

The Western Planner Journal Subscriber Survey Results

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Did you respond to the 2009 *Western Planner* Journal survey?

In a quest to find out what is working for our readers and what needs improvement, we asked subscribers to use Survey Monkey and give us their thoughts on the journal.

Planners find value in *Western Planner* articles and especially want practical advice. Over 90 percent want more articles that are practical and “how to” in nature and that discuss tools and techniques planners are using. More than two-thirds (69 percent) agree or strongly agree with the statement, “Articles in *The Western Planner* are relevant and beneficial to my development as a planner.”

The Western Planner Journal provides opportunities for planners looking for professional development and recognition.

Some 30 percent said they are interested in contributing

Indicate all organizations that you belong to (can check more than one so total exceeds 100%)			
Organizations		Organizations	
Alaska APA	9.3%	New Mexico APA	1.0%
Arizona APA	2.8%	North Dakota Planning Assoc.	9.3%
Colorado APA	4.8%	Oregon APA	1.7%
Idaho APA	7.6%	PAW (Planning Assoc. of WA)	11.4%
MAP	4.5%	South Dakota Planning Assoc.	5.5%
Nebraska APA	0.7%	Utah APA	2.1%
Nebraska Planning & Zoning Assoc.	0.7%	Western Central Chapter (WCC) APA	11.0%
Northern Nevada Section APA	1.4%	WYOPASS (Wyoming Planning Assoc.)	16.9%
Southern Nevada Section APA	15.9%	Other (please specify)	13.1%

Whether you were one of the 300 readers who filled-in the survey or not, you will be interested in the results! One-quarter of those responding (24 percent) have subscribed to *The Western Planner* Journal for more than 12 years; about half (47 percent) have been subscribers for five years or less. **Readers in every Western Planner state answered the survey.** The six states with the most respondents were Wyoming, Nevada, Washington, Alaska, North Dakota, and Idaho.

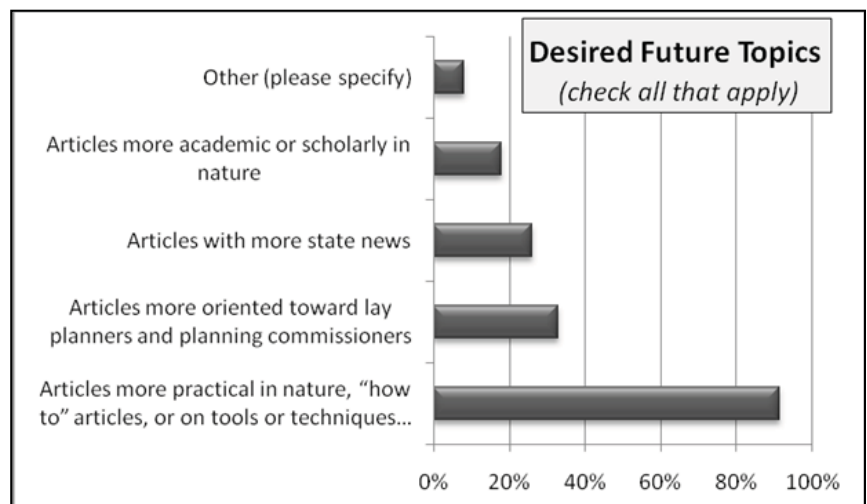
Readers are dedicated planning professionals. Two-thirds (67 percent) of survey respondents have over ten years of planning experience. Seventy percent of those who responded are members of the American Planning Association; over one-third (36 percent) are AICP members.

Most wear a local government hat. The majority of respondents (70 percent) work in local government, while the next largest group (15 percent) works in the private sector.

Advertising in *The Western Planner* reaps rewards. One-quarter of respondents said they have hired a firm that advertises in *The Western Planner*; 70 percent of those that have hired a firm that advertised in *Western Planner* say this advertising was important.

an article to *The Western Planner*. Just over one-quarter of respondents said they were interested in serving on a *Western Planner* committee or helping in some way. We'll be contacting you!

