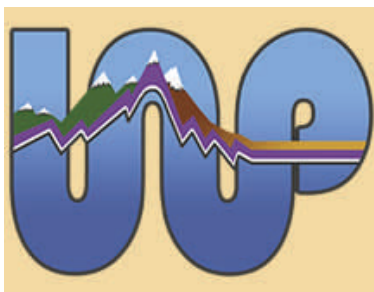
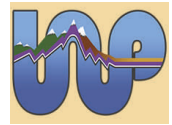


# **Western Planning Resources Strategic Plan 2015-2020**

**As Adopted by the WPR Board on August 18, 2015**





**Mission: We provide a network of professional and citizen planners to share vital and relevant knowledge and we educate our communities about the unique aspects of planning in the West.**

**WP's Goal: Unite planning professionals separated by the great expanses of the West with a common vision and shared experiences to improve our communities.**

## **A. BACKGROUND ON WPR**

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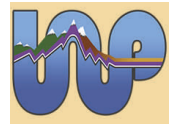
Western Planning Resources, Inc. (WPR) is a non-profit tax-exempt Montana corporation established in 1987. In 1989, WPR purchased *The Western Planner* from Western Planner founder Stan Steadman. Stan Steadman and many others created *The Western Planner* in 1979 with Stan Steadman continuing as managing editor until 1988. Other editors of *The Western Planner* have included David Conine, Steve Kurtz, Debbie Ehlers, and Rachel Girt. Digital versions of the Journal began in January 2015.

The initial member organizations in 1979 were Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and were soon followed by APA Colorado (1980), Utah (1980), Nebraska (1981), Washington (1982), Western Central Chapter of APA (1983), Alaska (1984), and Idaho (1984).

There are three categories of membership: sustaining, affiliate, and contributing.

**Sustaining Members.** WPR distributes five editions of *The Western Planner* annually to all of the members of sustaining organizations at a cost of \$25.00 per member. At the current time, there are three sustaining organizations: North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Starting in January 2015, sustaining member organizations received both print and digital versions of *The Western Planner* at no additional cost.

**Affiliate Members.** Individual members of affiliate organizations may subscribe to *The Western Planner* at a discounted rate of \$30.00 per year. Since *The Western Planner Journal* is not provided to all members of the affiliate organization, the number of subscriptions is usually less than 20 per organization. The ten affiliate members include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Alaska, Montana, Nevada, and Washington changed their membership status from sustaining to affiliate during the last several years. Starting in January 2015, members of affiliate organizations were able to choose either a print or digital version of *The Western Planner* at either \$25.00 or \$15.00, respectively.



**Contributing Members.** The Western Central Chapter of APA, which includes Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, is a contributing member.

**Individuals.** Individuals who are not members of a participating organization currently pay \$40.00 per year.

**WPR Board of Directors.** The Board consists of representatives from participating state and contributing organizations. Currently, there are 18 Board Directors representing 14 organizations and four At-Large Directors. The Bylaws authorize no fewer than 5 Board Directors and At-Large Directors can make up no more than 50% of the number of directors representing participating organizations.

**Bylaws.** The WPR Bylaws were last amended on January 15, 2011.

**Previous Strategic Plans.** There have been at least two strategic plans (1994, 2004). A strategic planning retreat was held in 2011 but there is no evidence that the WPR Board adopted a new strategic plan.

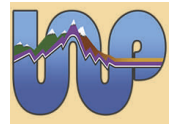
**WP Conferences.** There has been an annual WP Conference every year since 1980. The WP Conferences are held as joint conferences with the host state organization.

**Membership.** The WPR membership, which is based on the number of WP Journal subscriptions, has fluctuated based on the number of sustaining vs. affiliate members. There has been a constant flux in membership status for different organizations. In 1992, for example, there were six sustaining member organizations, including Idaho and Nebraska. By 1994, there were seven sustaining organizations with the addition of the Montana Association of Planners. Today, there are three sustaining and ten affiliate organizations as well as one contributing member organization.

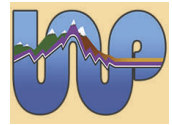
## **B. LONGSTANDING ISSUES**

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- Organization Structure, Membership, and Support from Participating Organizations – WPR subscribers are not members per se. They are members of the constituent organizations that make up WPR. This may be transparent to many subscribers but it is also confusing to many others. There has been a decline in the number of sustaining state organizations in the past few years due to a variety of reasons. There may be a perception among the board members of some of these organizations that the costs of WPR membership outweigh the benefits they receive.



