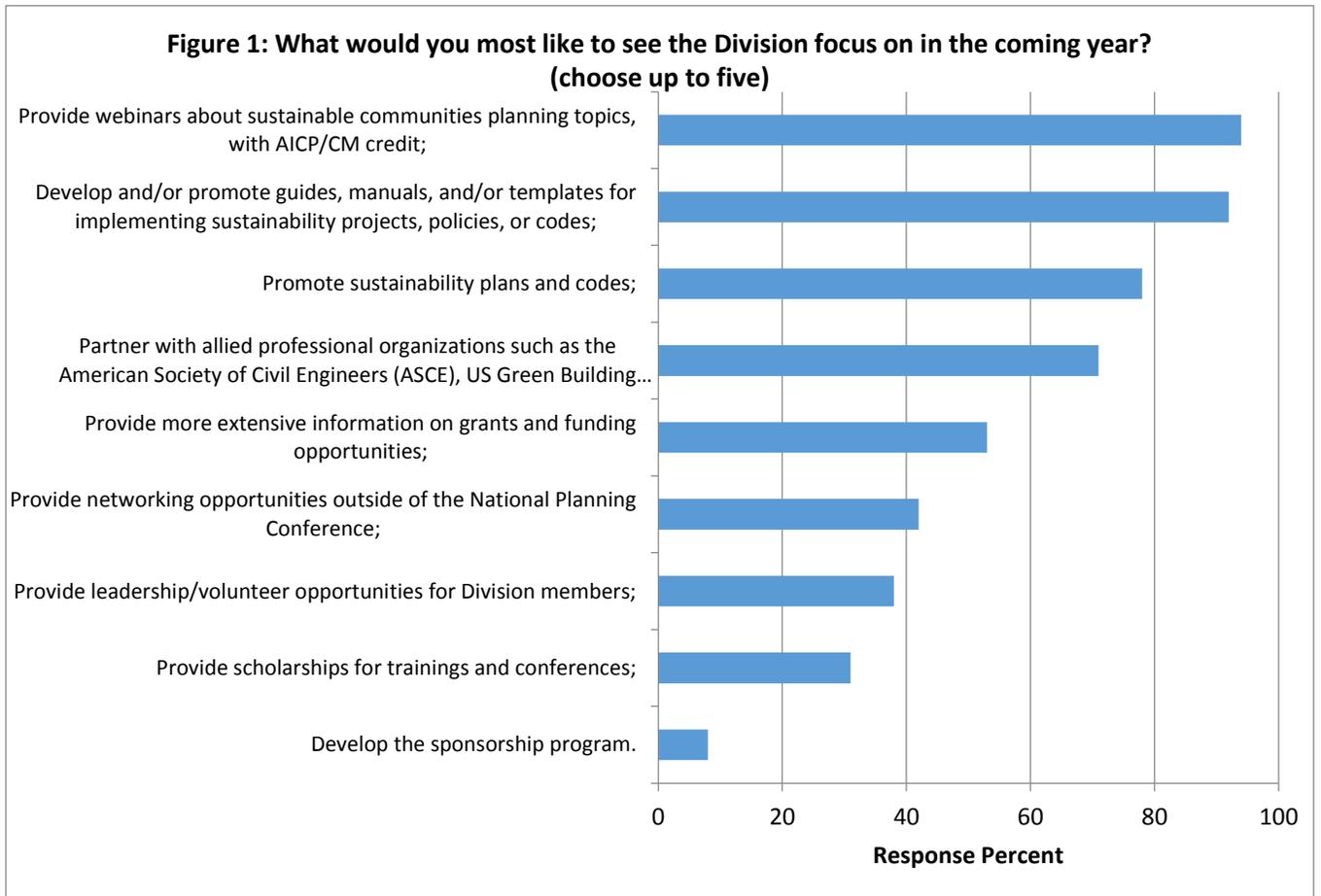


## APA Sustainable Communities Division 2015 Membership Survey

The 2015 membership survey results are in. 122 individuals took the survey. The survey results show that there is a desire for hands-on tools such as model codes and guides as well as training opportunities such as webinars.

