

Michael Zehner, AICP, CFM
Director of Planning & Community Development
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Michael Zehner, AICP, CFM, ENV-SP, is Director of Planning and Community Development with the Berkley Group, where he leads planning, zoning, community development, and development review services for local governments. He has more than two decades of public- and private-sector planning experience, including service in municipal planning and development leadership positions in Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, and North Carolina.

Michael's work spans comprehensive and small area planning, land use policy, zoning and ordinance development, development review and permitting, community engagement, resilience and hazard mitigation, and organizational and process improvement. Throughout his career, he has worked with communities to address complex planning and development issues and to translate policy goals into practical regulations, procedures, and implementation strategies.

He has particular experience with complex and emerging land uses, including utility-scale renewable energy facilities, battery energy storage systems, data centers, and other infrastructure-intensive development. His work has included developing comprehensive plan policies and regulatory frameworks, drafting zoning standards and ordinances, evaluating development applications, advising local governments on siting and compatibility considerations, and helping communities address the relationship between land use, infrastructure, environmental resources, economic development, and public concerns. This work often involves issues where rapidly changing technologies and development trends challenge existing policies and regulatory approaches.

Drawing on his experience as both a local government practitioner and consultant, Michael brings an understanding of not only how planning and zoning policies are developed, but how they must function in practice. His approach emphasizes clear and administrable regulations, effective development review processes, informed decision-making, meaningful community engagement, and alignment between long-range planning objectives and day-to-day implementation.

Michael holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Virginia Tech. He has been active in the American Planning Association in both North Carolina and Massachusetts, including leadership roles and service with APA Massachusetts' Executive Committee and APA North Carolina's Legislative Committee. He currently serves as a member of the Town of Southern Shores (NC) Planning Board.