

# IOWA PLANNING



American Planning Association  
Iowa Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Iowa Chapter of the American Planning Association

September 2010

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## 2010 APA Iowa Annual Conference

**"Sustainably Rebuilding the Heartland"**  
**October 27-29<sup>th</sup>, 2010**  
MidAmerica Center - Council Bluffs,  
Iowa

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Primary focus areas for this year's conference include three tracks: Recovery, Sustainability and New Innovations in Planning. In total, there will be over 26 sessions allowing participants the opportunity to earn up to 16 AICP CM Credits, including the required Ethics and Law credits. In addition, 4 mobile workshops are planned, highlighting the exciting changes occurring in the Council Bluffs/Omaha metro area, including tours of the Aksarben Village in Omaha, Brownfield Redevelopment Tour, Downtown Redevelopment Tour and a Bike Tour highlighting regional trail planning efforts. Our keynote speaker Eric Corey Freed, LEED AP, a Principal with organicARCHITECT and acclaimed author of "Green Building and Remodeling for Dummies" will share his story about not "why" we need to go green, but "how" we can go green in his "Detroit, Dallas & Despotism: a 3D View of Sustainability" presentation.





# President's Message

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Greetings Iowa Planners!

Well the Iowa State Fair has come and gone and the great Iowa State versus Iowa football game is just days away, so it must mean that fall is upon us. Hopefully you'll all agree with me that the best part of fall is the annual APA Iowa conference, which is being held from October 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> in Council Bluffs! The conference planning committee has been working very hard to put together a full and diverse schedule of sessions, speakers and mobile tours. More information on the conference is contained in this newsletter and is available on our website. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the conference planning committee, our colleagues from Nebraska APA who are assisting us with the conference and especially all of the staff from our host city of Council Bluffs who are continuing to work on all of the details that go into a conference. I would also like to thank all of our Conference Sponsors, who financially make the conference possible.

I hope by now you've all had the opportunity to visit our new website, [www.iowa-apa.org](http://www.iowa-apa.org). As I noted in our last newsletter, the site has been completely redesigned and is being updated on a regular basis to keep you all informed of the happenings of the Chapter and planning in Iowa. We are pleased to offer a portion of the site devoted to advertising planning positions, RFP's and RFQ's which can be posted on the site free of charge. If you have a job posting, RFP or RFQ you would like posted please contact our website editor Seana Perkins.

Over the last few weeks I've had the opportunity to represent all of you as a member of the Smart Planning Task Force, which was created as part of SF 2389, the Smart Planning Legislation which was signed by the Governor this past spring. It is exciting to see planning finally getting attention and discussion at the State level and amongst our State Legislature. As noted Aaron Todd's article in this newsletter, input opportunities on the Task Force work will be coming in late September and early October, we will keep you up to date on these opportunities and I would encourage you all to participate in the process.

I would like to extend a welcome to Brian Schoon, AICP, who was recently appointed as an At-Large member of the APA Iowa Board. Brian is the Director of Development and Transit at Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) and will be representing our COG and RPA members on the Board.

I'd like to conclude by saying thank you to all of the APA Iowa Board members, sponsors and volunteers who work to improve the organization and planning in Iowa. I would also encourage our membership to get involved in the chapter in some capacity, whether it be attending the conference, submitting a project for an award, submitting a student poster or volunteering to assist the chapter in another capacity. If you have questions, concerns or would just like to discuss matters pertaining to APA Iowa, please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to seeing you all in Council Bluffs!

Best wishes,

David R. Wilwerding, AICP  
APA Iowa President



# Iowa Smart Planning Task Force Update

*Submitted by Aaron Todd*

The Iowa Smart Planning Task Force has been busy researching, evaluating, and discussing various community and regional planning policy proposals throughout the summer. At its first meeting on June 23, the Task Force determined that it was necessary to divide its membership into two committees to facilitate in-depth discussion. Those committees were each divided into two work groups to focus attention even further. The basic structure and scope of the committees and workgroups are outlined below:

## Intergovernmental Coordination and Information Sharing Committee

- The Integration of Smart Planning Principles Workgroup is charged with evaluating state policies, programs, statutes, and rules to determine whether they should be revised to incorporate the Iowa Smart Planning Principles.
- The Information Sharing and Coordination Workgroup is charged with identifying strategies to ensure that data and analysis tools are readily available for plan development and for recommending a coordination mechanism to support local and regional planning efforts.

