Planning for Family Friendly Communities

By Evelyn Israel and Mildred Warner

Planners are concerned with the health of their municipalities and regions, and regularly confront issues that affect families. However, the vast majority of planners do not consider children in comprehensive plans. In a society that is increasingly concerned with environmental sustainability because of its effects on future generations, shouldn't we, as planners, also be concerned with planning communities for people from childhood to old age? Planners can play a role in creating more family friendly communities with housing at affordable prices, access to child care, parks, pedestrian pathways, quality public schools, safe neighborhoods, and many other potential features that promote family well-being. With nearly 200 attendees at a session devoted to planning family friendly communities at the APA's 2008 National Planning Conference, this issue is drawing growing concern and attention from planners.

Cities are rebuilding with an enthusiasm for attracting empty nesters and young urban professionals, and there is tremendous interest in Richard Florida's work (2002) on the creative economy. But planning priorities that stem from this approach often ignore the needs of families with young children. While suburbs are considered the most popular place for families, family needs are not necessarily met well there either. Single-use zoning hinders access to amenities for families and prevents families from running small businesses (particularly child care) out of their homes. Transportation options are also limited, and families contend with the expense and time of long commutes and lack of accessible child care. What about planning communities for the whole life course? Research by AARP has shown that the elderly want to age in place, and many of the issues they endorse — walkability, public transit, affordable housing, conveniently located services, parks, and opportunities for civic engagement — are applicable to creating family friendly communities (Kihl et al. 2005; Kochera et al. 2005). How can planners create family friendly communities wherever they work?

APA, in collaboration with Cornell University, conducted a survey in spring 2008 to assess attitudes about and barriers to creating family friendly communities, as well as current planning practice. The survey was answered by more than 900 planners from across the country and showed that planners are remarkably positive about the importance of families to communities and the role planners can play in designing communities that better meet families' needs. This *PAS Memo* describes the results of that survey.

Background

Why is there a concern about this issue? Communities are not adequately addressing family needs. For example, transportation systems are often based on route to work, not on route to child care, work, and grocery stores (trip chaining). There is an inadequate supply of affordable family housing, and there is some debate that planning is part of the problem because of zoning restrictions (Nechyba 2003: 148). Some argue that families do not contribute enough to the tax rolls to cover the costs of the services they require, and this discourages municipalities from promoting development of affordable, family-sized housing (Sternlieb 1974; Juergensmeyer 2007).

Is it reasonable to assume that suburbs are where families want to be? According to the 2000 Census, cities in the South and West experienced significant increases in married couples with children, and non-family households (singles and elderly people living alone) are now the primary residents of suburbs (Frey and Berube 2002). Are suburbs sustainable for families given peak oil and obesity? U.S. parents work longer hours than their European counterparts (Gornick and Myers 2003) and families face more stress (Halpern 2004). Planners can play a role in reducing family stress by designing communities and providing services

and infrastructure that better meet family needs. We are interested in determining how planners can be a part of the solution. Our survey showed 98 percent of planners believe they can play a role in helping communities become family friendly.

At the APA National Planning Conference in 2007, we conducted a focus group where we asked participants to articulate positive attitudes about the role families play in communities. We also discussed barriers planners face and specific activities they can do to create family friendly communities. Participants, who were community planners with experience in transportation, housing, economic development, disaster response, and child care, worked with us over the next year to design a survey.

Family friendly communities feature parks and open space with design guidelines that encourage interaction, as shown here on Market Street in The Woodlands, Texas.
Photo TBG Partners.

The survey was sent in March 2008 to APA members through an electronic postcard. The survey was also accessible through APA's website. There were a total of 944 respondents from throughout the country. Of the respondents, 44 percent worked in cities and the rest worked in suburbs (20 percent), rural areas (10 percent), and multiple jurisdictions (26 percent). The respondents tended to be from larger communities; 55 percent worked in communities with a population over 50,000, and 33 percent were from communities with over 150,000 residents (see Table 1). Respondents were primarily practicing planners working in the public sector (69 percent), but also included planning consultants (20 percent), elected government officials (1 percent), and government officials other than planners (5 percent).