Respondents were asked to choose up to five answers (out of nine possible answers) to the question **'What would you most like to see the Division focus on in the coming year?'** The top response was, *'Provide webinars about sustainable communities planning topics, with AICP/CM credit'* (76% of respondents). A very close second most popular response was, *'Develop and/or promote guides, manuals, and/or templates for implementing sustainability projects, policies, or codes'* (75%). The third most popular choice was, *'Promote sustainability plans and codes'* (63%) and the fourth was, *'Partner with allied professional organizations such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), US Green Building Council (USGBC), American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to expand networking and information sharing'*, which was selected by 58% of respondents. The other five possible answers to the question each received less than 50% in their rankings. Seven respondents also included their own answer under the 'other' category.

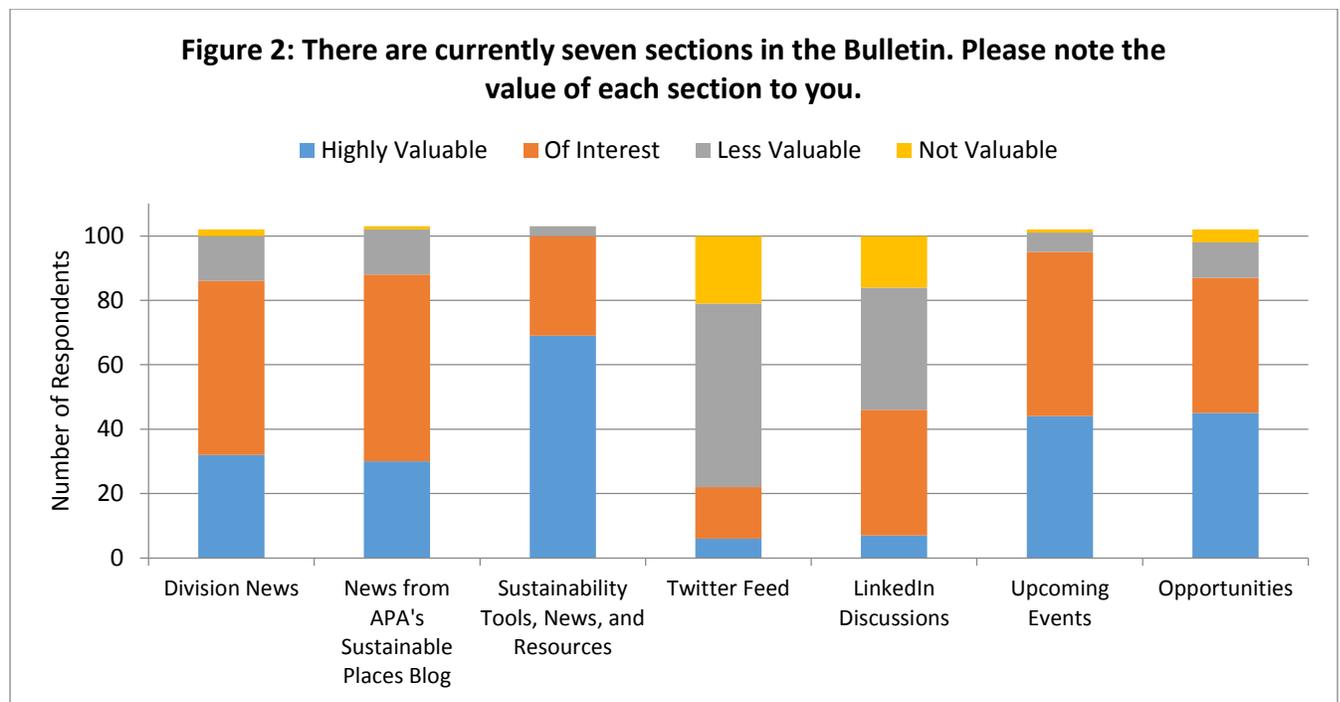


Over 65% of respondents read the bulletin most of the time or all of the time (20% always read it) while 29% said they sometimes read it. Only 6% said they never read it.

