



From SoHo to Yolo: ArtPlace America Grants Encourage Placemaking

BY JOSH STEPHENS

FORGET ABOUT SETBACKS, traffic counts, and environmental impact reports. A new nationwide initiative suggests that planners and community development officials should be focusing as much on canvases, scripts, and jam sessions – especially if those planners are in California.

Last month, 11 national foundations plus the National Endowment for the Arts announced the founding of ArtPlace America, a nationwide initiative to drive revitalization in cities and towns with a new investment model that puts the arts at the center of economic development. The launch of Artplace, based in Chicago, coincided with the awarding of \$11.5 million in grants to community-oriented arts organizations nationwide.

Of the 34 grants, eight of them went to organizations in California; no other state received more than three. These ranged from a project in San Francisco – not a surprise – to an “Art and Ag” project in Yolo County. They reinforce the widely held belief that in a down economy, the arts –

and the foundations that support them – can play a critical role in stimulating urban revitalization.

The aim of the grants is not only to support individual organizations but also to promote economic development and even revitalization of the respective urban fabrics where the organizations are located. Artplace operates on the principal that the arts, though they often lack the monumental physical presence of factories and office buildings, can contribute just as much to a local economy as can conventional businesses and housing programs.

“We are acting very deliberately to affect place and we believe vibrancy is the best proxy for quality of place, and quality of place is of course essential to attracting and retaining talent,” said Carol Coletta, executive director of ArtPlace. “And attracting and retaining talent is essential to

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Can a ‘Green’ Container Yard Clean Up the Dirty Air of L.A.’s Ports?

BNSF Railway hopes an innovative development will reduce pollution at nation’s busiest port

BY MORRIS NEWMAN

THE WORDS “GREEN” and “cargo containers” hardly seem to belong in the same sentence. Shipping is a dirty business. Particulate matter and greenhouse gases have long blackened the lungs of people who live near the ports, giving the area the lowest air quality rating in the region. One source of foul air is the port equipment, including the diesel-burning cranes and tow-trucks that move containers from ships to trucks.

Similarly harmful is the fleet of fume-vomiting trucks that haul containers from the ports to intermodal

yards near downtown Los Angeles and other places further inland, where the containers are loaded onto rail cars to destined for points east. These trucks make an average of 6,000 trips daily to and from the ports (including multiple trips by individual vehicles.) Many of these trucks are more than 20 years old, and engines tend to emit increasingly more with age.

You can understand my initial incredulity, then, with the claim that the proposed \$500 million Southern California International Gateway would be “the greenest

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COMPILED BY LAUREN DEITZ

IN AN ANNOUNCEMENT welcomed by fishing groups, environmentalists, and some farmers, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has lent his support to a plan to remove dams along the Klamath River. According to federal analysis, the dam removal process will cost \$160 million less than originally thought and will create nearly 4,600 jobs over 15 years. The analysis, released in September, also suggested that dam removal would boost agriculture, improve the condition of the river, and help commercial fishermen and Indian tribes by easing the path upstream for fish, such as steelhead and salmon. Two Siskiyou County supervisors, Michael Kobseff and Jim Cook, have vowed to vote against dam removal, and are skeptical of the claims for agricultural and economic benefit. They have raised concerns about the impact removing the dams will have on irrigation, the hydroelectric power that will be lost with the removal of the dams, the loss of dam worker jobs, and an anticipated decrease in property value of homes near reservoirs.

THE CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, the Friends of Riverside's Hills, the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society and the San Geronio chapter of the Sierra Club have agreed to a settlement with developer WR Holdings over a lawsuit pertaining to the development of a business park north of Alessandro Boulevard. The environmental groups were arguing that the plan for the park overlapped with protected habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat, an endangered species. As per the agreement, the developer will donate 42 acres to the City of Riverside for the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Area, which is alongside the business park to-be. Additionally, the business park must be at least 15 percent powered by solar, and the buildings themselves must be designed and built to be eco-friendly and energy-efficient. Vehicles that emit less pollution must also be used during construction, according to the settlement.