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) knew about *The Western Planner* Web site, <www.westernplanner.org>. Of those who know about it, about one-quarter (23 percent) visit once per month, while another 48 percent visit it once every couple of months. Readers listed 65 specific suggestions for improving *The Western Planner* Web site. More information of all types was the top



Type of Requested Improvement for the WPR Web site	No. Who Stated This
More Information	30
Better Design and Graphics	12
Update Information More Often	9
List Job Announcements and Similar	8

request. Other suggestions were including more information on the history of the organization and journal; local news stories involving planning; more information in general; more full articles; consider a listserv so that people could ask specific questions of a broad audience; information on how to work with state DOTs; include articles from the journal in a monthly electronic newsletter; a searchable article archives; having articles and references available online; technical planning information, and more state news.

We were surprised that 43 percent said they'd never attended a Western Planner

Conference. Just over half of those surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed that the conferences were interesting and relevant, while one-third (32 percent) said they didn't know.

We asked respondents to help tailor future articles by stating three primary areas of interest. Looking at just the top area of interest from the 250 who answered showed **transportation planning** (vehicular, multi-modal, freight, rail, smart, etc.) and **local planning** (city, community, small town, neighborhood, "nuts and bolts, what's happening") had the highest level of interest.

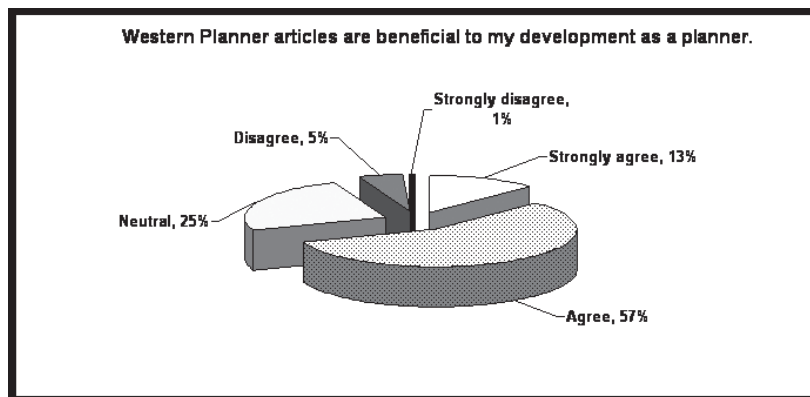
Over three-quarters of those surveyed (77 percent) strongly agree or agree that the style and layout of the *WP* is easy to read and appealing to readers; only five percent disagree. Most readers (85 percent) did not indicate there

Topics Desired for Future Articles (with at least 10 responses)	No. of Responses
Transportation Planning	26
Local Planning	25
Rural Planning	18
Sustainability and 'Green' Planning	15
Environmental	10
Zoning	10

were changes needed in the style, layout, or production quality. The 15 percent who had suggestions focused primarily on better use of color, graphics, and column layout.

Subscribers were evenly split on getting a paper versus a digital copy. Half (49 percent) would prefer to receive the *WP* electronically; the other half (51 percent) prefer a paper version. The Western Planning Resources (WPR) Board expects that over time more readers will want an electronic option and will investigate ways to do this and maintain a healthy subscriber base.

There were some open-ended questions that provide more direction on what readers would like to see in *The Western Planner*. The WPR Board will be analyzing the results in detail.



Almost all (88 percent) say the *WP* subscription cost is just right. However, most are willing to support a small increase in the subscription fee.

Half (51 percent) are willing to pay under \$10 per year more; almost half (49 percent) are willing to pay over a \$10 per year increase.

The WPR Board was gratified that subscribers could support a small price increase. As of January 1, 2010, *WP* subscription rates will go up \$5.00. Subscription rates have not been increased since the year 2000, and all costs have increased significantly since then.



WPR Editorial Board member Brian Frampton and WPR Board member Barbara Sheinberg at the September 9th Western Planner Awards Reception at the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish, South Dakota. Photo by Ken Waido.