

# Communications Boot Camp Webinar #1

## *First Steps: Responding & Reframing Planning*

November 4, 2011



collective  
strength

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**American Planning Association**  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

# Today's Agenda

- **Welcome** Paul Farmer, FAICP
- **PART 1:**  
Types of Challenges APA Members are Facing Jason Jordan
- **PART 2:**  
What You Can Do – Strategies for Reframing the Message Robin Rather
- **PART 3:**  
Message Discipline and Pivot Louisa Hart
- **PART 4:**  
Case Study – Wichita John Schlegel, ACIP
- Q&A from the Audience
- Future Communications Boot Camp  
Webinars and Support Materials Jason Jordan

# CHALLENGES PLANNERS FACE

**JASON JORDAN**  
**DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT**  
**AFFAIRS**  
**AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

# Today's Challenges for Planning: Fiscal & Economic

Research Brief

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CUTTING JOBS AND SERVICES

Job losses projected to approach 500,000

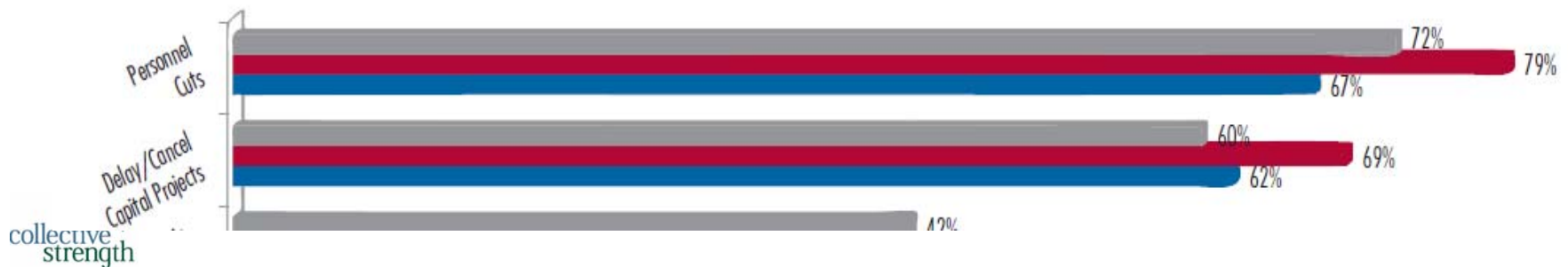
post-gazette.COM LOCAL / REGION  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

### Federal block grant cuts slicing municipal budgets

Tuesday, July 19, 2011

By Rich Lord, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

#### CITY FISCAL CONDITIONS IN 2011



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# Today's Challenges for Planning: Political

AGENDA 21  
IS EVIL



Carroll County Times



**Commissioners remove smart growth references from the Master Plan**

By Christian Alexandersen, Times Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, May 15, 2011 12:15 am

## BANGOR DAILY NEWS

**State suspends midcoast road plan  
seen by some as 'global conspiracy'**



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# WHAT YOU CAN DO STRATEGIES FOR REFRAMING THE MESSAGE

**ROBIN RATHER**  
PRINCIPAL  
COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

# The Value of Planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## APA's Strategic Plan: *Lead, Innovate, Inspire*

1. Planners are the guardians of the future.
2. Planners protect the public interest, safety and welfare.
3. Planners have a special concern for the long-term consequences of present day actions.
4. Planners add value by communicating the outcomes of planning, with a special focus on the economics of land use decisions.
5. Planners ensure that elected officials make smart, efficient and equitable decisions that work for the long term.
6. Planning is about leading, innovating and inspiring the next generation.