## Comprehensive Planning Committee

- The Local Comprehensive Planning Workgroup is charged with developing statewide goals for comprehensive planning, conducting a review of existing plans for inclusion of hazard mitigation elements, and recommending financial incentives and technical assistance to support local planning.
- The Regional Comprehensive Planning Workgroup is charged with developing a framework for regional planning throughout Iowa and recommending financial incentives and technical assistance to support regional planning.

Approximately 65 people have been participating in workgroup meetings throughout the summer. The committees are preparing to submit draft policy recommendations to the full Task Force by its next meeting on Sept. 15. At that meeting, the Task Force will review the draft recommendations, make any necessary revisions, and approve them for release for public comment.

At its Aug. 11 meeting, the Task Force determined a public comment process that is intended to provide multiple options for input. Five public input meetings will be held across the state, as well as one webinar. The public input meetings will be structured like an open house, with a formal presentation to begin the meeting, followed by small group discussions regarding the approved draft recommendations. Surveys will also be available on the Iowa Smart Planning website by late September, which can be emailed or mailed to the Rebuild Iowa Office. The Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) has agreed to host the webinar, which will be available to persons who were unable to attend the public input meetings in-person. Below is the tentative public input meeting schedule; please check the Iowa Smart Planning website prior to these dates to confirm times and locations:

9/28: Spencer • 9/29: Red Oak • 9/30: Waverly • 10/05: Coralville • 10/06: webinar 10/07: Boone

More information about the work of the Iowa Smart Planning Task Force, including meeting notes and reference materials, can be found here: [http://www.rio.iowa.gov/smart\\_planning/task\\_force.html](http://www.rio.iowa.gov/smart_planning/task_force.html). There will also be an opportunity to discuss the Task Force's draft recommendations during a session at the Iowa APA's annual conference in Council Bluffs Oct. 27-29.

The first official report to the Governor and Legislature from the Task Force is due Nov. 15. It is hoped that all interested planners will engage in this dialogue, provide input into the process, and ensure that a stronger planning culture continues to grow in Iowa!

# Heartland Brick Council is now The Brick Industry, Heartland Region

*Submitted by Aaron Steele, AICP*



Heartland Brick Council, an association of clay brick manufacturers and frequent sponsor of Iowa and National APA events, merged with the national Brick Industry Association (BIA) in January of 2010. The merger resulted not only in a new name for the organization, but also a new regional headquarters in Ames from which eight Heartland states are served.

The Brick Industry and Heartland Brick Council have a long history of supporting excellent planning and high quality development. Since 2003 the industry has employed community planners to provide free technical assistance to communities wanting to raise the bar for development and preservation through design standards and guidelines.

So why would the Brick Industry care about planning? The connection is clear, says Executive Director, Aaron Steele, AICP. "Builders in communities with strong, clearly defined standards for development use more clay brick because our product is associated with excellence. Good planning, strong policy, and effective implementation are good for the Brick Industry." Says Steele, "We make a product that is great for the appearance, economy, safety, and sustainability of communities, but building decisions are often made by people without a long term stake in the community's well being. That's why we work so well with planners – because they think from a long term perspective."

The staff of The Brick Industry, Heartland Region includes two planners (Steele and Wade Wagoner, AICP) with nearly 30 years of combined experience working with local governments. Over the better part of a decade they have helped dozens of Iowa communities by drafting code language, advising against common design policy pitfalls, doing research, and serving as a resource for information on masonry materials, design, and construction. The staff can be reached at:

The Brick Industry, Heartland Region  
414 S. 17<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 102A  
Ames, IA 50010  
(866) 644-1293  
[info@heartlandbrick.org](mailto:info@heartlandbrick.org)

# Elkader Riverfront Development Plan

*Submitted by Leslie Blaize*



In June 2008, the Turkey River swelled to nearly 16 feet above flood stage in the City of Elkader, Iowa. The flooding resulted in damage to the downtown business district, the permanent loss of six blocks of homes, increased deterioration of an historic dam, and emergency repairs to eroded riverbanks. In the wake of that damage, the City retained a collaborative team of consultants to help in the development of an official concept plan for the future of the river and riverfront.

