

American Planning Association Texas Chapter

Creating Communications For Success

June 1, 2017

APA TX Snapshot

- 3rd - largest chapter in U.S. with 2,000 members
- Diverse geographic and demographic sections
- Successful programs include conferences, training
- Certification for career advancement (AICP)

APA TX Vision

APA Texas is a respected leader and partner whose members make great communities happen by providing expertise and innovation to shape livable and sustainable Texas communities.

Challenges

- Limited resources – time, staff, money
- Desire to create fresh content
- Creating engagement with sections and members
- Communicating to sections with diverse planning needs
- Difficulty getting information to members and non-members
- How to engage with related planning and partner organizations
- Increase membership
- Engaging student chapters

Target Audience

- APA TX members and potential members
- APA student chapters
- Affiliated professional groups (AIA, ULI)
- Elected officials and their employees
- Planning officials
- Partner organizations (i.e. TML)
- Development and business community
- Community groups
- Media

Communication Objectives

- **Strengthen perception that APA TX is THE organization for planning professionals to advance their careers**
- **Create awareness of APA TX professional training programs among target audiences**
- **Position APA TX as advocate for statewide planning policy and initiatives**
- **Establish APA TX as the thought leader for planning practices and topics**

Communication Goals

- Increase digital engagement among the target audience by 15% in 12 months. Measure newsletter opens and click-through rates and social media activity (follows, likes, shares, comments)
- Increase awareness of APA TX and its programs among target audience by producing relevant monthly content for newsletters, social media channels, website, news outlets and blogs
- Increase interest in APA TX programs and events over the next 24 months (measured by an increase in participation)

Communication Strategies

- Increase communication through monthly newsletters, more frequent social media posts and up-to-date website
- Conduct targeted outreach campaigns to city managers, elected officials, planning boards/commissions, etc.
- Recruit partner organizations to help with news distribution
- Identify section people to help with social media, web info
- Engage with state and local media sources to spread news

Design Quality Newsletters

- Issue newsletters monthly. Suggested topics:
 - upcoming events and training, awards
 - section activities
 - job announcements
 - relevant planning news
 - legislative updates (state or federal)
 - wrap up of past events
 - feature a city/town or a planning professional of interest
- Share with planning and public officials, post on social media
- Post on website



Boost Social Media Engagement

- Focus on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Facebook: Post 1-3 quality, relevant items weekly
- Twitter: Post 5-20 times a week
- LinkedIn: Post once a week
- Instagram: Post as needed
- If mentioning other entity, tag them in the post
- Use hashtags wisely and strategically

Key Themes/Hashtag Strategy

- Establish key themes and use with hashtags and keywords
- Good planning+ great cities and APA TX develops great planners
- Use specific hashtags for events such as your conference #
- General hashtags may include:

#planninggreatcommunities

#planningmatters

#whatplannersdo

#planninggrowth

#planningsustainability

#plannerexpertise

#plannertraining

#plannercareers

#plannerlessons

#planning4TX

Grow Your Audience

Grow your audience by:

- Sharing relevant content (planning blogs, partner messages)
- Following related organizations, influencers, public officials, advocacy organizations, bloggers
- Repurposing your unique content and sharing/discussing it
- Showcasing section activities news

Enhance the Website

Make the website THE resource for planners for career information, training and resources

- Monthly review/cleanup - remove old pages/information
- Correct inaccurate information and add missing information
- Update weekly – use new information, especially training– related
- Post urgent info quickly – share on social media
- Compel sections to post content regularly
- Move social links to top of page, add Twitter feed

Partner With Key Influencers

Add to communication toolbox:

- Send relevant news to publications/blogs (Texas Tribune, Texas Monthly, NextCity, Planetizen)
- Leverage local media sources for news: Great Places of Texas and award winners
- Identify and engage key Texas influencers
- Recruit partners like TML and ULI to help distribute information
- Provide printed materials to elected and planning officials, commissions

Content Focus

For web, newsletters and social media, focus on:

- Attend or enter APA TX Awards, training, conferences, programs,
- Grow your career with APA TX
- Take advantage of these learning opportunities
- Section news – what's happening around Texas?
- Legislative update (state or federal) – support, oppose, monitor key legislation
- Job news – link to jobs page on web
- Congratulate new FAICP and AICP members

Content Focus

- Learn about best planning practices at our conference
- Recognize Great Places in Texas
- Celebrate planning award winners
- What you can learn from the Big 6
- Planning stories and links to articles about paradigm shifts in planning (how will driverless cars affect cities, what's new in citizen engagement)
- Links to interesting planning blogs or bloggers
- New skills required for planners
- Recognition of new or changing planning practices
- Here's what planning does and here's how it helps

Monthly Focus

- Ideas for your social media and newsletter posts by month. Will change as needed
- During legislative session, add advocacy posts
- Monthly highlights – use content suggestions to repeat and build upon key messages