JMA VENTURES recently paid \$70 million to buy the Great America amusement park from Cedar Fair Entertainment. The amusement park is next to a piece of property that is often discussed in relation to a new stadium for the San Francisco 49ers, and this sale could move that project from hypothesis to reality. Cedar Fair had opposed the stadium, and had even

NOV. 8 BALLOT MEASURES

IN THIS OFF-YEAR ELECTION, there are few land use measures on Nov. 8 ballots statewide. The City of Vernon's measures regarding term limits and other reforms represents a resurrection of sorts in the wake of the highly publicized efforts to disincorporate it.

SAN MATEO MEASURE G: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Measure G would amend the City of San Mateo's general plan to allow the city to impose housing impact fees and a fee refund incentive program to compel developers to provide below-market-rate units in rental properties. The measure is in response to *Palmer v. City of Los Angeles*, which invalidated certain approaches to inclusionary zoning.

VERNON MEASURE A: TERM LIMITS

In response to the firestorm of criticism – and an attempted forced disincorporation – the industrial City of Vernon in Los Angeles County is pursuing reform measures now that it has a new lease on life. This measure would limit council members to two five-year terms, with a lifetime ban thereafter. Critics contend that city council members have ruled over the city for decades and treated it like their own fiefdom in the absence of term limits or a functioning municipal democracy. Vernon has fewer than 200 residents. The Vernon city ballot also includes measures regarding city administration, at-will employment, and prevailing wages.

PITTSBURG MEASURE I: URBAN LIMIT LINE

Sponsored by developer West Coast Homebuilders, Measure I would amend Pittsburg's general plan and expand its urban limit line to accommodate a 193-acre development averaging three dwelling units per acre. The measure would pre-zone the land for a combination of single-family residential, high-density residential and light industrial uses. ■

filed a lawsuit against the developer's plan to build it atop a city-owned parking lot currently used by the park. JMA Ventures supports the stadium plans and has pledged to not only drop the lawsuit but to work with the 49ers to develop a "family entertainment destination," combining the draw of an amusement park and a football stadium. The deal between JMA and the team has yet to be approved by the Santa Clara City Council, and has elicited some criticism from those concerned about parking, traffic, and a \$1 billion price tag.

THE GOLETA CITY COUNCIL has blocked development plans for Bishop Ranch after receiving hundreds of comments about developer Michael Keston's plans to build a combination of a community commercial

center, community amenities, and residential units – including workforce and affordable housing – on the property. The 240-acre area is currently zoned for agricultural use, and the City Council has refused to amend the Goleta General Plan to allow residential and commercial in Bishop Ranch. Keston argued that Bishop Ranch cannot sustain farming, as evidenced by a study stating that only 25 acres of the property could be properly irrigated with Bishop Ranch's water rights, and that his development would bring in millions of dollars. Despite the lure of economic benefits, Goleta City Council unanimously voted against amending the city's General Plan, saying that rezoning the land would push forward a project that many local communities members were uneasy about.

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY has taken steps in staying ahead of the state of California as it prepares to adapt to climate change. The county is looking to develop and enact a Climate Action Strategy in order to reach the state's lowered greenhouse gas emission goals in the next 40 years. By 2020, California hopes to curb emissions to the level they were in 1990, and by 2050, the state wants emissions to be 80 percent of the 1990 levels. Though there is no statewide mandate for county and local governments to assume this responsibility, the state government has encouraged it. The County of Santa Barbara is now in its second climate action strategy phase, having completed a 335-page study with guidelines on how to attain the statewide goals. The second phase will use hard data to set specific emission reduction goals and develop an implementation plan. Two North County supervisors voted against pursuing the second phase of the Climate Action Strategy, citing cost as a major concern.

TWELVE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Federation of Fly Fishers and Defenders of Wildlife, have filed a complaint against the cutting of a Fish and Game program that provided oversight to the logging industry in California. Just before he left office, Governor Schwarzenegger cut the budget of the Department of Fish and Game by \$1.5 million, effectively defunding a program intended to examine the effects of logging on wildlife. The groups claim that this cut violates laws required to protect habitat and wildlife. The state must respond to the complaint within 30 days, and the Natural Resources Agency has stated that, with upcoming appointments to the Board of Forestry by Governor Brown, the logging industry may soon be under more intense scrutiny.