The survey focused on three main categories: attitudes, actions, and barriers. "Attitudes about family friendly communities" was used to gauge planners' attitudes about the importance of families to communities and raise awareness of the need for family friendly communities. "What planners can do" presented questions to benchmark what planners are currently doing and provided planners with ideas and tools they can use to plan family friendly communities. The responses were also much more positive in this category than expected. "Barriers to the creation of family friendly communities" presented questions to explore the extent of the problem and get planners thinking about what hinders the creation of family friendly communities.

Table 1: Population of Municipality Where Survey Respondents Work

≤ 10,000	13%
10,001 – 50,000	32%
50,001 – 150,000	22%
150,001 – 500,000	17%
≥ 500,001	16%

Attitudes About Family Friendly Communities

In the first section of the survey, we listed a series of statements based on the positive and negative attitudes displayed at the focus group the previous year. Respondents could agree or disagree with the statements using a seven range Likert Scale (survey results in this section combine the three degrees of "agree " and "disagree").

Table 2: Planners' Attitudes Towards Families

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Families are important to community growth, sustainability, and diversity.	97%	2%	1%
Families are the most likely population group to reinvest in their community through time, money, and other forms of civic engagement.	78%	11%	11%
Most families do not generate sufficient tax revenue to cover the cost of services they demand.	53%	19%	28%
Families represent a valuable consumer population.	97%	3%	0%
Communities that keep people for the whole life cycle (children, single adults, parents, elderly) are more vibrant.	90%	6%	4%
The needs of families are similar to the needs of the elderly with regards to the physical environment (e.g. parks, transportation, affordable housing).	64%	6%	30%

Table 2 shows planners overwhelmingly believe families are important to communities and they recognize the need to include families in plans. Of the respondents, 97 percent agree that families are important to growth, sustainability, and diversity. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics most recent Consumer Expenditure Survey (2007), housing tenure of homeowners with mortgages and renters is longer for parents with children than any other consumer unit. Increasing the population of families in a city "holds the promise of creating neighborhoods with a strong sense of community, whose residents are committed to the [city]" (Rivlin and Cleireacain 2001: B.03). Of the survey respondents, 78 percent agree that families are the most likely population group to reinvest in their community through time, money, and other forms of civic engagement.

 Literature often describes families with children as a tax burden for a community because of the high cost of education (Juergensmeyer 2007). However, only 53 percent of respondents believed that most families do not generate sufficient tax revenue to cover the cost of services they demand, and a full 97 percent agreed that families represent a valuable consumer population. Although families without children and empty-nesters have the most disposable income, the expenditures of families with children are more likely to recirculate in the local economy (Warner and Liu 2006). Further, family expenditures are high: The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates total family expenses on a child through age 17 is $196,010 for households in the lowest income group, $269,040 for those in the middle, and $393,230 for those in the highest group (Lino 2008). The average annual expenditure for husband and wives with children is $68,354 in comparison with $55,631 for husbands and wives only, $35,491 for single parents with at least one child under 18, and $33,997 for single persons and other consumer units (Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2007).

Ninety percent of respondents believe that communities that support the whole life cycle (children, single adults, parents, and elderly) are more vibrant. There is a similarity between what makes a community family friendly and built environments that are conducive to aging in place. Elderly advocates (Pastalon 1990) are interested in transportation, parks and other places for recreation, walkability, safety, crime, design, and the need for different types of housing, which are all important aspects to family friendly communities. Because 64 percent of respondents see a connection between the needs of families and the needs of the elderly, there is an opportunity for planners to connect with elderly advocates and work with AARP to influence developers and public officials to change the built environment.

Zoning and Housing

We next asked whether planners address family needs and services in comprehensive planning and the permitting process. Of the respondents, 40 percent work in communities that have comprehensive plans that address family needs and services. This number rises to over 50 percent if the community brands itself family friendly, while it drops to less than 30 percent for communities that do not brand themselves family friendly.

Zoning and housing are closely linked. Overall, respondents indicated that zoning contributes to some aspects of family friendliness in their communities, such as open space protection (82 percent) or family-sized housing (60 percent). But many family needs are still restricted by zoning (see Table 3 below). Only 34 percent of respondents work in communities with zoning regulations that allow child care in residential units by right, and only 41 percent promote the siting of child care facilities.

Parents living in or near this affordable housing development with child care onsite at the Ohlone-Chynoweth light-rail/bus station in San Jose, California, face a simpler daily trip to work. Photo Kristen Anderson.