When asked to rate the value of the Bulletin to them and their Sustainable Communities work 69% of respondents indicated that the Bulletin is of interest and 21% said the Bulletin is highly valuable. Only 10% indicated the Bulletin is less valuable and only one respondent said the Bulletin is not valuable.

The majority of respondents (80%) feel the length of the Bulletin is just right and 18% think it's too long.

When asked to rank the value of the seven sections of the bulletin 67% of respondents ranked the Sustainability Tools, News, and Resources section as highly valuable. Opportunities ranked 44% highly valuable and Upcoming Events ranked 43% highly valuable. The majority of respondents felt that the Division News section and the News from APA's Sustainable Places Blog section were either of interest or highly valuable. The majority of respondents also believe that the LinkedIn Discussions and the Twitter feed were either less valuable or not valuable.



Several individuals offered suggestions to improve the Bulletin. Among the suggestions:

- “Critical analysis of Government proposed ‘solutions’ to environmental concerns that actually do more harm than good.”
- “International sustainability goals”
- “Try an opinions section so everyone can assess each other’s efforts”
- “Formatting and aesthetic need work”
- “Make it better known, I wasn’t aware of it somehow.”
- “Define an information ‘filter’ so that the SCD Bulletin does not duplicate the approach or content that is prevalent and popularly available. Focus on the high-value content that is not accessible or integrated in other sources. Why are you different? Why should I spend my time reading the Bulletin? The answers that point to the SCD's unique contribution to the

sustainability planning challenge, understanding and practice, that can't be found elsewhere, is the content you should provide.”

- “Visually, it's hard to parse. Formatting needs to be improved, please. I realize you're trying to provide diverse info, but it backfires and I don't read much of the bulletin at all. (1) Too many hyperlinks and/or too much wording in hyperlinked making for a lot of underlined, green text. Everything under the LinkedIn section is underline/green making it impossible to see what the key words/topics are. (2) In major sections such as Sustainability Tools, News, and Resources bullets and/or grouping by topic area would help. Trying to read through an entire paragraph for a particular point of interest, e.g., energy only, is difficult. "Opportunities" is too generic. Have a section for Grants, a section for Fellowships/Internships, a section for Volunteering.”
- “It's just way too long!”
- “Less focus on Government based sustainability programs that are ineffective and counter-productive to the goal of sustainability. Highlight private sector accomplishments and industry innovation that leads to solutions, not a greater bureaucracy.”

Several respondents essentially said they like the Bulletin just the way it is.

74% of respondents indicated they did not know that “...you can submit content to the Bulletin by e-mailing [apascd@gmail.com](mailto:apascd@gmail.com)?”

65% said they read the Newsletter which is only available to members via the APA website.

A number of those who do not read the newsletter provided some reasons why they don't. Some of the responses are listed below:

- “Did not know about it”
- “I guess I missed it - definitely interested & will try in future.”
- “The extra steps of going thru APA website”
- “I'm not a sustainable communities division member (due to cost)”

70% of respondents said they find the Newsletter of interest while 27% find it highly valuable.

Several individuals offered suggestions to improve the Newsletter. Among the suggestions:

- “Thoughts on wider distribution???”
- “Same as for the bulletin in the above response. Also, focus on systematically assembling a strategic understanding of the challenge and the emerging leading edge response, including critical assessments. Be a "portal" to the leading edge and deepening strategic understanding and approach that has the real potential to move the sustainability needle on an economic/societal transformation path.”
- “I confess I have a hard time reading newsletters online, and prefer an old school hard copy. But I understand it is wasteful to print them. so not sure how to handle this issue.”
- “More content for private practice planners would be nice”
- “It should have more interview content.”
- “Don't make us log in through APA, it's an extra step that's likely to make me just skip it.”

Participants were asked about the content they would like to see added to the blog website. For each of the possible choices respondents were asked to rank the choices either highly valuable, of interest, less valuable, or not valuable. Here's how the choices were ranked:

52% said 'upcoming events and webinars' is highly valuable and 41% said of interest.