# 2010 Nationwide Poll Definition of “Sustainable Community”



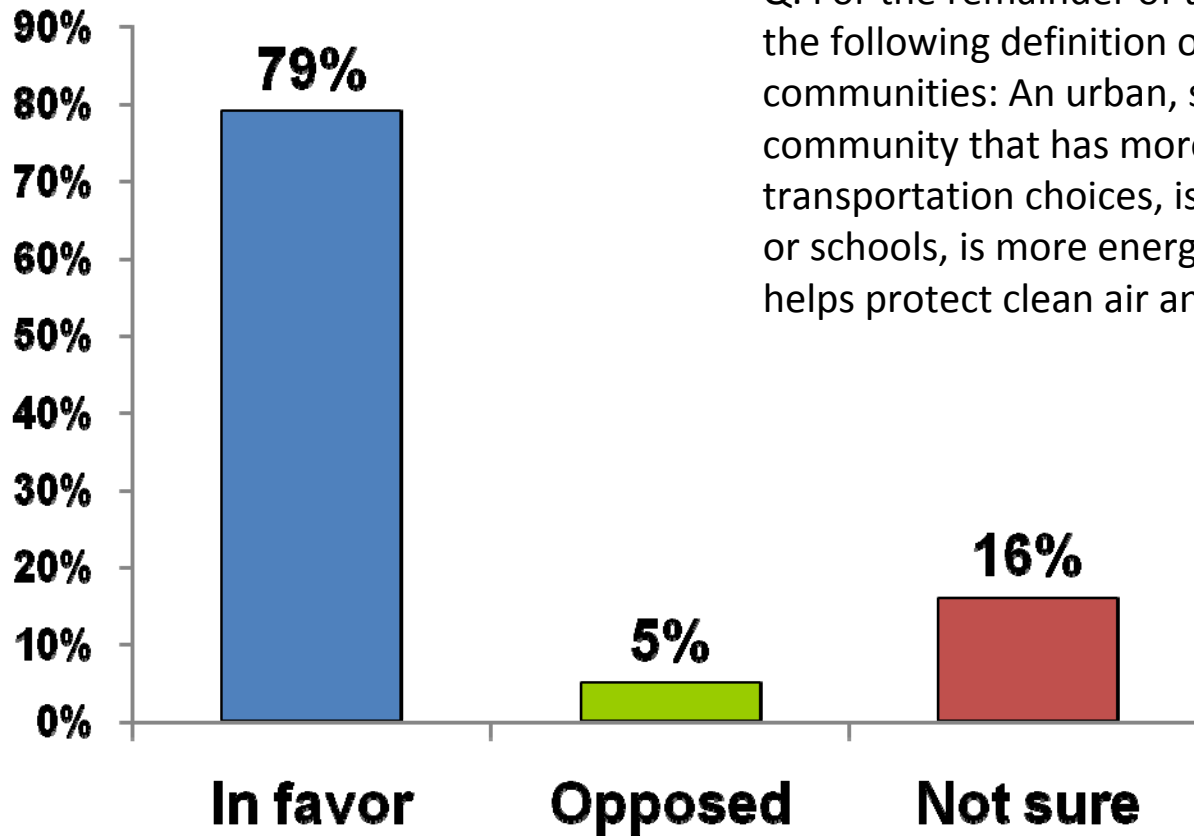
*An urban, suburban or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent and helps protect clean air and water.*