LAST YEAR, the Santa Ynez tribe of Chumash Indians purchased a 1,400-acre parcel of land, known as Camp 4, and now would like to annex the property so as to expand their reservation for housing. The local

community in Solvang, a Santa Ynez Valley town, is resisting the expansion. The tribe currently owns and operates the Chumash Casino, the largest employer in the valley and a way for the tribe to raise funds for college, medical expenses, and philanthropy, but Solvang citizens are concerned that the lack of restrictions on tribal lands could lead to the construction of another casino or resort. Chumash leaders say that federal law makes it difficult to build a casino on reservation land purchased after 1988, as this was, and that the Chumash would like to use the land to build houses for its 140 tribe members.

A BILL THAT WOULD ALLOW state auditors to look into fraud, abuse, and wasteful spending by cities, counties, and special districts is on Governor Brown's desk—and some would like those powers expanded even further. Some cities and local water retailers would like to see this legislation used to examine the management of water districts, such as the Central Basin Water District in Los Angeles County. Central Basin provides water for 24 cities within a 227-square-mile area. Users of Central Basin point to exponential rate hikes, questionable projects, a new and expensive public relations consultant, and flagrant extravagance by board members to prove the possibility of disordered priorities, at the least, and wasteful spending or fraud at the most. Currently, the practice of state auditors is to scrutinize the management and budgets of state departments.

JUST THREE MONTHS from the completion of the environmental impact report, renowned Los Angeles philanthropist Eli Broad has signed a letter to Metro asking to rework the "regional connector" for Downtown Los Angeles. The connector, as currently proposed, would add three stations in Downtown. The Community Connector Coalition, the group who wrote the letter, suggests alternative stops along different streets, citing cost-saving measures — the connector is set to cost \$1.44 million — and better

public access than Metro's present plan. Meanwhile, the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority received the final Court ruling on one of several petitions filed by an unwilling seller of land within the future maintenance and operations facility site for the Pasadena to Azusa extension of the Gold Line Foothill Extension project. The ruling released today denies the petitioner's request that the court invalidate the Construction Authority's certification of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the project. In general, the basis for the lawsuit was the following: the SEIR covered only a piece of the overall project from Pasadena to Montclair and, therefore, did not evaluate the full impact, mitigation or alternatives necessary; the range of alternatives was insufficient; the Final SEIR did not adequately respond to the comments submitted to the Draft SEIR by the petitioner; and the Monrovia site was the predetermined choice for the maintenance facility before the environmental process was complete.

MINING COMPANIES have claimed 285 sites just outside of Yosemite National Park in recent years, and environmental groups are less than pleased. In order to separate ore from rock, miners must apply cyanide and other toxic chemicals, which environmentalists are afraid will affect the Tuolumne River and the plants and animals in surrounding areas. All 285 claims that have popped up in the past five years are within 10 miles of the park. Since the Department of the Interior banning mining for a million acres around the Grand Canyon in June, preservationists hope that a comparable moratorium or ban will be imposed surrounding Yosemite. There are 32 known illegal gold mining operations in California, according to the Office of Mine Reclamation, but the state cannot interfere unless a mine disrupts more than one acre of land or takes away more than 1,000 cubic yards of material.

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THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL has approved an agreement with developers to build a new sports arena in downtown Sacramento, and has permitted the hiring of consultants to help with the project. Though the \$555,000 price tag – including \$375,000 from Sacramento’s general fund – gave the council some pause, ultimately the spending plan was approved 7-2, with the belief that the investment will bring in far more capital in the future. Several contracts were built into the cost, such as \$125,000 for Barrett Sports Group and \$180,000 for parking experts. City officials have been attempting to negotiate with Anschutz Entertainment Group to help finance the arena upfront. The council-approved agreement will last until March 1 of next year, by which point the city must have a plan for the arena or the Kings might leave Sacramento.