Table 3: Does your community's zoning regulations advance the interests of families in the following areas?

	Yes	No	Don't Know / NA
Affordable housing (e.g. expedited review, impact fee exemptions)	39%	48%	13%
Multifamily housing	66%	25%	9%
Family-sized housing	60%	25%	15%
Accessory apartments by right	25%	51%	25%
Accessory apartments by special permit	35%	37%	29%
Open space/parks	82%	11%	7%
Siting community facilities	48%	33%	20%
Family child care in residential units by right	34%	40%	26%
Family child care in residential units by special permit	46%	26%	29%
Siting child care centers	41%	33%	26%

Although 66 percent of respondents' communities have zoning that promotes multifamily housing, Figure 1 below reveals that the same percentage cites lack of affordable housing as a barrier. This is the most significant of all barriers cited, mentioned more than twice as often as education or safety issues. Research has shown that by promoting a variety of housing types and densities, affordability as well as economic and social diversity may be achieved (Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing 1991), and we found that 67 percent of planners agree. However, planners recognize there is not an adequate supply of affordable housing and only 45 percent believe their community has enough family-sized housing.

Given this problem, it is surprising that only 39 percent offer expedited review or impact fee exemptions for affordable housing.
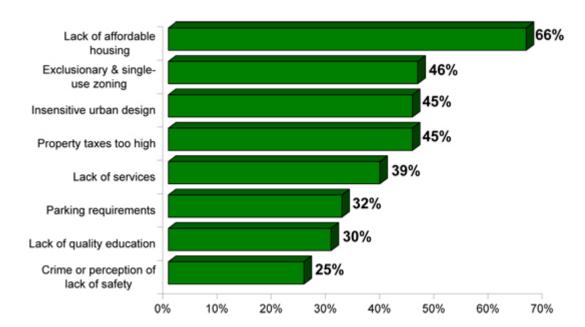
Figure 1: Which barriers currently exist in your community that prevent it from being more family friendly?

Design

We were interested in learning what planners are doing spatially to create environments conducive to family living. Design of space and place can affect the time parents have to devote to the work-family balance. For example, housing, particularly the suburban single-family home built far away from an urban center and jobs, not only increases commuting time, but also exacerbates tension in family logistical matters (e.g. parent-teacher conferences, attendance at school events) because of the physical separation of parents from children (Silbaugh 2007).

Planners recognize the value of design mechanisms that encourage interaction between neighbors, and 53 percent of respondents say their communities have such design guidelines (see Table 4). Mixed-use zoning unites housing, services, and jobs, and 90 percent of respondents have zoning regulations in their communities that allow for mixed use (see Table 5). Only 59 percent, however, provide density bonuses. Of the respondents, 75 percent say their communities require street connectivity with adjacent developments sometimes if not often, 80 percent mandate sidewalks, and 70 percent require parks and playgrounds — all design elements that reduce sprawl and encourage neighborhood integration.

A wealth of literature exists criticizing sprawl. The spatial structures that characterize the suburbs isolate women and are inefficient and economically dysfunctional, while urban centers and their mix of uses enhance efficiency by bringing homes closer to shops and services such as laundries, restaurants, and childcare (Markusen 1981: 180). Although the federal government is beginning to recognize gender as a labor market issue, gender differences typically have not been addressed by planners (Fainstein and Servon 2005). Planners need to respond in spatial terms if we hope to see the federal government respond to these gender biases in a more holistic way, and our survey shows that planners are beginning to do just that.

Neighborhood parks and playgrounds provide important opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and nature exploration for children of all ages.
Photo Kristen Anderson.