One intriguing recommendation calls for the development of whitewater play features in the river, while another recommends improved

riverfront access for the benefit of fishermen, kayakers, and canoeists. The primary purposes of the study and plan are to:

- Identify opportunities to enhance the recreational uses of the river in Elkader
- Evaluate the condition and viability of the historic dam
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of potential changes, including economic, social, hydrologic, and ecological outcomes
- Establish a consensus vision for the future of the river and riverfront
- Identify methods of funding for desired projects
- Establish an action plan to realize the vision



The Turkey River floods Elkader, Iowa on June 16, 2008.



Downtown Elkader is flooded on June 16, 2008.

The planning process started in 2009 when the City began working with a class of landscape architecture students from Iowa State to explore new park and recreational opportunities for the downtown area. While three student groups developed concepts for the six blocks of homes (which are slated for removal), one group focused on the river itself and proposed a variety of changes that included dam removal and whitewater recreation.

The student projects sparked some excitement, but also raised many questions. In January 2010, the Turkey River Corridor, including the Cities of Elkader, Clermont, and Elgin, was selected as an "Iowa Great Place," giving the City access to increased planning and funding assistance and helping to create momentum for positive change. *(Continued on Page 9)*



# Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities

*Submitted by Charles Connerly*



To better address the problems and challenges faced by small towns in Iowa and the Midwest, the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Iowa launched the **Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC)** in 2009. IISC's purpose is to enhance the capacity of towns, cities, and counties in Iowa, as well as elsewhere in the Midwest, to better become sustainable communities. By sustainability, we employ the standard definition of sustainability as enabling current generations to meet their social, economic, and environmental needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. More specifically, sustainability entails efforts to protect and preserve the environment, while both encouraging economic prosperity and the equitable distribution of economic and social opportunity.

Increasingly, communities in Iowa and the Midwest face a crisis of sustainability. A number of major forces affect these towns and their sustainability:

- declining employment opportunities in Midwestern manufacturing and agriculture
- the decline of local food systems
- the need for new renewable energy sources such as wind
- the decline of the family farm, which reduces the population that is served by small towns
- expansion of industrial agriculture and the impacts it has on the environment, including water quality
- increasing effects of global climate change making communities more susceptible to extreme weather events such as floods
- large-scale meat packing operations which come to dominate local economies in ways that make small towns highly vulnerable to the decisions of one or two companies in their community
- increased reliance by meatpacking industries on labor from Latin America, thereby creating demographic change that challenges communities to learn to accommodate language and other differences while ensuring that all residents have equal access to the educational, economic, and environmental opportunities in their communities

IISC's purpose is to apply the talent and knowledge of the students and faculty of the University of Iowa to develop plans and initiatives that will enable Iowa's small towns and cities to enhance the sustainability of their communities. In doing so, IISC provides significant and ongoing **outreach** to Iowa's communities, while **transforming teaching and learning** at the University of Iowa by engaging students in a student-faculty-community collaboration that is focused on some of the most important problems faced by communities in Iowa and the Midwest. At the same time, University of Iowa faculty will be able to use this opportunity to **advance scholarship on sustainability** in their various disciplines and fields. The end result will be to greatly enhance the University of Iowa's reputation for advancing sustainability scholarship, teaching, and community outreach.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, 27 graduate students assisted four Iowa communities in developing sustainability plans. These cities are Decorah, Anamosa, Wellman, and Columbus Junction. In Decorah, students worked closely with a citizens group, We Can Decorah, to promote energy conservation and the use of environmentally friendly storm water drainage techniques. In Anamosa, students also worked with a citizen's organization, Vision Anamosa, whose focus is on generating redevelopment concepts and plans for downtown Anamosa. In Wellman, students worked with the city manager and city council to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan for the community. In Columbus Junction, students worked with a local citizens group, Keep Columbus Beautiful, to coordinate a series of Earth Day 2010 events that attracted resident participation from throughout that community. In 2010-2011, our students will return to Decorah, but will also do sustainability planning projects in Burlington, Charles City, and Oskaloosa.