LAKE TAHOE, one of California’s most famous and treasured vacation destinations, is at the center of a controversial plan to pick up and move half of a beloved golf course. The Upper Truckee River, which flows directly into South Lake Tahoe and is the lake’s biggest source of water, first runs through the 18-hole Lake Tahoe Golf Course, located in Lake Valley State Recreation Area. As it happens, the Upper Truckee River is also one of Lake Tahoe’s single biggest sources of sediment and erosion, most of which comes from the golf course. In hopes of reducing erosion and restoring river clarity, the state’s Department of Parks and Recreation has proposed moving half the golf course into Washoe Meadows State Park. This proposal has invited criticism from residents and golfers alike, though for distinctly different reasons. Residents near Washoe Meadows, who currently live near land that is essentially untouched, do not want to disturb the natural ecosystem. Golfers, on the other hand, are concerned about rising fees and changing the course itself. They argue that the economic benefits of the course outweigh the natural downsides, and if the course is moved, the economy will suffer.

THE CITY OF OAKLAND has announced a pilot program for “parklets,” small public spaces in areas currently reserved for street parking. Parklets – currently allowed by San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, and several other cities – are no more than six feet in width and typically are about the length of two parking spots. The city issued a set of guidelines and encouraged anyone who wanted to build a parklet to apply by October 24. The pilot program will test out eight parklets from the general application process, which will be announced November 4 and open to public comment until January. Permits will be issued in January to candidates who carry insurance, agree to maintain the area, pay fees of over \$1,200, and can show support from the community for the parklet.

THE U.S. NAVY has agreed to give Alameda Point, a former Naval Air Station, to the city of Alameda for free. The two parties have argued about the price of the transfer for 14 years. Only three years ago, the Navy asked for \$108 million for the 918-acre parcel of land. With the economic downturn and recession, the Navy no longer found the land value so concrete, and when Alameda began to shift away from residential to industrial and commercial development, the Navy determined creating jobs in the area was more beneficial to all involved. The city plans to develop the land in small bits over time, following market conditions. The Navy might not be as generous as it appears, however; if the city decides to build residential units on the property, only 2,011 units are free – it must pay the Navy \$50,000 for each unit built past that figure.

WORK CREWS HAVE BEGUN a \$1 million project to restore Santa Cruz Island’s coastal wetland. The scope of the 60-acre project includes removing 1,800 nonnative eucalyptus trees, reshaping the mouth of the island’s most prominent stream, and trucking gravel and dirt out of Prisoner’s Harbor in order to restore the landscape to what it was pre-farming. The

aim of the project is to reverse the harmful aspects of ranching and farming, allowing the ecosystem to repair itself. Beginning about 150 years ago, Prisoner’s Harbor was used for sheep and cattle ranching and wine production, and became the island’s main port in the 19th century. These activities degraded the land and impaired habitat of animals specific to the Channel Islands, such as the island fox and the island scrub jay. Wetlands restoration is viewed by officials as one of the most effective means for the survival of these species.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY and Administrative Review Committee of the California Assembly is looking into the justifications for state subsidies given to the logging industry. According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the state government pays out \$18.8 million each year to regulate logging on privately owned land, for varied costs such as area inspection to erosion protection. The logging industry pays back about \$550,000 for permit fees, which balances out to a state subsidy of around \$18 million per year. In other regulated industries, California earns back regulatory costs through fees paid by the industry – but logging has avoided this, even though it impacts public resources. Owners of California’s private forestland, which takes up 8.7 million acres, say the subsidy is justified because the industry provides public benefits such as wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, cleaner air, and 22,000 jobs. Loggers also argue that the industry has had a 50 percent drop-off in the last decade, and the state costs should be lowered. ■

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legal digest

Agency May Shield Cultural Resources in EIR

Court rules to protect Native American archeological site

BY WILLIAM W. ABBOTT

AS THE STATE'S public disclosure statute, CEQA directs lead agencies to disclose the likely impacts associated with agency approval of projects. And while legal caution dictates that more disclosure is preferable to less disclosure, lead agencies have to recognize that there are two notable exceptions to this practice: information relating to cultural resources, as outlined in Government Code section 6254, CEQA Guidelines section 15120(d), and trade secrets, per CEQA Guidelines section 15120(d). A recent decision in *Valley Foundation v. City of Rocklin*, in which the integrity of Native American cultural resources hung in the balance, explores how a lead agency can navigate the conflicting requirements of disclosure and confidentiality.