- Continuing personal engagement between the WPR board and these constituent organization board members and their members is necessary to rectify the situation. We must address this situation or subscribers will continue to decline. It may be necessary to consider other models if we are to reinvigorate and then grow our subscriber base.
- **Financial Stability** – WPR has always operated on a conservative financial basis using the same model for some 30 years. Changes in our state membership categories from sustaining to affiliate status have resulted in a decrease in subscribers in recent years. Some of this is the result of changes beyond our control such as the recession and competition from other forums and social media. It is necessary that our revenues cover our expenses despite these changes. The editor needs to be able to focus on the quality of the Journal and not extraneous activities that distract from professional duties. We have a high-quality product in the Journal but it needs a larger subscription base to retain existing and attract new advertisers.
  - **Annual Conferences** - These events have provided substantial revenue subsidy to WPR often making up subscription deficits. Recent WP conferences have used contracts and varying revenue-sharing formulas with host states to assure a reasonable rate of return to WPR. Conferences held in conjunction with larger states or regional conferences have the potential to expose many more western planners to our organization thereby increasing subscribership or even new state affiliations.
  - **Maintaining High Quality of Western Planner Journal** – Our subscribers tell us that they appreciate the quality of the Journal. It is unique in its coverage of western planning issues. The Journal is augmented by the E-News which provides coverage of member state organization activities and issues. The format and focus of the Journal should continue to appeal to western-wide matters of interest while we strive to increase our subscriber base.
  - **Web Page and Subscriptions Management** – This is a challenge because it demands time and effort from our board members and there are no easy solutions. Ideally, we would be able to fund web page development and subscription management so that board members need not handle these tasks regularly. If we can grow our subscription base and revenues from our conferences and other sources, including grants, then WPR can benefit from a more sophisticated web and social media presence an pay



for subscription management rather than burden board members with such tasks.

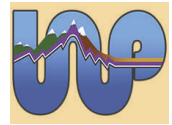
- Value to Membership and Subscribers – Ultimately, what distinguishes Western Planner is that we are a network of planners who daily work on making our communities better places to live. We are familiar with western issues and the unique challenges planning faces west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian. It is incumbent on each member of the WPR Board to build relationships that strengthen the WP network and provide added value to its member organizations and our subscribers.

### **C. EXISTING WPR STRATEGIC PLAN**

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Here is a summary of our 2004 Goals:

- Improve our resources
- Develop better relationships with members
- Understand and better serve our market and its needs
- Improve our marketing, to reach out to those we serve
- Revitalize our Board of Directors



## **D. WPR GOALS FOR 2015-2020**

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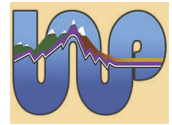
### **A. We will increase WPR's exposure and relevancy in all Western States**

**by:**

- 1) Promoting WP Conferences and the Journal on APA Chapter and Section Web pages, and on related planning organization and interest group sites.
- 2) Creating WPR exhibits for display and distribution during member planning organization conferences, and related planning and interest group meetings.
- 3) Investigating option to purchase mailing lists for direct marketing to APA Chapters; or request that these chapters pass along our information periodically using their list-serves.
- 4) Increasing and broaden WPR Board membership to be more inclusive and diverse to reflect the demographic composition of the western states.
- 5) Preparing WPR Annual Report starting in 2016 and distribute to all member organizations and post this Year End Review Report on our web page, with highlights printed in the western Planner.

### **B. We will increase the value of the Western Planner Journal to our current subscribers and to attract new subscribers by:**

- 1) Completing a searchable article database of all previous articles by 2017.
- 2) Creating a member-only WP listserv to post inquiries and share technical information or events, and to network.
- 3) Expanding the variety of content in each issue (e.g., letters to the editor, regular interviews, featured citizen planners, academic planners, non-profits, etc.)
- 4) Tracking the number of articles written for AICP CM Credits and provide this information in the annual editor's report to the Board and the Year End Review.



- 5) Inviting articles from other allied organizations based on the model now used with the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute.

**C. We will continue to promote sound planning practices in Western states by:**

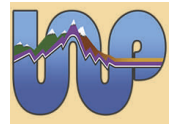
- 1) Sharing policy alternatives and perspectives on Western planning issues in The Western Planner Journal, website, and social media.
- 2) Providing technical assistance and ethics training at WP annual conferences and at conferences by member state planning organizations.

**D. We will diversify our revenue sources and increase our financial stability by:**

- 1) Increasing Journal subscriptions
- 2) Recruiting more advertisers in all media formats
- 3) Partnering with regional planning and other allied organizations to increase our visibility as a trusted information source.
- 4) Organizing more regional conferences that attract several states and that guarantee a higher profit.
- 5) Obtaining grants to fund website development and subscription management, and possibly other programs.

**E. We will clarify and delineate the responsibilities of the WP editor and the treasurer and document their roles in a revised WP Handbook.**

**F. We will expand the role of the board secretary to include maintaining an updated membership list for subscriptions and other purposes.**



**G. We will continue to revisit our WPR organization bylaws to consider the options for restructuring and membership that will help us achieve the other goals of this strategic plan.**

**H. We will explore and implement alternative media for content delivery and communication to Western Planners.**