

Wrap Up of the 2015 APA National Conference Feature Article by Dean Minakami – City and County of Honolulu

(Photographs Courtesy of Kevin Butterbaugh- AECOM)



Over 6,400 Planners converged in Seattle for APA's National Conference, including 51 attendees from Hawaii. Unseasonably sunny weather greeted attendees, which was particularly fortunate for those attending mobile workshops. Many of the sessions were standing-room only, a testament to the interest in the subjects being presented (though more seating would have been appreciated). If you were there and thought it was crowded, you are absolutely correct. Only the 2008 National Conference in Las Vegas had more attendees.

A rousing opening keynote was delivered by Ron Sims, former deputy secretary of HUD. His message: "Planners are charged not with the present but with guiding us into our future" and also that Planners cannot be indifferent to consequence "There is no such thing as an innocent plan."

There were many sessions and workshops to choose from and Hawaii was well represented among the presenters.

George Atta, Renee Spath-Espiau, Mark Garrity and Tony Ching led a session on Honolulu's rail transit project and Leo Asuncion, Scott Derrickson, Laura McIntyre, and George Atta held a session on Sustainability in Hawaii.



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One of the benefits of the National Conference is that it provides an opportunity to learn about the planning issues other jurisdictions face, and the solutions they have implemented. It can be sobering, though, to hear that other jurisdictions are grappling with the same issues we are here in Hawaii, and that there are no easy solution. With respect to housing, for example, numerous cities are dealing with high housing costs and seeking ways to increase their stock of affordable housing.



If you thought our housing costs are high, consider that the median price for a home in Vancouver is \$1.2 million or that average monthly rent for a two-bedroom unit in San Francisco is \$4,580. You can read a short article covering the housing sessions [here](#).



At the legislative forum, Jason Jordan, APA National's Director of Policy and Communications, provided an update on APA's legislative efforts at the federal level. This year, APA's federal legislative priorities are 1) Reauthorization of MAP-21; 2) Infrastructure Funding; 3) Planning for Water Hazards; 4) Supporting Federal Data Programs; 5) Housing and Community Development; and 6) Respecting Local Planning Authority. Of particular note is that funding for CDBG programs

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could be significantly cut in the forthcoming budget. We're still early in the budget process, though, and our colleagues at APA National will be working to ensure that CDBG and other programs we rely on are sufficiently funded.

APA is also launching a Grassroots Initiative that will allow members to become more involved in its federal initiatives. We'll distribute more information about the new initiative as it becomes available. Next year's National Conference will be held from April 2 to 5 in Phoenix, Arizona. Let's have another good turnout there!