The facts involve Clover Valley, a small rural valley located in Rocklin, part of the great Sacramento urban area. A developer prepared an environmental impact report for purposes of annexation and an updated land plan for an area originally zoned for 974 homes. This EIR was certified in 1997. In early 1998, the developer and city entered into a development agreement, under which the developer made a substantial contribution to the city for a public recreation facility. Starting in 2000, the developer submitted a large lot map, and the city processed another EIR, tiered to the original annexation EIR. The DEIR was released in 2002, and through subsequent reviews, the project was reduced from 933 to 558 lots. Following certification of the later tiered EIR, the city approved the downsized project in 2007.

Community opponents of the project then filed suit, challenging the sufficiency of the EIR. The trial court ruled for the city and developer.

On appeal, the appellate court first addressed the contradictory aspects of the CEQA full disclosure requirement with the obligation to protect the integrity of cultural resources by not disclosing specific information. In *Valley Foundation*, the resources in question were Na-

The city did not want to reveal the exact location of artifacts and archeological sites for fear of would-be looters.

tive American archeological sites and artifacts. The city did not want to reveal their exact location for fear that would-be looters could seize upon the information. Claimants, however, argued that this lack of disclosure was a violation of CEQA.

As a result of a decision made in 2002 by the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), a section 106 consultation was undertaken. That consultation resulted in the development of a historic properties management plan.

The management plan was kept as a confidential document by the Corps and SHPO. Generalized information regarding cultural resources was included in the EIR, and the appellate court ruled that the lead agency had provided the right level of accommodation of disclosure and confidentiality. On a related topic, the appellate court also ruled that the information added to the FEIR by the city regarding certain cultural resources did not trigger recirculation. Turning to growth-inducing

impacts, the appellate court upheld the city's discussion of the growth-inducing impacts of a sewer line extension, whereby the EIR documented that the line would provide service to additional homes, but that those future homes were already analyzed in the Rocklin general plan and related EIR, and would not constitute unplanned growth.

In upholding the adequacy of the EIR, the appellate court addressed a number of other common claims. Facing a claim that the construction of a road in a potentially sensitive area was inconsistent with a specific general plan requirement, the appellate court followed the more flexible rule in general plan interpretation articulated in *Sequoyah Hills Homeowners Association v. City of Oakland* (1993) 23 Cal.App.4th 704.

With respect to a challenge to the infeasibility of mitigation for address scenic impacts, the court found the evidence in the record regarding conflict with rights granted under the previously approved development agreement and potential secondary impacts to other resources to be sufficient to uphold the city's conclusions. Finally, the court upheld the city's reliance on a commitment letter issued by the Placer County Water Agency as sufficient, even though the actual future delivery of water was subject to later regulatory steps and hurdles, all of which was reflected in the EIR. ■

William W. Abbott is a partner in the firm of Abbott & Kindermann, LLP, of Sacramento.

► **The Case:**
Valley Foundation v. City of Rocklin (2011)
197 Cal.App. 4th 200. C061808

The Attorneys:
Kenyon Yeates, Charity Kenyon, Bill Yeates, and Christina Morkner Brown for Plaintiffs and Appellants Clover Valley Foundation and Sierra Club

Russell A. Hildebrand; Jarvis, Fay, Doporto & Gibson and Rick W. Jarvis for Real Parties in Interest and Respondents

Fifth Time's a Charm for Warehouse Development

Court absolves Sonoma Co. developer from preparing EIR after fifth negative declaration

BY WILLIAM W. ABBOTT

HOW MANY mitigated negative declarations are required for a lead agency to avoid preparing an EIR? In Sonoma County the answer is five. While the portion of *Schenck v. County of Sonoma* devoted to the “fair argument” analysis remains unpublished, the court’s published ruling that certain procedural errors are not prejudicial is helpful, as well as the appellate court’s affirmation that the trial court can fashion a tailored remedy to cure a CEQA error and is not compelled to set aside the approval.