# Exciting International Learning Opportunity for Iowa Planners

Submitted by Jerry Anthony, Ph.D., AICP

Good quality housing is a basic human need. However, it is not always available or if available is not priced at reasonable levels. This forces millions of families all over the world to live in bad quality or unaffordable housing, resulting in significant socio-economic, physical and financial problems. The scope and scale of the housing shortage is markedly greater in developing countries: one, because of the sheer number of people that need such housing, and two, because of the lack of public and private resources to address this crisis. These constraints have forced governments and non-profits in developing countries such as India to devise innovative lower-cost housing construction technologies that feature a high labor component, use many renewable resources, and have low impacts on the environment.

Last winter, Prof. Jerry Anthony of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Iowa taught a course in the India as a part of the university's India Winterim program (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~geog/india/index.shtml>). His course, titled **"Eco-sensitive low-cost housing: The Kerala experience"** provided an extraordinary opportunity to advanced undergraduate and graduate students and other interested persons, to travel to India, interact with highly acclaimed housing professionals and learn about many innovative eco-sensitive housing techniques. The course helped participants develop a clearer understanding of the conflicting challenges of economic development and environmental protection, and of culture, politics and the uneven geography of opportunity in a developing country.

The course was primarily located in city of Trivandrum, the capital city of the state of Kerala in southern India. Trivandrum is home to two renowned housing agencies -- COSTFORD and the Kerala State Housing Board (KSHB). COSTFORD is a local non-profit that has been developing cutting edge lower-cost construction technology, and building residential and institutional structures with them. Its expertise in this area has led to numerous awards from the government of India and the United Nations. COSTFORD's efforts are guided by the design principles devised by one of its founders -- Dr. Laurie Baker -- a world renowned architect whose many accolades include the Order of the British Empire (1983), UNO Habitat Award & UN Roll of Honor (1992), Sir Robert Matthew Prize for Improvement of Human Settlements (1993), and the International Union of Architects Award (1993). The Kerala State Housing Board (KSHB) is a public agency charged with increasing the supply of low priced housing across the state of Kerala. To fulfill its mission, the KSHB formulates and implements various housing construction and finance schemes that cater to very low-, low- and moderate-income persons. Its efforts have won numerous national awards. *(Continued on Page 12)*



<http://www.uiowa.edu/~geog/india/index.shtml>

# Dubuque Creates Sustainable Development Code

Submitted by Laura Carstens



In 2009, the City of Dubuque's new Unified Development Code (UDC) went into effect. The UDC updates and consolidates zoning, subdivision, site development, historic preservation, and sign regulations into a single city code. The Dubuque UDC incorporates text, photographs, drawings, charts and diagrams for ease of use in an online illustrated version.

The four-year process for developing the Dubuque UDC incorporated three citizen advisory committees and an interdisciplinary task force of City staff working with JEO Consulting. The last 12 months of the process were devoted to seeking and responding to input on the draft UDC from developers, engineers, architects, neighborhood and business associations, sign contractors, City Boards and Commissions, and the general public prior to City Council work sessions and public hearings.

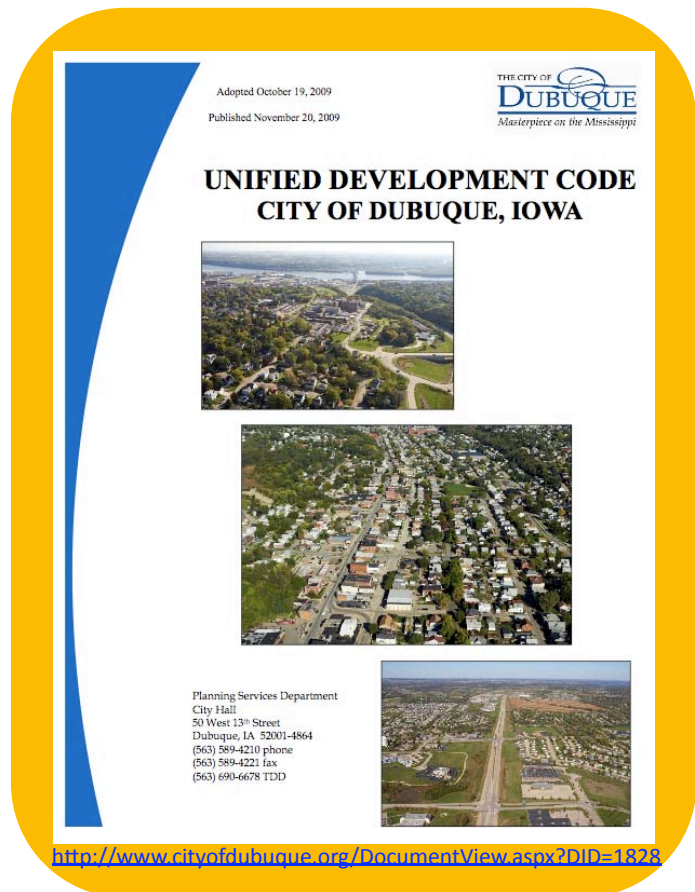
The Dubuque UDC incorporates sustainable design while meeting smart growth objectives. *Sustainable design is*