© Ford Foundation, 2010. Poll conducted by Harris Interactive 4th Qt 2010

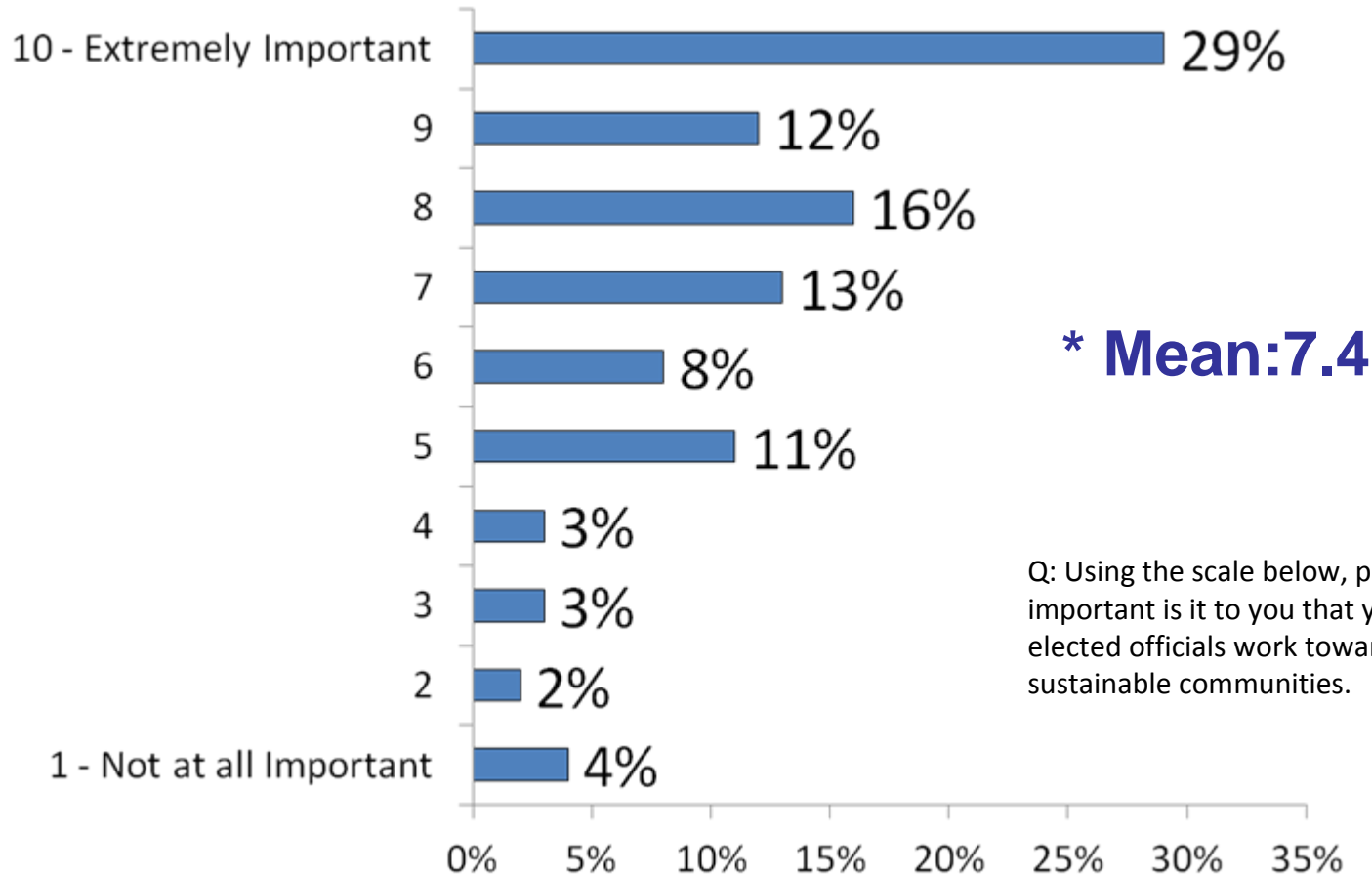


# Support for Sustainable Communities (with Definition)

Q: For the remainder of this survey, please use the following definition of sustainable communities: An urban, suburban, or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent, and helps protect clean air and water.



# Importance of Officials Working to Create Sustainable Communities



© Ford Foundation, 2010. Poll conducted by Harris Interactive 4th Qt 2010

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# Define it First

- Review your messaging
- Ensure it expresses **impact**, **value** and **goals**
- What's the Value Proposition?
- Example

*The goal of this comprehensive plan is to make sure our city is affordable and competitive. We can make the most efficient use of our tax dollars if we plan carefully instead of letting things happen chaotically.*



# The Framing Used by Disruptive Groups

- **Planning = Tyranny**
  - End of Property Rights
  - Global Re-education of Children
  - Forcing People into Cities
  - De-population
- **Planning = Communism**  
End of American Liberty
- **Planning = Rich Elites**  
Imposing a “New World Order” Via the United Nations Agenda 21
- Source: [www.freedomadvocates.org](http://www.freedomadvocates.org)

# Attacks are Orchestrated

- Not a “loyal opposition” or interest group
- Not there to testify on a specific topic or plan
- The principal objective is to disrupt and discredit the planning process

Wednesday, 02 November 2011

## FREEDOM ADVOCATES

RECOGNIZE UNALIENABLE RIGHTS

Formerly Freedom 21 Santa Cruz

Home Articles Audio/Video Visuals Research Ctr

### Main Menu

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- Education Transformation
- Family Autonomy
- Illegitimate Government
- Junk Science
- Liberty
- Oceans - Coasts
- Planning - Smart Growth
- Police State
- Private Property

## Bureaucrat Bingo

By Freedom Advocates

Monday, 09 July 2007 12:11

Don't get bored - be creative. Enliven community "example!"

Here's a consensus process diversion for those who are frustrated and stifled during these sessions? What?