The basic facts are not unusual. In processing a negative declaration as the CEQA document for a 116,000-square-foot warehouse and beverage distribution center, the county and developer labored through four additional mitigated negative declarations before the Board of Supervisors ultimately accepted the negative declaration and approved the project. In the ensuing litigation, the trial court concluded that the county, as lead agency, failed to send a required notice to the Bay Area AQMD (BAAQMD), but otherwise upheld the substantive analysis contained in the negative declaration. The trial court fashioned a remedy specific to the one notice error it determined to

be prejudicial. The county complied with the court’s directive, documented to the court that it had fulfilled the court’s order, and final judgment was entered.

Schenck, the project’s opponent, appealed.

The appellate court addressed three principle issues. First, the court concluded that notice to BAAQMD of the intent to approve the negative declaration was mandatory, and that the county had not complied with the notice requirements for the revised negative declaration. However, the appellate court, unlike the trial court, concluded that the error was not prejudicial. The lead agency had provided a notice of the application to BAAQMD, and had used the district’s standards and mitigation requirements in the negative declaration. That, coupled with substantial notice to the public, led the appellate court conclude that the error was not prejudicial.

The appellate court next addressed the trial court’s surgical fashioning of a remedy which left the approval in place, while directing the lead agency to provide notice to BAAQMD and take appropriate action. The appellants argued that the trial court was obligated to set aside the approval. Not so, according to the appellate court. Citing Public Resources Code section 21168.9 the appellate court held that this code section grants trial courts discretion in fashioning an appropriate remedy.

The appellants then argued that the lead

agency erred by failing to give Caltrans and the Regional Water Board notice of the hearing on the project (Guidelines Section 15072). The appellate court again disagreed, concluding that the notice provided to the State Clearinghouse and the other notices meant that the county “substantially complied” with the required notice steps. Given that the public and the county had received the agency comments based upon the fourth negative declaration, the failure to give notice in conjunction with the fifth negative declaration was not prejudicial.

The remainder of the decision, which deals with the fair argument test, remains unpublished by order of the appellate court. ■

William W. Abbott is a partner in the firm of Abbott & Kindermann, LLP, of Sacramento.

► The Case:

Schenck v. County of Sonoma (August 26, 2011, SCV-244017) A129646. Cal.App.4th, Filed August 26, 2011.

The Attorneys:

Bruce D. Goldstein, County Counsel, Sue A. Gallagher, Deputy County Counsel, For Defendant and Respondent County of Sonoma.

Clement, Fitzpatrick & Kenworthy, Clayton E. Clement, Esq., Anthony Cohen, Esq., For Real Parties in Interest and Respondents Liquid Investments, Inc., and Mesa Beverage Co., Inc.

»»» Grants Seek to Promote ‘Creative Economy’

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economic success in places.”

According to research by Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, planning professor at the University of Southern California, and others, artists are not mere gentrifiers, spiffing up a neighborhood and kicking out longtime residents only to commute to work elsewhere. Rather, they keep their activities local and create economic multipliers in relatively small radii, especially when artists’ residences, studios, galleries, and watering holes arise next door to each other. This pattern, according to Currid-Halkett, dates back at least to the revitalization of New York’s SoHo in the 1970s.

“The arts have been thought of as icing on

the cake,” said Currid-Halkett. “But if you look at the cases of some of the most successful neighborhoods in the world, there’s a real presence of the arts and cultural industries.”

Among the eight grant recipients in California, some have direct connections to the built environment, whereas others are more ephemeral (see sidebar on page 7). The preponderance of grants in California suggests that the state’s creative economy – at least that which does not involve the mass-market entertainment industry – is getting its due.

“I think California’s reputation has not been as big as the actual art that exists here,” said Currid-Halkett. “Los Angeles and San Francis-

co have huge concentrations of artists doing incredibly interesting work and I don’t think it has the global reputation it ought to... Hopefully, for California’s sake, the grants will have the spillover effect of actually creating the California art brand that it should have had years ago.”