Table 4: Does your community have or promote:

	Yes	No	Don't know
Design guidelines (e.g. sidewalks, benches) that facilitate interaction between neighbors?	53%	35%	12%
Cooperative housing or common living spaces?	19%	68%	13%
Site plan reviews that consider pedestrian needs and issues?	74%	16%	10%
Lighting design guidelines or regulations that address/promote safety?	60%	26%	14%
Street furniture on main streets to facilitate "eyes on the street?"	37%	49%	14%

Table 5: Zoning and subdivision regulations

	Often	Sometimes	Not at all / Don't know
Allow for mixed use	36%	54%	10%
Provide for density bonuses	21%	38%	42%
Require parks or playgrounds	33%	37%	31%
Mandate sidewalks	54%	26%	20%
Require street connectivity with adjacent developments	39%	36%	25%

Markusen also believes there is value to collective living spaces, particularly because they help break down the patriarchal structuring of household production. She describes retirement communities and condos as examples that reduce household maintenance tasks and create space that encourages collectivity, such as group dining and recreation facilities. The division of labor between genders is thus minimized spatially. These concepts can be applied to family housing, which can reduce costs and aid families with household tasks. While cooperative housing or common living spaces are emerging, only 19 percent of respondents say these are promoted in their communities (Table 4). More common are design guidelines that promote interaction between neighbors (53 percent) and site plans that consider pedestrian issues (74 percent). In general, our survey results show that planners have the zoning regulations and design guidelines to promote family sensitive design.

Child Care

In designing our survey, we were interested in finding out what planners know about the need for child care and whether they include child care in their plans. According to a 2006 New York State survey, economic developers are aware of the lack of quality, affordable child care and the negative impacts of this on the

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economy (Cornell 2006). Their awareness and willingness to engage in the solution is the result of working with employers whose workforce is dependent on the availability of child care.

In contrast, most planners do not know if their community has an adequate supply of child care (see Table 6). Only 20 percent of respondents believe their community has an adequate supply, and 45 percent are unaware if their community uses local, state, or federal funding to support child care. Public funding can increase the availability of child care, and 21 percent of respondents routinely use it, but only 14 percent of communities provide financial support for development or operation of child care facilities.

Cities that allow child care as an accessory use in office parks or other employment centers and fast-track permits can encourage employer-sponsored programs and reduce parents' commute trips. (Provident Credit Union, Redwood City, California)
Photo Kristen Anderson.

Table 6: Child care

Does your community:	Yes	No	Don't Know / NA
Have an adequate supply of quality, affordable child care?	20%	37%	43%
Provide financial support for development or operation of child care facilities?	14%	48%	38%
Maintain data on child care (location, cost, enrollment, hours)?	18%	40%	42%
Have a local child care plan?	5%	52%	43%
Assess Impact fees to subsidize child care facilities and pre-K programs?	7%	64%	29%
Routinely use local, state, or federal funding to support child care?	21%	34%	45%

A host of economic development tools can be used to promote child care (Warner et al. 2004). Impact fees can subsidize the construction of child care facilities and pre-K programs (Anderson 2006), yet only 7 percent of communities assess impact fees for this purpose. Instead, impact fees most often are assessed to subsidize parks and recreation facilities (45 percent). Though only 30 percent of respondents say they work in communities that use Tax Increment Financing (TIF), this tool can be used to finance public improvement projects that support families, such as the development of child care facilities, school or park improvements, or traffic control.

Additionally, only 5 percent of respondents are certain that their communities have a local child care plan. Planners are not connected to family issues, especially of families with young children. Our data suggest that planners are not aware of the need for child care because families are not participating in the planning process and planners are not engaging them (see Politics and Participation below).

Transportation

Transportation is an issue for families because it concerns time, space (and subsequently ease of mobility), and affordability. We were interested in determining whether planners consider family needs in transportation planning.

Given the overwhelming urban nature of our sample, 84 percent have bus service and 29 percent have train or subway service. Of those who answered that their community has bus service, 36 percent say that "many" of those buses (and an additional 31 percent say "some") are kneeling to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs. Of those communities that have train or subway service, 79 percent also promote transit-oriented development (TOD), a development pattern that minimizes costs to families (Utter 2005). "Location efficient" neighborhoods exhibit many of the characteristics associated with family friendly communities, such as density, walkability, access to jobs, and amenities (Center for TOD 2006). Although land values are higher around TOD sites, housing can remain affordable because of the high density. They are also excellent sites for child care (LINCC 2008). Although TOD is often focused on one or two bedroom apartments, only 5 percent of respondents in our sample that have train or subway service say that TOD restricts family-sized housing.

Fruitvale Transit Village, at an Oakland, California, BART (rapid transit) station, includes a large Head Start center, retail shops, and social services offices to support new affordable housing as well as the surrounding low-income neighborhood and transit riders.
Photo Kristen Anderson.