Here's a way to change all of that:

1. Before (or during) your next meeting, seminar, a good size -- then divide it into columns--five across

# New Tactics for Attacks

- Skilled at personal attacks and mocking using YouTube
- Planning process is “pre-determined” and “falsely inclusive”
- Hates zoning; convinced that comprehensive planning will eliminate property rights and destroy individual liberty



# Preparation

1. Know the subject matter (Agenda 21)
2. Build up your base of support – internal, stakeholders, public
3. Reach out to groups likely to create a confrontation (Tea Party and Libertarian) in advance
4. Train staff, allies, volunteers to manage attempts to disrupt meetings and stay on message



# Preparation

First, know the likely vector of attack

- Read up on United Nations Agenda 21 and know any local connections to the U.N.
- Determine if your city signed the Mayor's Climate Change Agreement
- Prepare for likely opposition arguments and charges ... craft positive responses in advance that reinforce the value of your plan and your message

# Preparation

## Second, be proactive

- Reach out to groups likely to oppose
- Request a meeting with them to listen to concerns and ideas
- Do not try to change their minds –collect their input
- Encourage them to provide you with materials (books, websites, etc.)
- Research local activist networks

# Preparation

## Third, build up your base

- Reach out to fans of planning and trusted messengers
- Cultivate and prepare key champions and messengers
- Educate them about the nature of these attacks
- Enlist them to help respond:
  - Public forums & testimony
  - Online, Social and Traditional Media
- Be ready to factually correct Agenda 21 claims, but don't lose sight: your local plan is what is important

# Preparation

Fourth, provide support to elected officials & educate the media

- Discuss your planning goals and outcomes
- Keep Electeds briefed and prepared
- Give them a heads up on what you are hearing – both positive and negative
- Cultivate influentials who can ‘push back’ when needed
- Sound bite: “A good future depends on a good plan. I want the best future possible for our community and our people. Planning is how we get there.”

# Offensive Moves

at events and workshops ...

- Involve allies and citizen volunteers (not government employees or contractors)
- Train staff and volunteers to facilitate, and maintain message discipline
- Emphasize fair treatment of all attendees
- Learn how disruptions will take place
- Train employees, contractors and volunteers in disruptive process management

# If you are confronted with Agenda 21 (or another issue) at a public event

- Don't debate the pros and cons of Agenda 21
- Reframe the issue with positive messages (next slides)
- Stay Local and Focus on Benefits, Values
- And then return immediately to the point of the meeting & process:
  - "This meeting is by and for the people of our community. Our goal is (fill in the blank) and (fill in the blank)."

# Positive Themes

Local

Outcomes

Benefits-Driven

Inclusive

Prosperity

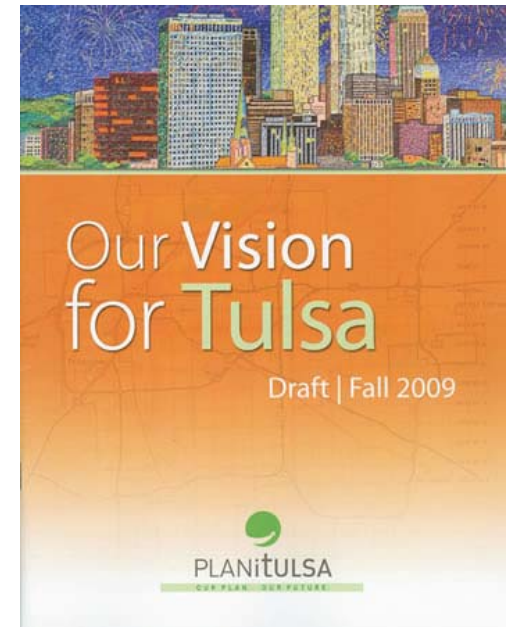
Fair

Choice

Good Business Sense



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# Sample Sound Bites

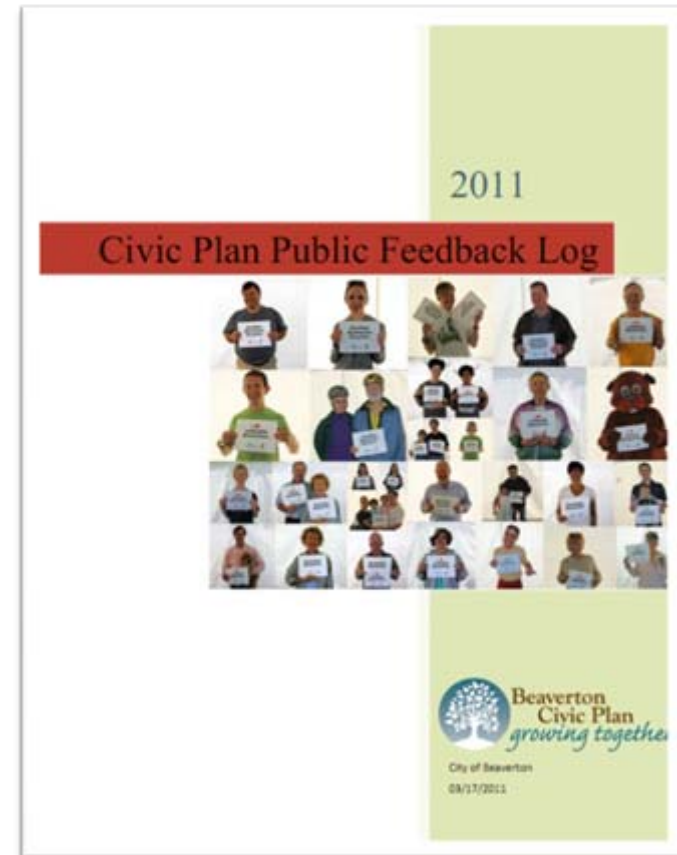
"Planning protects what is we like about our city and helps us change what we don't like."

