking a loss. Proceeds from PIC can go to APA Colorado allowing us to provide more programs. Money can't go the other way except through a loan.

So that's where we are. We'll keep you informed as we progress and will talk more about this at the state conference in Ft. Collins. Feel free to respond to me with any questions, gbillingsley@co.boulder.co.us.