Cities can partner with transportation and other public agencies to develop facilities such as Kidstation at the Montclair Metrolink commuter rail and bus station in southern California.
Photo Kristen Anderson.

Trip chaining is the linking together of primary and secondary activities through travel originating and ending at home (Primerano et al. 2008). The need to model transportation plans on trip chaining behaviors was first noted by Adler and Ben-Akiva in 1979. Incorporating trip chaining behaviors of working parents into zoning and transportation plans (i.e. grocery stores and child care on primary transit paths) is vital to reducing stress and commuting time. Yet, 60 percent of respondents say they work in communities that do not consider trip chaining commuting behavior of parents in transportation plans (see Table 7). Studies show women still bear a disproportionate share of household responsibility (Bielby and Bielby 1988; Tingey et al. 1996), and women spend more than twice the amount of time as men caring for children (BLS 2008). Work-family conflict makes time an especially important constraint for women whose household responsibilities do not decline as they enter the paid labor force (Silbaugh 2007). Therefore, building transportation plans based on trip chaining patterns could reduce work-family conflict and commuting time, which in turn would increase time women (and men) can spend on household chores and interact with children.

Table 7: Transportation

Does your community:	Yes	No	Don't Know / NA
Consider trip chaining for parents in zoning and transportation plans?	17%	60%	23%
Promote alternatives to a privately owned vehicle?	36%	59%	5%
Have a policy for low traffic speeds in residential neighborhoods to promote safety?	70%	19%	11%

Our survey shows that 84 percent of respondents work in communities that have some form of public transportation, but 59 percent do not promote alternatives to privately owned vehicles, and 46 percent have zoning regulations that do not promote transportation choices for families. However, 70 percent of communities have a policy for low traffic speeds in residential neighborhoods to promote safety.

From the perspective of creating family friendly communities, planners do not seem to perceive parking requirements as a problem in most communities; 54 percent of respondents thought that parking requirements are not a barrier preventing the community in which they work from being more family friendly. Only 34 percent believed parking is a barrier, and another 14 percent did not know.

Schools and Crime

Popular wisdom indicates that the quality of schools (Nechyba 2003; Silbaugh 2007) and the amount of crime or perceived safety (Wachs et al. 1993; Rapoport 1985) are two important factors in family residential choice. Interestingly, most respondents in our survey do not find lack of quality education (62 percent) and high crime or the perception of the lack of safety (68 percent) as problems in the communities they work. Instead, lack of affordable housing, exclusionary and single-use zoning, insensitive urban design, property taxes too high, and lack of services are seen as the largest barriers. These numbers shift to reflect urban and suburban differences. In smaller communities with a population of 50,000 or less, only 19 percent say lack of quality education and 14 percent say crime are barriers. For larger communities (over 50,000), the response rates are higher at 39 percent and 35 percent respectively, but they still are not seen as significant barriers.

Creating better quality schools is not typically viewed within a planner's purview, but planners should involve themselves since schools influence the way in which communities grow (Pianca 2001). Planners are collaborating with school boards (see Table 8) to reuse school buildings (30 percent), site new schools (45 percent), and co-locate schools with parks, recreational areas, libraries, and community centers (43 percent). Additionally, 52 percent of respondents work in communities that have a walk-to-school program such as Safe Routes to School. Such collaboration may help prevent sprawl, prevent long commutes for parents dropping off and picking up their children, enable walkability, provide amenities that will aid in a child's education, and reduce school costs (Pianca 2001).
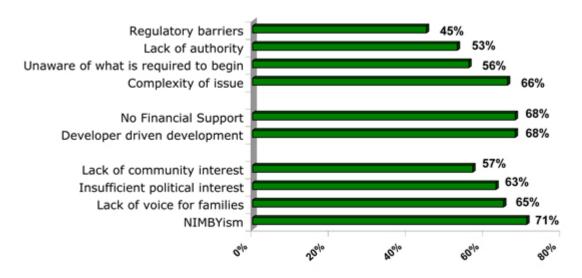
Table 8: Schools

Do planners in your community collaborate with the school board to:	Yes	No	Don't Know / NA
Reuse school buildings?	30%	37%	33%
Site new schools?	45%	29%	26%
Co-locate schools with parks, recreational areas, libraries, and community centers?	43%	30%	27%

Additionally, 59 percent of respondents say that schools function as a center of their community. Schools can be used for a wide variety of community functions, including child care, continuing education courses, public meetings, community recreation, libraries, and computer facilities.