June

- **Reminder – chapter award submittals due in July: feature categories, post link to past award winners**
- **Look back at national conference – key takeaways**
- **With summer in Texas, focus on green initiatives, sustainability**
- **Best practices for creating/updating your general or comprehensive plan**
- **Grow your career with help from APA TX**
- **Section highlights/news**
- **Call for speaker proposals for November conference**

July

- Promote state conference registration – early bird pricing
- Deadline for chapter awards
- Continued call for speakers/topics at November conference
- Use July 4th timing to discuss how planning is related to the growth of our cities and country
- Mid-year successes and challenges for APA TX

August

- Promote state conference registration – here's what you can learn
- Highlight keynote speaker and topics of upcoming state conference
- Join APA TX – enjoy member rate at conference
- Highlight other training/workshops planned around the state
- Encourage students starting or returning to college and thinking about a career to join student chapters – looks good on resumes, etc.

September

- Final push for state conference registration
- Feature host location
- Call for student volunteers – get student chapters involved
- Feature sessions and training opportunities at conference
- What new tools can planners view at the conference (new GIS technology, etc.)?

October

- **October is National Planning Month**
- **What do planners do?**
- **How do planners make a difference?**
- **How can elected officials learn more about planning practices and requirements?**
- **What best planning practices can your town adopt?**
- **How does planning promote community sustainability, growth and economic development?**

November

- **Conference focus – maximize social media posts with photos, videos, tag speakers and keynote, attendee interviews, awards information and great moments**
- **Keep this going throughout the month until the Thanksgiving break – give thanks for being a planner and helping make great communities**
- **Announce the application process is open for Great Places of Texas**

December

- **Wrap-up report for conference**
- **Make a push for Great Places of Texas applications**
- **End of year successes and challenges for coming year**
- **Highlight any significant section successes**
- **Anticipate what the new year may bring in the planning industry**
- **Have fun and wish everyone happy holidays and happy new year**

January

- New year, new focus on career and job training
- What skills will you need this year?
- How can APA TX help you advance, take the AICP?
- Promote Great Cities application process
- For student chapters' graduating seniors – what can you do between now and graduation to prepare yourself for a career in planning?
- Regional news/highlights

February

- **Submit your Great Places applications**
- **Feature last year's Great Places' winners**
- **Focus on planning healthy communities (Feb. is heart - healthy month)**
- **Regional news or highlight of a region**
- **Feature a town or planner using innovative planning strategies**
- **If there is a Big 6 conference, start promoting it**

March

- If Big 6 occurs, then promote heavily and share live comments, photos, and video from the event
- Tease the Great Places announcement
- Do you know we train elected and other public officials on planning practices/policies?
- Feature an elected official who is not a planner and is implementing good planning policy
- What innovative infrastructure techniques can help cities?

April

- Showcase the Great Places of TX award winners - focus on each one and the group as a whole (get as much mileage as you can out of this)
- What effective planning practices were incorporated by Great Places winners?
- Get the recognition you deserve – enter the chapter awards competition
- Top planning practices for community engagement
- Regional news/highlights
- Membership drive – highlight membership benefits ahead of national conference



May

- Recognize planning graduates – use APA as a resource for your career, resume writing help
- What type of planning careers are hot right now?
- Promote national conference and TX activities/reception (promote before, during and after)
- Celebrate TX award winners – write features on their entry (why did they win, what planning topic was highlighted or what problem did they solve?)
- What sections attended the conference (who had the most attendees?)