*the expectation.* While traditional development is still allowed, it is now the exception. The UDC received strong support from City officials and citizens alike. This acceptance of sustainable design has continued through implementation.

Subdivision and site development regulations were extensively revised to promote sustainable design, such as conservation design, solar access, and low-impact development measures. Access for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit as well as design guidelines for historic districts, the downtown, and older neighborhoods also are now part of the UDC.

The intent of the Dubuque UDC is to guide the physical, economic and social development, redevelopment and conservation of the community. The UDC protects and enhances the historic, cultural and aesthetic resources that make Dubuque a unique, identifiable and vital community.

The City of Dubuque hopes the UDC will serve as a model for other sustainable land development codes in Iowa. For more information on the Dubuque UDC, contact the Planning Services Department at [planning@cityofdubuque.org](mailto:planning@cityofdubuque.org) or look online at <http://www.cityofdubuque.org/index.aspx?nid=1209>.





# Elkader Riverfront Development Plan

(Continued from Page 5)



Views differ on whether Elkader's upper dam should be saved or removed to create a whitewater feature and safe route for canoe passage



Consultants evaluate Turkey River conditions on March 1, 2010.

In February 2010, the City selected a team of consultants to further evaluate possible improvements to the river and riverfront. The team included a floodplain specialist, a river and whitewater recreation specialist, a landscape architect, and a planner. They worked with the City to evaluate current conditions and a variety of possible projects, including improved access to the river, dam modification or repair, whitewater recreation, a riverwalk, pedestrian bridges, and a Turkey River Visitor Center.

The consultant team included:

- MSA Professional Services (planning, floodplain analysis, surveying and overall project management)
- RiverRestoration.Org (river engineering and whitewater design)
- Ken Saiki Design (landscape design)

The planning process began with a 2-day site visit on March 1-2, 2010. The team accomplished much over two brisk and sunny days:

- Toured and photographed the river and riverfront with members of the Riverfront Redevelopment Committee
- Surveyed river depths and conditions and dam conditions
- Reviewed the project with a representative of the Department of Natural Resources
- Met with the Riverfront Redevelopment Committee twice—first to discuss general issues and ideas, and then on the second day to share initial findings and recommendations

The team has since worked with the City's Riverfront Redevelopment Committee to select and refine projects for implementation in the coming years. A full set of recommendations was shared with a large audience of interested residents, including the City Council, on April 26, 2010. Reactions ranged from strong support for some improvements to strong opposition to others. Most controversial was the proposal to remove much of the existing 14-foot dam, and the waterfall it provides, to create a whitewater feature and a safe route for canoe passage. Many residents are fond of the waterfall and the flatwater pool above the dam and would like to keep the dam. On the other hand, most stakeholders liked the recommendations for improved access.

(Continued on Page 10)

# Elkader Riverfront Development Plan

(Continued from Page 9)



Recommendations are currently being studied and fundraising is underway. The City Council has indicated that City funds are not available for improvement projects at this time, but Council members have also expressed support for many of these projects. Project supporters are seeking grant funding and private donations to proceed with design and construction. *(View the concept plan on Page 11)*

Fundraising efforts are concentrating on the following projects:

- Improving access points north and south of the downtown
- Creating a riverwalk
- Creating a whitewater play feature
- Building a Visitor Center with bathrooms, changing rooms, and a small concession area

Although there are still fiscal, political, and regulatory challenges to overcome, the City has a committed core of individuals who are working to make these projects reality. While the flooding was traumatic, the planning and recovery process has helped residents see more in the river than just beauty and danger. With careful planning the City can simultaneously reduce flooding risk and increase use of the river as a recreational amenity that draws people to Elkader to visit, shop, and live.