Politics and Participation

Planners face a number of challenges to building family friendly communities, but regulatory barriers, authority, and complexity of the issue are all things planners can address. While finances and development pressures rank high as barriers, the highest barriers in general are political: lack of community interest, lack of family voice, and NIMBYism (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Challenges to Planning Family Friendly Communities (Combines "often" and "sometimes" responses.)

To address these political barriers, planners see citizen interest and parent involvement as the most important interest groups to engage (see Table 9). These groups are even more important than political or economic development leaders and could provide a local voice for families and help address the NIMBYism that many communities face.

Table 9: What interest groups are needed to help communities become more family friendly?

	Greatly needed
Citizen Interest	63%
Parents	48%
Pressure from local elected officials	34%
Advocacy organizations	26%
Business community or chamber of commerce	20%

However, our survey also shows that planners are not paying sufficient attention to how to involve parents and youth in planning processes. For example, only 2 percent of respondents' communities provided child care for public meetings often and only another 11 percent provided child care sometimes (see Table 10). While planners are doing basic work to create family friendly communities, such as planning recreation facilities, they are not making substantive changes in addressing child care and affordable housing. According to our survey, substantive changes are less likely in communities that do not engage families in

the planning process. Citizen and parent interest is needed even more as planners undertake more substantive issues.

Table 10: How frequently does your community engage families in the planning process by:

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely/Never/Don't Know
Providing child care for public meetings?	2%	11%	88%
Running public meetings at times convenient for working families?	46%	33%	21%
Running public meeting in facilities convenient for working families?	37%	36%	27%

The inability to engage families in the planning process is, in part, a function of parents' busy schedules. Yet, according to our survey, parents are an underrepresented voice. Planners have a professional commitment to engage underrepresented voices, and there are ways for planners to engage families even given their time restraints. Although most planners often or sometimes run public meetings at times and in facilities, such as schools, or religious centers, convenient for working families (see Table 10), there is still considerable room for improvement, such as providing child care during these times.

Children are not often encouraged to participate in government and make their voices heard because they cannot vote. Only 39 percent of communities encourage youth participation in the planning process. In contrast, the elderly are an extremely powerful voting block, with time, unlike busy parents, for civic engagement. Uniting with AARP and other elderly advocates may help communities build common interest and political support for more family friendly design.

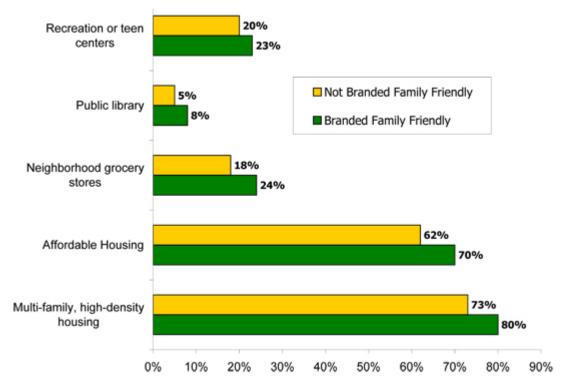**Action, Resistance, and Attitude Change**

More then 40 percent of our respondents indicated they worked in communities that branded themselves family friendly. Table 11 shows communities that brand themselves family friendly are more likely to promote family-sized, affordable housing, transit oriented development, child care, and design guidelines that facilitate neighbor interaction. Family friendly communities are also more likely to include family needs in their comprehensive plans and co-locate schools with parks and other facilities.

Table 11: Substantive planning: comparison of branded to not branded family friendly communities

