How do we plan for the future when we don’t know what it holds? This is a common dilemma for planners and land use practitioners everywhere. Despite the best-laid plans, new practices or technology can disrupt the entire process. The sharing economy—with the advent of Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, and others—has already made an impact on transportation and housing. Cities are exploring how to become smarter through the use of responsive infrastructure, but question how to integrate this model into the existing city-scape. And with fleets of driverless cars on the horizon, what will this mean for our mobility networks and parking structures?

Disruptive influences impact more than just cities. Landscape managers can now track livestock and grazing, map remote areas, and monitor plant and animal species using drones and GIS mapping. The rise of e-commerce is disrupting both big-box stores and Main Street shops. What additional impacts will drone delivery have on brick-and-mortar retail? And how can rural communities improve their communication and data networks so their residents can also benefit from the smart economy?

In addition to all the change being brought about by technology and innovation, communities also have to contend with the disruptions brought on by natural processes. How do communities embed resilience and adaptation in their long-range planning to address potential impacts caused by climate change, for example, including prolonged droughts, heat waves, and extreme weather events? What adaptive strategies can cities employ to protect public health and safety in the face of extreme weather? How do rural communities manage the risk of wildfire at the wildland-urban interface?

In a world full of disruptions, how do we build infrastructure and craft policies that not only meet our present-day needs, but also have the flexibility to adapt to future scenarios? These questions will help frame our discussions at the 2018 Western Places/Western Spaces conference.
About the Western Places/Western Spaces Conference

The Rocky Mountain West is characterized as much by its vibrant and diverse communities as by its sweeping plains and rugged mountains. The Western Places/Western Spaces conference explores the growth and development issues facing communities—from large cities to small towns—as well as concerns about managing and preserving our natural heritage.

RMLUI’s annual conference is the place for land use and development professionals in the West to share knowledge and network. With 500 attendees annually, this event helps define and influence the West’s land use and development future.

The conference attracts people from across the country, but most attendees are from the Rocky Mountain West (Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Idaho, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming). Attendees represent national, state and local government agencies, private planning and law firms, development companies, academic institutions and non-profit organizations.

The conference takes place on a Thursday and Friday, and typically includes about 30–35 sessions. Each session is 90 minutes, and runs concurrently with four to six other sessions in the same time block. Plenary events are an hour in length and are held during the lunch hour. Off-site tours are scheduled for afternoons and run for three and a half hours (including transportation to and from the site). We also offer an optional day-long workshop that provides an in-depth look at a specific land use topic on the Wednesday prior to the start of the regular conference activities.

New for 2018

Starting in 2018, RMLUI is extending an opportunity for individuals to submit their names as a subject matter expert.

This is a good option for those who may not be able to develop a full panel but could lend their expertise to a panel.

Once sessions are finalized, RMLUI will work with session organizers to add selected speakers to round out panels.

How to Apply:

Go to the RFP online form and select the “Speaker” option on the first page. Fill out the requested information: name, title, organization, short bio, and a list of topics you could address.

If you have any questions, please contact RMLUI at rmlui@law.du.edu.
Submitting Your Proposal

Be prepared with the following information: session title, description, outline, learning objectives, and speaker information. You should also be prepared to describe how your session supports the conference theme and highlighted topics (see page XX), as well as how you will engage with participants during your session.

The title and description of your session will be used not only in evaluating your proposal, but also for marketing materials if your session is accepted. Titles should catch the reader’s attention, and the description should provide enough information for an audience to know what the session will cover. For examples, please refer to programs from past conferences on our website.

The session outline provides the Selection Committee with a more in-depth look at how your session will be structured, the topics you plan to address, and the issues that each speaker will cover.

Learning objectives describe what lessons participants will take away from the sessions. These are used in obtaining continuing education credits for the conference, but also are used in evaluation criteria.

Speakers should be able to demonstrate content expertise in the topic, as well as be engaging to the audience. We are looking for well-rounded panels that present a variety of perspectives, represent different geographic, ethnic, and gender diversity. Speakers should be able to discuss how tools and methodologies can be transferred to other cities and towns.

It is our experience that panel-style presentations work best when limited to no more than three speakers. Please note that RMLUI is not able to provide travel assistance for speakers.

Please adhere to the following guidelines when preparing your proposal:
- Proposals are due by Friday, August 25, 2017.
- Please review the Western Places/Western Spaces conference theme and the highlighted topics above to make sure your session is a good fit for the conference.
- Comply with word limitations (text will be cut off longer entries).
- Limit panel style sessions to one moderator and three speakers.
- Please provide all of the information requested. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

Selection Criteria

RMLUI seeks to provide a broad selection of offerings focused on the conference theme, highlighting innovative developments, and covering the topics listed in the Themed Tracks section.

