

# AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

(Adopted October 1978 – as amended October 1991)

This Code is a guide to the ethical conduct required of members of the American Institute of Certified Planners. The Code also aims at informing the public of the principles to which professional planners are committed. Systematic discussion of the application of these principles, among planners and with the public, is itself essential behavior to bring the Code into daily use.

The Code's standards of behavior provide a basis for adjudicating any charge that a member has acted unethically. However, the Code also provides more than the minimum threshold of enforceable acceptability. It sets aspirational standards that require conscious striving to attain.

The principles of the Code derive both from the general values of society and from the planning profession's special responsibility to serve the public interest. As the basic values of society are often in competition with each other, so also do the principles of this Code sometimes compete. For example, the need to provide full public information may compete with the need to respect confidences. Plans and programs often result from a balancing among divergent interests. An ethical judgment often also requires a conscientious balancing, based on the facts and context of a particular situation and on the precepts of the entire Code. Formal procedures for filing of complaints, investigation and resolution of alleged violations and the issuance of advisory rulings are part of the Code.

## The Planner's Responsibility to the Public

A. A planner's primary obligation is to serve the public interest. While the definition of the public interest is formulated through continuous debate, a planner owes allegiance to a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest, which requires these special obligations:

1) A planner must have special concern for the long range consequences of present actions.

2) A planner must pay special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions.

3) A planner must strive to provide full, clear and accurate information on planning issues to citizens and governmental decision-makers.

4) A planner must strive to give citizens the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs. Participation should be broad enough to include people who lack formal organization or influence.

5) A planner must strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons, and must urge the alteration of

policies, institutions and decisions which oppose such needs.

6) A planner must strive to protect the integrity of the natural environment.

7) A planner must strive for excellence of environmental design and endeavor to conserve the heritage of the built environment.

## The Planner's Responsibility to Clients and Employers

B. A planner owes diligent, creative, independent and competent performance of work in pursuit of the client's or employer's interest. Such performance should be consistent with the planner's faithful service to the public interest.

1) A planner must exercise independent professional judgment on behalf of clients and employers.

2) A planner must accept the decisions of a client or employer concerning the objectives and nature of the professional services to be performed unless the course of action to be pursued involves conduct which is illegal or inconsistent with the planner's primary obligation to the public interest.

3) A planner shall not perform work if there is an actual, apparent, or reasonably foreseeable conflict of interest, direct or indirect, or an appearance of impropriety, without full written disclosure concerning work for current or past clients and subsequent written consent by the current client or employer. A planner shall remove himself or herself from a project if there is any direct personal or financial gain including gains to family members. A planner shall not disclose information gained in the course of public activity for a private benefit unless the information would be offered impartially to any person.

4) A planner who has previously worked for a public planning body should not represent a private client, for one year after the planner's last date of employment with the planning body, in connection with any matter before that body that the planner may have influenced before leaving public employment.

5) A planner must not solicit prospective clients or employment through use of false or misleading claims, harassment or duress.

6) A planner must not sell or offer to sell services by stating or implying an ability to influence decisions by improper means.

7) A planner must not use the power of any office to seek or obtain a special advantage that is not in the public interest nor any special advantage that is not a matter of public knowledge.

8) A planner must not accept or continue to perform work beyond the planner's pro-

fessional competence or accept work which cannot be performed with the promptness required by the prospective client or employer, or which is required by the circumstances of the assignment.

9) A planner must not reveal information gained in a professional relationship which the client or employer has requested be held inviolate. Exceptions to this requirement of non-disclosure may be made only when (a) required by process of law, or (b) required to prevent a clear violation of law, or (c) required to prevent a substantial injury to the public. Disclosure pursuant to (b) and (c) must not be made until after the planner has verified the facts and issues involved and, when practicable, has exhausted efforts to obtain reconsiderations of the matter and has sought separate opinions on the issue from other qualified professionals employed by the client or employer.

## The Planner's Responsibility to the Profession and to Colleagues

C. A planner should contribute to the development of the profession by improving knowledge and techniques, making work relevant to solutions of community problems, and increasing public understanding of planning activities. A planner should treat fairly the professional views of qualified colleagues and members of other professions.

1) A planner must protect and enhance the integrity of the profession and must be responsible in criticism of the profession.

2) A planner must accurately represent the qualifications, views and findings of colleagues.

3) A planner who reviews the work of other professionals must do so in a fair, considerate, professional and equitable manner.

4) A planner must share the results of experience and research which contribute to the body of planning knowledge.

5) A planner must examine the applicability of planning theories, methods and standards to the facts and analysis of each particular situation and must not accept the applicability of a customary solution without first establishing its appropriateness to the situation.

6) A planner must contribute time and information to the professional development of students, interns, beginning professionals and other colleagues.

7) A planner must strive to increase the opportunities for women and members of recognized minorities to become professional planners.

8) A planner shall not commit an act of sexual harassment.