"Planning is a process that makes sure that decisions are fair to the whole community, not just a few."



# Tone

- Positive, inclusive, local and friendly
- Not defensive or derisive
- Respectful of critics as any other guest
- Focus on specifics
- Fact-based economic proof points that underscore the planning benefits



# Research Conclusions

- The era of talking about the sprawl wars is over. Focusing on maps and pretty pictures along with emphasis on land use and transportation is not enough.
- The era of Fiscal Responsibility, The New Frugality and Clear, Transparent Return on Public Investment is well underway.
- Planning needs to be reframed as something pivotal to the return of American prosperity and economic strength.

# Planning Industry: Recommended New Frame

- Planning = Economic Recovery, Prosperity and **Clear ROI**
- Planning = Good Gov't.
- Example: Austin Case Study
  - Sustainable Development Grant using Super Computers to create ROI models for sustainable planning projects
  - Goal is to generate 6,000 new jobs with a Trade, Re-development and Small Business Economic Strategy
  - 3,000 jobs targeted via small business “each one hire one” for the hard core unemployed – those with no college degree, out of work for more than one year
  - 1,700 international trade jobs via a new inland distribution center
  - 1,200 from six “catalyst” re-development projects

# Pushback from Planners

- Planners Should Stay Above the Fray and let Elected Officials deal with attacks
- Tea Party is just another special interest group
- Quality of Life is the best way to frame planning
- Planning and Economic Development are sometimes in “conflict”

# Quotes from Mayors

- “There is a price to pay either way – if you protect the environment or if you don’t. Look openly at the tradeoffs”
- “Self sufficiency is the key. In local resources, agriculture and transportation.”
- “Focus on transparency in Community Benefits. Monetize the financial impact on both the public and private sectors – both in terms of investment and payback.”

# Ask Yourself the Big Questions

- How comfortable are you with confrontation?
- How skilled are you translating planning goals into economic values, job creation and public sector return on investment?
- How do you blend economic framing and quality of life issues?
- How do you relate to two critical audiences: Young professionals and forward-thinking business executives and entrepreneurs?
- How can you be even more proactive?

# Areas to Lead/Inspire/Innovate

- New Sustainable Economic Development and “home grown” entrepreneurs are key
- Smarter blending of planning and its economic impacts
- Total transparency around return-on-investment: public and private sectors
- Create new ways to monetize rural and suburban planning benefits
- Simpler lower-cost solutions are sexy
- Examples of economic success and sound bites for Elected Officials

# MESSAGE DISCIPLINE AND PIVOTING

**LOUISA HART**  
PRINCIPAL  
AXIOM COMMUNICATIONS



# Messages: Your Indispensable Tools

## Don't Leave Home Without Them!

- Preview to give you the basics of message development and delivery to level the playing field in an interview or public meeting
- **Communications Boot Camp Webinar #2** – November 18<sup>th</sup> – will provide in-depth coaching on message development, message control, talking to the media, and meeting management and participation to advance your goals

# APA's Messages

- APA's core messages frame *planning* in terms of lasting value, choice, opportunity and democratic engagement
  - APA members help create communities of lasting value.
  - Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live.
  - Planning enables civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

# Message Development: Your Messages About Planning

- Your planning messages should focus on the benefits and value of planning - specific outcomes, empowerment and planning's impact on quality of life.
- As a planner, you need to describe the physical, social and economic difference good planning makes in your community.
- Using APA's current messages as a framework, develop your own messages and proof points (the "for examples...").