Panelists should represent geographic diversity as well as different viewpoints. We strongly encourage sessions that provide the perspective of small towns and mid-size cities.

We are also interested in sessions that utilize formats other than the traditional panel style, such as debates and round tables, and those that encourage audience participation.

RMLUI provides continuing education for legal, planning, and real estate professionals, and encourage session organizers to emphasize this content in their proposals.

Sessions should strive to:
- Provide useful and practical knowledge participants can use in their own work.
- Address current issues trending in the land use and development communities.
- Present innovative tools and case studies of current projects.
- Offer diverse perspectives with speakers from across the region with different perspectives and backgrounds.
- Engage the audience in a meaningful way.
Disruption, Innovation, and Progress: In keeping with the theme of the conference, what are the disruptive technologies and innovative processes that are changing the way we live? We hear “smart city” and “smart car” all the time, but do we really understand what that means? What kind of technology, digital infrastructure, and data will transform our communities? What are the land use impacts of these technologies?

Finance and Taxation: Public-private partnerships, special districts, and other tools have changed how we finance infrastructure and development. How have they stood the test of time? How can communities make better use of new tools like impact investing and social impact bonds? With disruption in the retail sector, is it time to reconsider our reliance on sales tax and take another look at land valuation, regional tax base sharing, or other means of financing government functions?

Housing: Despite an increase in home building, many communities still struggle to provide enough affordable housing to meet the needs of their residents. How are communities responding to this challenge? Are ADUs, tiny homes, and manufactured housing acceptable solutions? How do short-term rentals like Airbnb fit into this equation? And how are communities addressing the homeless populations?

Land Conservation: From large landscape conservation to urban pocket parks, Westerners value open space. But ownership and management of public spaces continues to be debated—should federal agencies or states have control of public lands, and who should have the final say in what lands are protected? As cities grow, how do we protect and add to urban green spaces to create places people want to live?

Legal Developments: What are the most important legal developments impacting land use and real estate development this year? Which legislative efforts will allow for, or stifle, innovation? Which judicial decisions will have the most disruptive ripple effects—or not?

Mobility and Transportation: With driverless, autonomous cars just over the horizon, car sharing services like Lyft and Uber continuing to grow, and bike sharing on the rise, what are the implications for driving and parking infrastructure? What is the future for mass transit? What mobility infrastructure do we need, and how do we plan now for the multi-modal needs of the future?

Natural Resources: Energy, water, and wildlife are inextricably linked to the management of our Western public lands and to federal policy. How do changes at the federal level affect land use at the local level? As the world transitions away from fossil fuels, how should Western communities respond and what will it mean for new infrastructure? As water becomes an increasingly scarce resource due to drought and growing populations, what can local communities do to protect and manage this essential asset to meet the unknown challenges of the future? As climate change threatens biodiversity in West, how do we manage public lands and critical habitat to preserve our Western heritage? What is the future of the Endangered Species Act and how are changes in land management impacting the West?

Resilience and Adaptation: Natural disasters, including landslides, floods and fires, are forecast to become more frequent and less predictable due to climate change. How can we build communities that are resilient and adaptive, capable of bouncing back from the ultimate disruption?

Retail: Retail has shifted from mom-and-pop shops to big box stores to e-commerce. As e-commerce continues to grow, what do we do with all the empty big box stores? Are large distribution centers the next phase? What does e-commerce mean for rural communities—is it an opportunity or an additional burden?

Other Hot Topics: What topics have we missed? What new disruptive technologies are around the corner that will affect land use? How is social media changing the way we plan and build our communities? Suggest something to be included in the Hot Topics track.
Sponsorship & Promotional Opportunities

Our conference is not possible without the generous support of our sponsors. These financial contributions help fund our programs and conference activities, including top-notch keynote speakers, plenary lunch events, and tours. Conference sponsorship provides visibility and underscores your company’s commitment to sustainable communities and informed and ethical land use and development practices.

Equally important are our Aspen sponsors, who provide in-kind marketing and promotional support.

For more information, please see the Sponsor page on our website or contact Susan Daggett.

Next Steps

All applications must be submitted online. However, we encourage you to create your proposal in Word and then copy and paste into the online form. You can download a sample form here.

The Selection Committee will review all complete proposals and make a final decision on which to include. RMLUI reserves the right to make changes to sessions, including adding speakers or combining sessions with similar content.

Important Dates:
- August 25, 2017: proposals due
- September 29, 2017: applicants will be informed of the status of their proposals
- November 3, 2017: selected sessions must be finalized (title, description, speakers)
- March 8 & 9, 2018: RMLUI’s Annual Land Use Conference

Questions?

Submissions and Logistics
Lisa Loranger
Program Coordinator
lloranger@law.du.edu
303-871-6319

Program and Sponsorships
Susan Daggett
Executive Director
sdaggett@law.du.edu
303-871-6319