For information, contact Jason Valerius, AICP, LEED® AP, at [jvalerius@msa-ps.com](mailto:jvalerius@msa-ps.com) or at 800.446.0679.



Freestyle whitewater kayaking may one day be a reality in Elkader, Iowa.

# Elkader Riverfront Development Plan

(Continued from Page 10)





# Exciting International Learning Opportunity for Iowa Planners

*(Continued from Page 7)*



While in India, course participants met with representatives of COSTFORD and KHSB, attended presentations by Indian housing policy and economic development experts, and went on several field trips in the state of Kerala. As part of the service learning component of the course, students developed a new, web-based database of projects done by COSTFORD. Cultural immersion activities included visits to several historic sites (including the 500-year old Padmanabhuram Palace), to Kanyakumari – the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal and attend a live Carnatic music performance as a guest of the family of the former King of Travancore. Trivandrum is located on the coast with temperatures around 75 degrees in December and January, so a visit to the beach provided a perfect way to end many a hectic day.



Two views of the Center for Development Studies in Trivandrum, built in 1974 using low-cost eco-sensitive techniques pioneered by COSTFORD

The India Winterim program is offered by the University of Iowa over the winter break each year. This year it will be from Monday December 27, 2010 to Sunday January 16, 2011. The University of Iowa encourages non-students with keen interests in topic areas covered by courses in the program to travel with UI students and instructors to India on the India Winterim program. Last year Charles Eastham, founder of The Housing Fellowship – a non-profit in Iowa City – was one of the non-student participants in this course. If you are interested in India or eco-sensitive housing in India or in planning issues in developing countries, plan to be a part of this adventure in December 2010. Contact Prof. Jerry Anthony at [jerry-anthony@uiowa.edu](mailto:jerry-anthony@uiowa.edu) or 319-335-0622, or Ms. Pam Butler at [pamela-butler@uiowa.edu](mailto:pamela-butler@uiowa.edu) or 319-335-0032.



## Upcoming Events:

**September 29: Central Iowa Planner's Luncheon (1.5 CM)**

This session will be held from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the Iowa Public Safety Building, 215 E. 7th Street (corner of E. 7th and E. Court Avenue) in Des Moines. The session is free to attend; however, lunch will cost \$10. Attendees will learn about the comprehensive master planning process for a large campus facility integrated into the fabric of an existing urban environment with the adoption and implementation of the *Iowa State Complex Master Plan*. Attendees will hear from the authors of the plan as well as representatives from the State of Iowa on the steps taken to draft and adopt the plan that will be the future framework guiding expansion and development of the campus for its users, employees, nearby residents and visitors. The session presenters will specifically discuss planning process trials and errors, public and stakeholder participation, integration and transitioning of the capitol campus into surrounding neighborhoods, sharing tangible examples of the efforts of the master plan being implemented, and other facets of the continued visioning contained in the plan needed to keep the State Capitol Complex as a place of great urban presence and high civic pride for all Iowans.

**September 22-24: Upper Midwest Regional APA Planning Conference**

The Minnesota APA is hosting this year's 2010 Upper Midwest Planning Conference in the lovely city of Mankato. Information is available at [www.plannersconference.com](http://www.plannersconference.com) including the draft schedule of sessions, mobile workshops, social events and registration instructions.

**Sept 30 – Oct 2: AIA Iowa Convention 2010 Push | Pull**

The American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter has announced that registration for the AIA Iowa Convention 2010 is now available. Highlights include four keynote speakers, Louis L. Marines, Hon. AIA, founder of the A/E Services Division of FMI Corporation; Peter L. Gluck, Peter Gluck and Partners in New York; Robert Miklos, FAIA, Founder of designLAB architects in Boston, and John Ronan, AIA, Founding Principal of John Ronan Architect in Chicago. The convention will also feature 27 workshop options, ranging from *Historic Preservation in the Context of Economic Development* to *The Social Media Landscape* and everything in between. Additional information and registration is available at <http://www.aiaiowa.org/displayconvention.cfm?conventionnbr=8515>.

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If you would like to submit an article for the November issue of Iowa Planning, feel free to contact Carissa Miller at [cmiller@midascog.net](mailto:cmiller@midascog.net).

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