# Message Development: Creating Audience-Centered Messages

- Know your audience:
  - What do they know about your topic?
  - What do they care about?
  - What information and facts will capture their attention?
  - What values do your audience care about?
- Create messages that will appeal to them

# Message Examples

Scenario: Yuba County in California is updating their general plan for the first time since 1996 and the community does not feel it has been informed about or involved in the process. Key points you want to get across at a meeting with business leaders –

- Why a new plan?
- How the process involves and needs the input of the community?
- Factors to be addressed in the new plan.

# Message Examples

- The driving forces for creating a new plan were the numerous requests we had for amendments to the old plan. Instead of patching the old plan together piece meal, we believe it is important to involve the community and develop a plan that address all of the issues.
- Tonight's community meeting takes the planning process and puts the power in to the hand of citizens. We are examining numerous scenarios to determine how many news homes, residents and jobs would be added to the county under each scenario - including if the plan isn't adopted and the county continues to use the general plan adopted in 1996.
- The plan will address a wide range of issues from deer herds and corridors, septic system in high groundwater recharge areas, and fire safety and evacuation plans.

# Message Discipline: How to Deliver Them

1. Before you get to the meeting, before you talk to a reporter, – know what your key messages are and memorize/internalize them
2. Don't wait until you are asked about your key messages by others: proactively deliver them and set the framework for the discussion
3. Start with your “conclusion” and then move to develop it; use phrases such as “The key thing to remember is. . . .”, “That has to be put in the context of. . . .”
4. Generate “proof points” using examples from your own community – plans tell stories and these stories are a great way to explain the benefits

# Message Discipline: How to Deliver Them

5. Repetition is important to retention
6. Remember that body language and voice tone are critical elements of your delivery: remain relaxed and maintain a pleasant, firm, authoritative tone (don't match your opponent's level of intensity and conflict)
7. Don't repeat your opponents negatives in the process of denying them: i.e. don't say things like "Planning is not a government plot to take away individual rights."
8. Practice your presentation/messages in advance with your staff



# What to Do if Under Attack

1. Before you get to the meeting, take time to analyze the likely criticism that will be lobbed at you – consider creating a Q & A document for yourself.
2. If you are confronted about an issue, such as Agenda 21, do not engage in a debate: your goal is not to “defeat” that one person, but instead to convince the majority of the audience about the merits of the plan and their involvement.
3. Pivot the discussion back to the key benefit messages you are working to convey about the plan.
4. Use words such as:
  - What is really important to understand is...
  - The way planners view this is....
  - You make an interesting point, however...
5. Redeliver your key messages, and end on a positive statement.

# **CASE STUDY: WICHITA, KANSAS**

**JOHN SCHLEGEL  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING  
WICHITA-SEDGWICK COUNTY METROPOLITAN  
AREA PLANNING DEPARTMENT**



**APA**

# Wichita Case Study

- Started with clear communications strategy
- Key component: be first to frame issues
- Chose messages strategically; words to express them carefully

# Wichita Case Study

Sample messages:

- Retention/recruitment of young professionals key to sustaining local and regional economy.
- Vibrant urban settings are attractive to this group.
- Downtown offers choices in work, housing and entertainment.
- Downtown is important to everyone (jobs, tax base, image).

# Wichita Case Study

- Anticipate as many objections as you can, list them and develop your responses.
- Involve your friends/ work with potential foes
  - Let allies play significant roles
  - Include potential foes

# Wichita Case Study

Stay on message, consistently

- Develop your talking points
- Practice them on others
- Refine and perfect
- When challenged, stay on point

# Wichita Case Study

Keep local media involved

- Share information early and often/ make them part of the process

E-mail and blogging matters

- Use allies lists to expand beyond usual circles
- Reach out to bloggers (wisely)

Educate and coach your elected officials

# Future Training and Materials in the Communications Boot Camp Series

## Webinars:

Nov. 18, 2011

Dec. 2, 2011

Dec. 16, 2011

Jan. 6, 2012

Jan. 20, 2012

(All webinars will take place  
at 2pm ET/11am PT)

## How-To Guides:

Nov. 11, 2011

Nov. 25, 2011

Dec. 9, 2011

Dec. 21, 2011

Jan. 13, 2012

Jan. 27, 2012

Jan. 31, 2012

[www.planning.org/policy/communicationsbootcamp](http://www.planning.org/policy/communicationsbootcamp)



## Questions?

For more information and an archived copy of this webinar, please visit:

[www.planning.org/policy/communicationsbootcamp](http://www.planning.org/policy/communicationsbootcamp)