The Illinois State Section (APA-ISS) had big plans for 2020, only to fall victim to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. After retreating and reassessing our capabilities in a new world of virtual communication and professional development, APA-ISS is looking forward to a more robust 2021. Nor was 2020 a total loss, as APA-ISS supported citizen planner trainings, grew the roster of citizen planner trainers, and added a new regional coordinator.

The 2020 APA-ISS Conference, intended to be held in April in Champaign-Urbana, was on pace to be the premier professional development opportunity convened by the Section in recent memory. The conference was organized around the theme of small-scale development, with the Incremental Development Alliance (IncDev) having been hired to present four sessions on IncDev's activities, the small-scale development process, and strategies for supporting small-scale development in communities of all types. Additional sessions included panels on financing and constructing small-scale projects, walking tours of both Champaign and Urbana, and a recent alumni career panel for UIUC students. Three weeks before the conference was scheduled to begin, registration had reached nearly 100 attendees, a substantially larger number than is typical for APA-ISS conferences. While the conference was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, APA-ISS was fortunate that very little money was lost to nonrefundable expenses. APA-ISS remains in strong financial shape, and the section plans to bring IncDev back to Champaign-Urbana for the 2022 APA-ISS Conference.

Meanwhile, planning for the virtual 2021 APA-ISS Conference continues apace. The conference will happen April 16th and April 23rd. We are hoping that attendees will find this once-a-week, half-day schedule convenient.

One of the core goals of APA-ISS is to support citizen planner workshops across our territory. APA-ISS offers financial support to local and regional governments that organize training sessions for their Plan Commissions, Zoning Boards of Appeals, and City Councils on planning-related topics. In past years, these workshops have been held in person and led by either local planners or trainers from the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development. While trainings could not be held in person this year, the need for citizen planner education did not subside. If anything, members of boards and commissions needed additional support as they conducted hearings and meetings online for the first time. APA-ISS was proud to support virtual trainings in Champaign County and Metro East. Additionally, several APA-ISS board members attended a "train the trainer" session, learning how to present the citizen planner workshop curriculum ourselves. In 2021, APA-ISS has budgeted funding to support four citizen planner workshops, so please do not be shy about asking for funding if you are organizing a training in your community.

APA-ISS was proud to welcome Reema Abi-Akar of the Tri-County Regional Plan Commission to our Executive Committee as the Region 2 Coordinator. A 2015 graduate of UIUC, Reema returned to Illinois following her graduate education at the University of
Illinois State Section

Michigan and is making an impact not just as a regional coordinator, but as a member of the APA-IL Membership Committee as well. APA-ISS is seeking similarly motivated people to fill the currently vacant regional coordinator positions for Region 1 and Region 3.

All current APA-ISS Section Officers were reelected for the 2021-2022 term, so the Section should benefit from stability in leadership. However, we will greatly miss long-time APA-ISS Executive Committee member Stephanie Ashe Brown, AICP, who is concluding 10 consecutive years of APA-ISS service in a number of roles, most recently Past Officer. Thank you, Stephanie, for your leadership, guidance, and positive energy!