43% said 'updates and information about current SCD projects' is highly valuable and 51% said of interest.

40% said 'original content blogs by field area experts' is highly valuable and 53% said of interest.

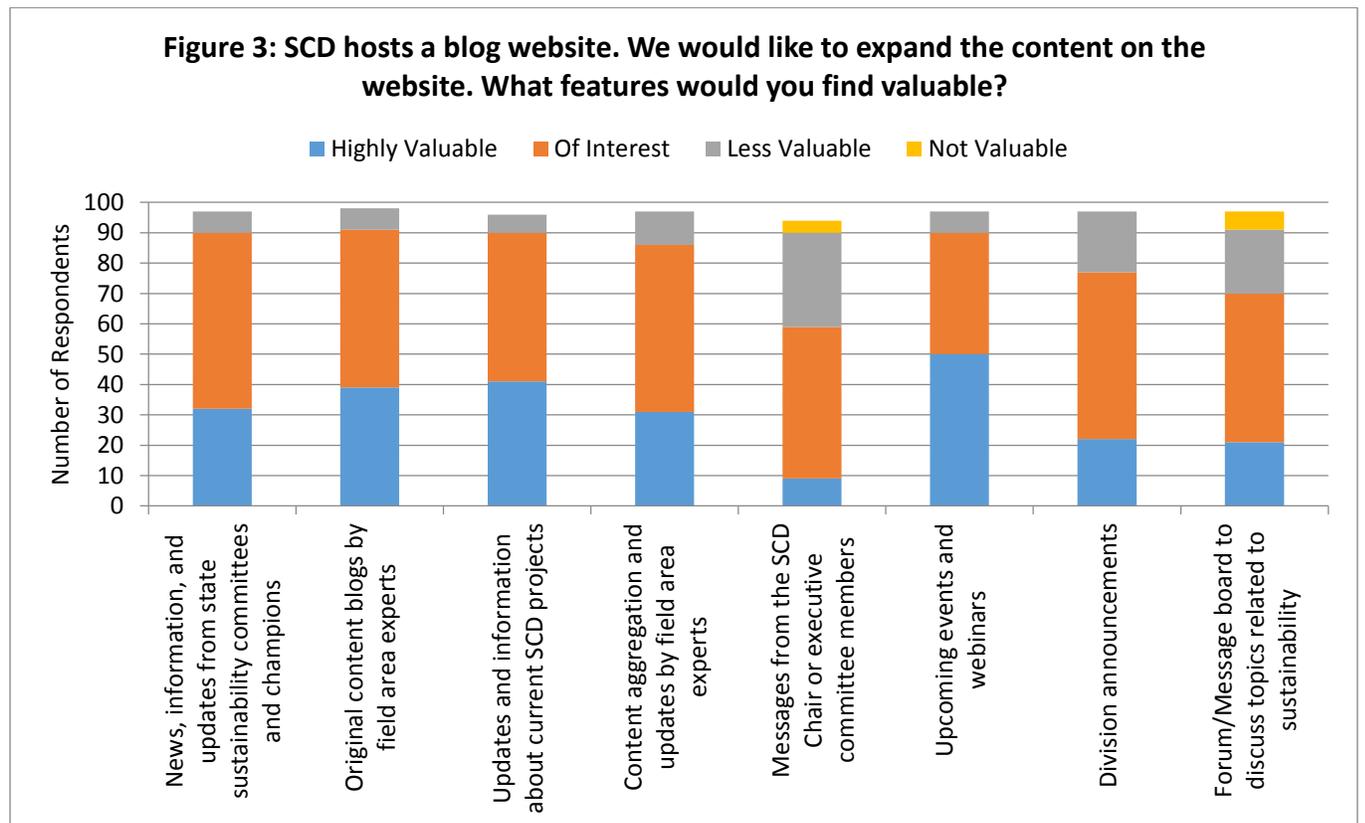
33% said 'news, information, and updates from state sustainability committees and champions' is highly valuable and 60% said of interest.

32% said 'content aggregation and updates by field area experts' is highly valuable and 57% said of interest.

23% said 'division announcements' is highly valuable and 57% said of interest.