APPENDIX – SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

APA TX Social Media Stats

Twitter

317 followers, following 98, 151 Tweets, 61 Likes

Tweets focused on the conference or Great Places of Texas

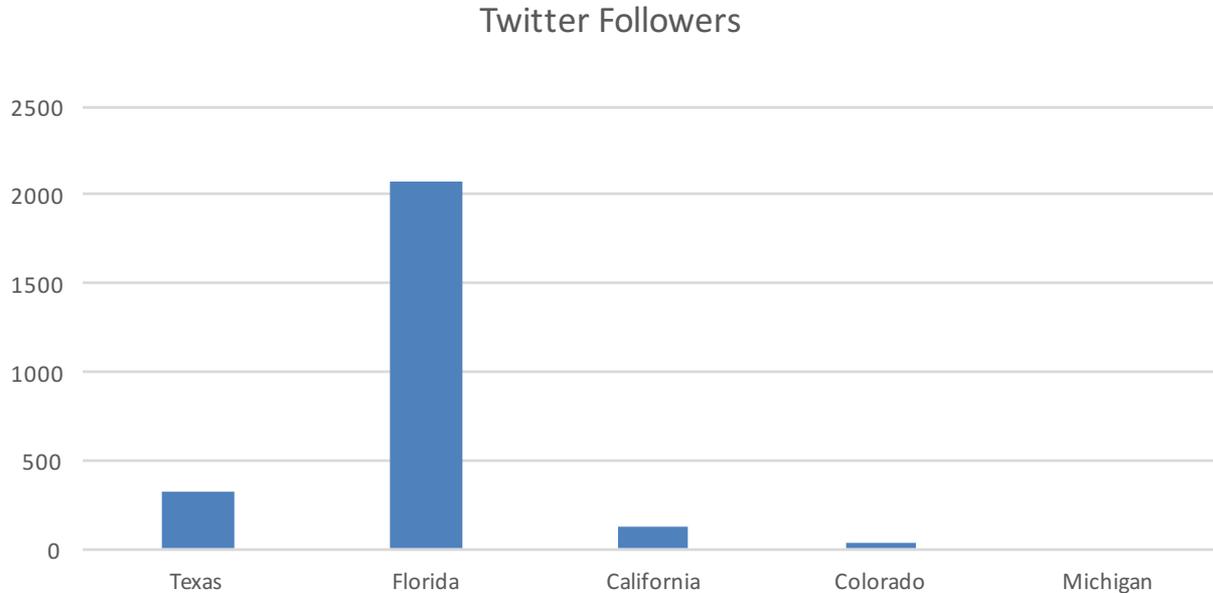
Facebook

741 page follows, 754 total page likes

Average of 4 posts a month except for October and November – leading up to the conference and the conference itself

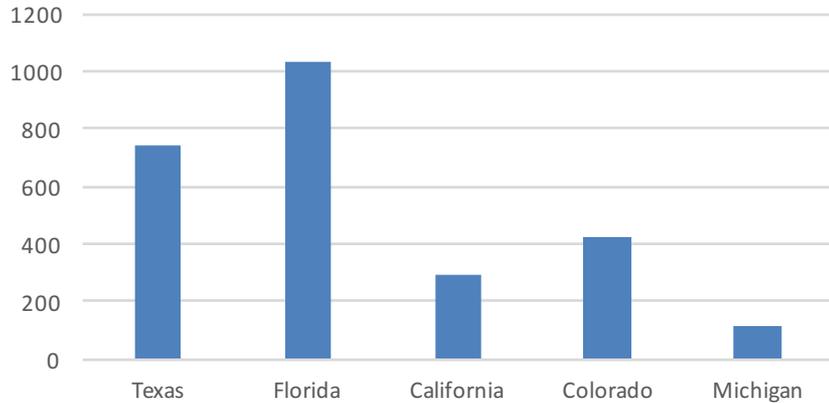
Social Media Comparisons

TX chapter compared with a few other chapters

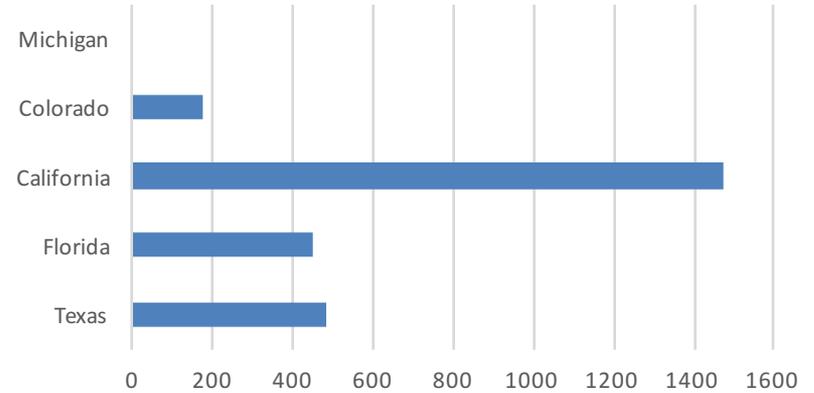


Social Media Comparisons

Facebook Page Follows



Linked Followers



Facebook Notes

- Keep it conversational, ask questions
- Best time to post on Facebook: 3 p.m. Wednesday
- Other optimal times: 12 –1 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 1 - 4 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays
- Engagement rates are 18% higher on Thursdays and Fridays, and weekdays from 1 - 4 p.m. tend to see the highest click through rates
- On Fridays, Facebook use spikes by 10%
- Friday is a good day for humorous posts
- The worst times to post on Facebook: weekends before 8 a.m. and after 8 p.m.

Twitter Notes

Follow elected officials, area planning organizations, national planning organizations, and relevant influencers

- Twitter is quickest method to distribute message and grow audience
- The best times to post on Twitter are weekdays 12 – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.
- Data suggests posting up to 5 times/day
- Use hashtags effectively, but no more than one or two per post

LinkedIn Notes

- LinkedIn is used heavily for professional use. Post career tips, job announcement and training information here.
- The best time to post on LinkedIn is midweek from 5 - 6 p.m. Other optimal times include Tuesdays from 10 – 11 a.m., Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 7:30–8:30 a.m., at 12 p.m., and from 5 – 6 p.m.

Instagram Notes

- Use Instagram to showcase visually compelling content
- Great Places of Texas
- Conferences and Awards
- BONUS: Facebook and Instagram are linked for easy content sharing
- Less frequent posts
- Lots of hashtags drive people to posts
- The best times to post are Mondays and Thursdays anytime