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TERRA FIRMA

YOUR GUIDE FOR SOLID LAND USE PLANNING

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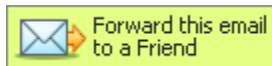
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FORENSIC PLANNING

After being a professional land use planner for almost two decades, I have had the opportunity to get to know many colleagues. Inevitably, we end up talking about where we went to college, what specialty our degrees are in, and how we decided on planning for a career. I have been surprised, over the years, to uncover that so many land use planners actually started college with the intent be in the field of criminology and then switched majors in stream, myself included.



So, I've been thinking. Is there a link between Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and land use planning that draws the same personalities into both professions?

1. ASSESS THE SITUATION

When criminologists arrive at a crime scene, they assess environment. When planners begin a new project, they assess its merits and potential issues. Both planners and investigators are trained to search out a situation, question everything and uncover all they can about the task at hand.

2. DETAIL OF RELEVANT FACTS

A criminologist logs all pertinent details he can find relative to the scene. A planner does the same in the form of a due diligence report. It is important have a complete understanding of the history of a site; its relationship to adjacent areas; the laws that govern it; the players who have come in contact with it; and what potentially could happen in the future.

3. INTERVIEW STAKEHOLDERS

The interview process is an essential part of the crime investigation process. In order to understand what might have occurred, the investigators ask questions. Lots of questions. Planners do, too. As planners, we have a responsibility to gather as much information as possible

from stakeholders who might have an interest in a project. Engaging the public is an important part of the planning process and, like the interviews done by crime scene investigators, planners should take this part of their jobs very seriously. By talking with others who might have knowledge of the situation, it often is realized that things may not be as they seem.

4. UNDERSTAND THE LAW

Before any recommendations are made by CSI to the police they need to be sure they understand applicable law. Before planners make any recommendations to their client they, too, need to understand relevant law and be mindful of the legal ramifications of their professional opinion.

5. BASE RECOMMENDATIONS ON FACT

In both land use planning and criminology, all recommendations must be based on fact. Without having a solid understanding of what is true and an accurate knowledge of the situation, neither planners nor investigators can do their jobs effectively. Once the facts have been gathered, both can link the facts to the principles they have learned during their professional education and training and begin building a case.

6. ALL ARE EQUAL

As a certified land use planner, one of the most important things to me, is that all participants in the process are to be treated equally. From a personal perspective, that includes both clients and interested parties. Crime scene investigators operate under the same mantra - innocent until proven guilty.

7. PRESENT THE CASE

As cases go to trial, the crime scene investigators are often brought in as expert witnesses. Each time a planner represents a client at a Land Planning Agency, Zoning Board or Board of County Commissioners, he is making his case for the project based on the investigation he has done.

By investigating the correlation between the two professions, it has become apparent to me, that criminology and land planning clearly share similar traits - we are problem solvers; we are analysts; we want the facts; we base our recommendations on truths, facts and planning principles. We want the little guy to have success if he is in the right and we want justice to prevail.

It now comes as no surprise to me why so many planners have been "stolen" from the world of crime scene investigation.

MEGRATH SELECTED TO LEAD HER PEERS ON NATIONAL COMMITTEE

If you receive *Terra Firma* monthly, you might recall last month's announcement that President and Principal Planner **Allison Megrath, AICP** was recently appointed to the American Planning Association's (APA) Small Town and Rural Planning's Division (STaR) Policy Committee. This is a position that Megrath will hold with only four other planners selected from across the United States.

This month, Ms. Megrath was elected by the Policy Committee to serve as their Chair. Megrath takes on the responsibility with much humility. "The group is made up of experienced planners dedicated to improving policy affecting small towns in rural America. To be selected as the leader of our committee is an honor and a responsibility I will accept," states Megrath.

The most immediate concern for the STaR Policy Committee is to develop a Division position for the National Infrastructure Investment Initiative.



Additionally, the STaR Policy Committee is responsible for recommending Division position statements, monitoring legislation or other policy matters, responding to APA Policy proposals, and recommending strategy to advocate for legislation that promotes sound planning in small town and rural areas on a national level.

LPS FACILITATES BOX CITY WORKSHOP IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Johnston Group Land Development Consultants, Inc. and Anderson-Moore Construction Corp. hosted and sponsored Box City Workshop at the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County on Friday, July 17th. Allison D. Megrath, President and Principal Planner of **Land Planning Solutions, Inc.** facilitated the event, teaching 25 children, aged 9-12, the fundamentals of city planning, zoning and the connections between land development and our environment.



Land Planning Solutions

is available to provide the same program to other schools and organizations (ideal for groups such as Boys and Girl Clubs, 4-H, YMCA activities or schools). Call us at 239-407-7983 regarding rates and additional information.



HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY



Land Planning Solutions has had several requests to give a presentation on Hometown Democracy. The presentation is not for or against the movement; it is structured to provide the audience with an overview of the history of Hometown Democracy, what it is, where it would fit into the planning process, the proponents arguments, the opponents responses and where the audience can get more information to be able to make their own informed decision.

Land Planning Solutions, Inc. has the following Hometown Democracy presentations scheduled:



August 25, 2009: Rotary Club of Naples Bay



August 26, 2009: Gulfshore Rotary Club



August 27, 2009: Lee County Bar Association



October 29, 2009: Highlands County Republicans



January 13, 2009: Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce

If your organization would like an update on the status of this movement, please call us at **(239) 405-7983** to schedule a presentation. Reasonable

costs.

LOOKING FOR A SPEAKER?

Land Planning Solutions, Inc. has talented staff available to talk to your group about a variety of current and technical land use planning issues. Examples include:

- Hometown Democracy: Making Sense of It
- Planning 101: Basics For Non-Planners
- Understanding the Difference Between Planning and Zoning
- Public Advocacy: Who Will Fight For You?
- Dispelling the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) Mentality

Visit our website for a history of presentations at www.landplanningsolutions.us/publicspeaking.html.

Please let us know if you would like to discuss a possible speaking engagement for an upcoming conference or meeting. Reasonable costs. Send information on the envelope to alexis@lpsfl.us.

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