22% said 'forum/message board to discuss topics related to sustainability' is highly valuable and 51% said of interest.

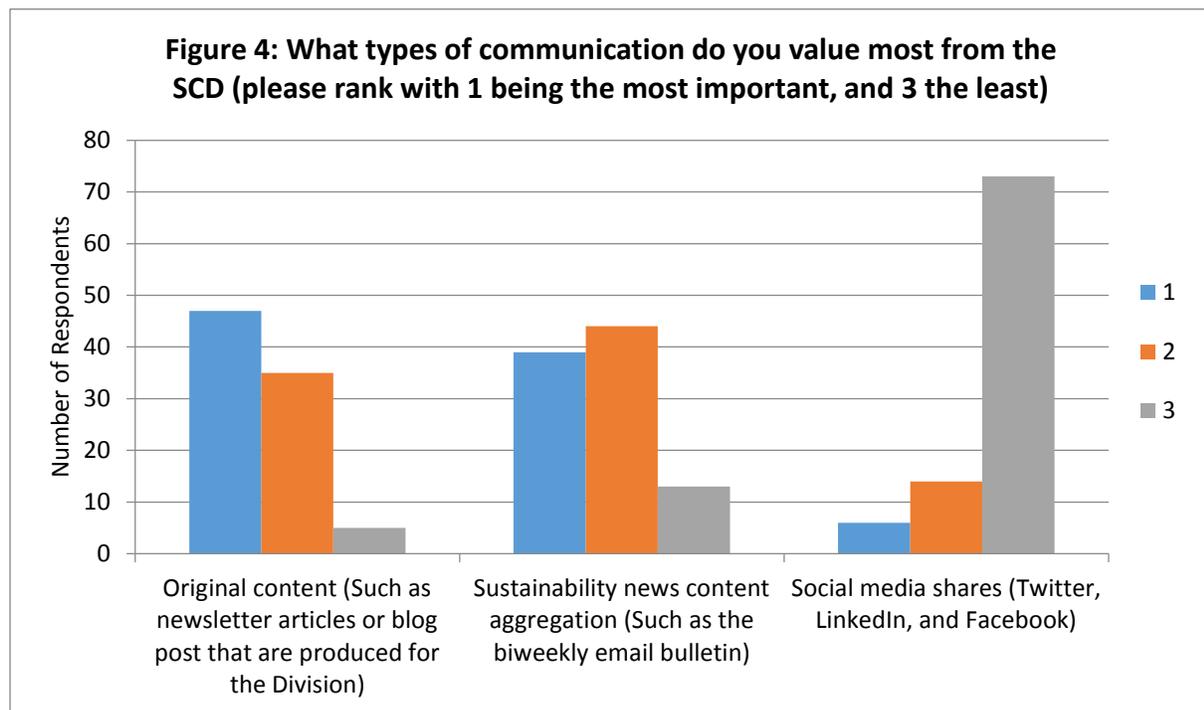
10% said 'messages from the SCD Chair or executive committee members' is highly valuable and 53% said of interest.



When asked, “Are there other features that you would like to see on the website?” responses included the following:

- “Tips for Cities with a very limited Sustainability Committee how to get going”
- “Make the blog accessible as an RSS feed”
- “The key criteria is defining a filter that allows you to illuminate, select, and package powerful information that is not available elsewhere or at least easily, and is advancing practice.”
- “I am overwhelmed with info so anything that makes the website searchable so that I can find topic-based info would be helpful. I don’t have time to check most blogs every day or even week, and I may not care whether the info is expert content or a division project as long as I can find it when I go looking.”
- “Barriers related to financing.”
- “Opportunities for collaboration with other planners (such as in response to RFP’s); job opportunities; grant opportunities.”
- “A link to a listing of educational/training resources outside of APA on sustainability related topics - there are a ton of them out there. A place for feedback from people who have used these resources would be helpful”

When asked, “What types of communication do you value most from the SCD” respondents were asked to rank three choices with one being the most important and 3 the least important. They most strongly favored, “Original content (Such as newsletter articles or blog post that are produced for the Division)” with 54% ranking the option as their number one choice and 40% as number two. The second most popular choice was, “Sustainability news content aggregation (Such as the biweekly email bulletin)” with 41% listing this is their first choice and 46% as their second choice. Coming in last was, “Social media shares (Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook)” with 78% saying this is their third choice.