Does your community:	Branded Family Friendly			Not Branded Family Friendly		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Promote a variety of housing types and prices to enable an economically and socially diverse community?	73%	24%	3%	58%	38%	3%
Have an adequate supply of 2+ bedroom rental apartments and homes?	50%	36%	14%	40%	43%	17%
Promote TOD?	50%	42%	8%	38%	57%	6%
Address family needs and services in each of the following sections of its comprehensive plan?						
Goals and Objectives / Vision Statement	56%	25%	19%	27%	52%	21%
Existing Conditions and Trends	54%	25%	21%	32%	47%	21%
Recommendations and Action Plans	54%	27%	21%	31%	45%	24%
Zoning regulations allow for:						
Multi-family housing	70%	22%	8%	62%	31%	7%
Family-sized housing	65%	23%	12%	55%	31%	14%
Open space/parks	86%	8%	6%	79%	16%	5%
Siting community facilities	61%	24%	15%	39%	43%	18%
Site plan reviews that consider pedestrian issues?	80%	14%	6%	68%	22%	10%
Design guidelines that facilitate interaction between neighbors?	61%	28%	11%	46%	45%	9%
Co-locate schools with parks, recreational areas, libraries and community centers?	52%	26%	22%	38%	34%	28%
Have an adequate supply of quality, affordable child care?	24%	35%	40%	16%	42%	42%

While these family friendly communities do more substantive planning, they also face greater NIMBYism and political negativity. Interestingly, our survey reveals that family friendly communities enjoy greater political and community interest, but they also face greater public opposition (see Figure 3). This is because substantive action can lead to organized resistance.

Figure 3: Has the general public ever attempted to block efforts to include the following family friendly conditions, amenities, or developments? (Figure depicts "yes" responses.)

We believe there is an iterative relationship between attitudes and action. Communities that brand themselves family friendly do more for families and face more resistance. However, they appear to overcome this resistance because they engage youth and families more in the planning process and they organize more family events which are public celebrations of the family (see Table 12). Additionally, they are more likely to hold meetings at times and in places convenient to families. Family engagement in the planning process leads to attitude change. Logically, family friendly communities have better attitudes about families and the role they play within communities, but our data suggest that even with greater political opposition, communities that make more substantive changes have slightly more positive attitudes.

Table 12: Civic and Public Engagement

Does your community:	Branded Family Friendly	Not Branded Family Friendly
Encourage youth participation in the planning process? (yes)	44%	33%
Organize family events? (yes)	70%	60%
Run public meetings at times convenient for working families? (often)	50%	41%

Overall, the challenges that family friendly communities face are similar to communities that do not brand themselves family friendly. Yet, supporting our notion of an iterative process of attitude change, we see branded communities are more likely to face these challenges "sometimes" whereas not branded communities are more likely to face these challenge "often" (see Table 13).

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Table 13: How frequently has your community faced the following challenges in trying to become family friendly?

	Branded Family Friendly		Not Branded Family Friendly	
	Often	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes
Regulatory barriers	7%	44%	10%	32%
Developer driven development	21%	48%	30%	37%
Lack of authority	12%	43%	25%	29%
Lack of voice for young families	22%	43%	29%	38%
Insufficient political interest	21%	41%	30%	34%
Lack of community interest	15%	43%	21%	39%
NIMBYism	37%	37%	35%	34%

Conclusion

The 2008 APA/Cornell survey of practicing planners across the United States shows clearly that planners see a very positive role for families and believe incorporating family issues into planning practice is a critical challenge for the future. Barriers exist, but they can be overcome. The high costs of serving families are counterbalanced by the significant investments families make in communities — both financial and civic. Communities that plan for residents across the entire life course are more sustainable and more vibrant. Increasingly planners are incorporating family issues in comprehensive plans, but more work is needed in making zoning and design guidelines reflect these priorities.

Communities that brand themselves family friendly show the way. They have moved beyond talk to action, and have both regulatory and public participation mechanisms to ensure family needs are reflected in planning processes. They face more resistance but overcome it through dialogue and action. Planners have important tools at their disposal to promote more family friendly cities. They can remove zoning barriers to accessory apartments or child care, design transportation systems to address family needs, use state and federal funds for child care, promote affordable housing, provide safe and attractive parks and public spaces, and promote family and youth involvement in the planning process. Regulation, development, finance, and public participation are all arenas where planners have great influence. As we build communities for the 21st century, we must give more attention to using these tools to build more inclusive communities for all.

About the Authors

Evelyn Israel completed this work while a graduate student in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. Mildred Warner is professor of planning in the same department and co-directs the national Linking Economic Development and Child Care Project. **The project website** *contains many resources for planners. We would like to thank the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for funding to support this project, as well as Bill Klein and Tre Jerdon of APA, and Lynn Ross and Carrie Fesperman, formerly of APA, for their support and collaboration.*

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