In the 2013 member survey members asked for the Division to provide support in three broad areas: (1) better communicating sustainability to leaders and citizens, (2) developing policies/guides to help implement sustainability, and (3) providing training/certification programs to improve professional practice. SCD responded by developing a Sustainability Champion Program, offering webinars and collaborating on a Sustainability Policy Guide Update and Smart Cities Initiative.

**Sustainability Champions:** In this Pilot Sustainability Champions program 12 champions from 11 states representing regions across the US form a national Sustainability Champions Network, which will be a resource for planners nationwide. Champions will help keep SCD members aware of emerging best practices at the local level in an effort to replicate success stories, and it will provide outreach for SCD initiatives at the local level.

Responses to the question, “What activities would you most like to see the Sustainability Champions become involved with?” included the following:

- “Resilience. Quantifying benefits of sustainability planning.”
- “More webinars”
- “Providing guidance to members and the public”
- “Lobbying”
- “Collaboration”
- “Model codes”
- “...getting involved with more red states seems like a good idea.”
- “University sustainability partnerships”
- “Making sustainability a central pillar of planning -- not an add-on”
- “Mentoring”
- “Partner with APA State Chapters for education.”
- “Real on the ground climate change projects that can be used in other communities.”
- “For private practitioners it would be helpful to have a forum in which to explore ways in which we can collaborate on projects. it would be helpful to be able to build multi-disciplinary consulting teams from within SCD and pursue work nationally.”
- “Developing policies to implement sustainable practices in community development”
- “Expert assistance on identifying funding sources, "selling" sustainability to local governing bodies for incorporation into the budgeting process.”
- “Organizing volunteer opportunities in distressed communities; syndicated blog or publication featuring a rotational piece by one or more of the selected Champions; submitted pieces to Planning Magazine and other outlets”
- “Teach planning & sustainability in schools”
- “Promoting sustainability programing at chapter conferences. (Sponsoring sessions)”
- “Advocating policy for their respective regions (particularly state law), and acting as a resource for their members, such as by giving presentations to planning commissions, etc., when local initiatives are on the table.”
- “Political advocacy”

**Webinars:** The Division has begun to organize a series of webinars to educate planners at all levels about a variety of topics related to sustainable communities. These webinars will initially be free and open to all, and the Division will apply for AICP CM credit for each webinar.

About a third of participants answered the question, “Are there any specific topics that you would like us to cover, or specific speaker you would like us to invite?” The responses include the following:

- “Rev Reggie Flynn Foss Ave Baptist Church Flint Michigan”
- “Water conservation issues, xeriscaping, permeable pavement where practical”
- “communicating sustainability concepts and projects to communities who have an unfavorable view of sustainability.”
- “LEED ND and STAR Community Index”
- “transportation links, environmental justice”
- “International sustainability plans”
- “Biophilic Cities/Timothy Beatley”
- “Land Banks”
- “funding for local, year round food production”
- “climate change adaptation”
- “strategic sustainability, biophilic city planning and design, living buildings communities and cities/regions, regenerative urban and regional planning.”
- “Resilience to climate change issues (not only for coastal areas, but including coastal areas); economic resilience; what we can actually do to affect climate change.”
- “Trails planning as part of sustainable communities. Retrofitting car-oriented suburbs into more user friendly communities.”
- “Dr. Richard Jackson ‘Urban Sprawl and Public Health’”
- “Renewable transportation fuels.”
- “Suburban Retrofit; Managing Change; Planner-as-advocate;”
- “Integrating economic development into sustainability.”
- “Habitat III; economic/financial advantages of sustainable practices (i.e., it's not just environmental extremists trying to advocate a preindustrial lifestyle - it actually helps the checkbook).”
- “Living Community Challenge reps”