ArtPlace officials hope that these projects will catalyze local development in a way that traditional local government programs could not.

“If you think about the trajectory of community development, in the beginning, it was thought of as investments in housing,” said Co-

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>>> California Gets Lion's Share of ArtPlace Grants

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letta. “Over time, it became clear that that’s not enough. We need to have more complete communities.”

The grants, though small in the scheme of the California economy, come at an opportune moment in light of the state’s budget crisis and especially the woes of its redevelopment agencies.

“It could help our redevelopment problems,” said Currid-Halkett. “If there’s one thing that artists tend to do historically, it is act as change agents in neighborhoods. They seem to set off a series of other kinds of activities, whether it’s galleries, coffee shops, or restaurants, and those draw other residents.”

Crucially, the arts generally require physical places, including neighborhoods where artists interact and buildings where they produce and display their work. That is a crucial distinction from those types of commerce that can take place online or that can be outsourced.

“Everybody’s on Facebook and cell phones and everybody feels massively connected through the Internet, and yet the arts still continue to be one of the places where we connect,” said Dani Thomas, executive director of grant recipient YoloArts. “And then you keep the money local.”

Representatives of the Berkeley Repertory Theater say that this process has already occurred in downtown Berkeley and that the ArtPlace grant may enable it to happen again in west Berkeley. The theater is establishing its Ground Floor incubator on Harrison street in a forlorn industrial district. The company expects to attract as many as 50 visiting dramatists, in addition to dozens of staff that will occupy offices there.

“It’s an opportunity to do a new neighborhood (what was done) in downtown Berkeley,” said Meghan Pressman, managing director of the Berkeley Repertory Theater. “Harrison Street is definitely a neighborhood in need of revitalization. We’re hoping to turn it into an incubator home that attracts new businesses.”

But, the ArtPlace philosophy does not apply only to urban areas. One of its grants is helping to fund the Arts & Ag Project of YoloArts, which serves largely rural Yolo County. The project is intended to bring “artists out from their studios and farmers off of their farms,” said Thomas. It is also promoting the display of art in unconventional places, such as gallery spaces in corner drug stores. The idea, says Thomas, is to demonstrate that art does not need to be the sole provenance of cosmopolitan elites.

ARTPLACE'S EIGHT GRANT RECIPIENTS IN CALIFORNIA INCLUDE:

BAY AREA (14 Counties): The Creative Work Fund provides grants and other means of support so that artists can collaborate with community-based nonprofits. <http://www.creativeworkfund.org>

BERKELEY: Berkeley Repertory Theater Ground Floor. Ground Floor is an innovating incubator for new dramatic works. It is being established on a campus in an industrial area of west Berkeley. <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/about/groundfloor.asp>

LOS ANGELES: The Watts House Project enlists artists, designers, and architects to work on a range of community revitalization projects and programs around the Watts Towers. <http://wattshouseproject.org>

LOS ANGELES: Good Magazine Ideas for Cities describes itself as a “continuing brainstorm” on the future of cities, in collaboration with CEOs for Cities. <http://www.good.is/series/ideas-for-cities>

SAN FRANCISCO: Intersection for the Arts’ “M5” initiative is a partnership with developer Forest City to redevelop four downtown acres that include the old San Francisco Chronicle building, empty parking lots and vacant warehouses into space for film and digital-media businesses, artists’ workshops, social-entrepreneur offices and cultural events.

SAN JOSE: 1st ACT Silicon Valley is a network of business, civic and arts leaders working to foster cultural engagement and help create an authentic sense of place and cultural identity for Silicon Valley. <http://www.1stact.org>

SAN JOSE: Zero1 commissions local artists to create works that explore the relationship between culture and technology. <http://zero1.org>

YOLO COUNTY: YoloArts Arts & Ag Project cultivates a dialogue between artists, farmers, and the community to raise awareness of the importance of preserving working landscapes, to promote sustainable agriculture and visual arts in Yolo County. <http://www.yoloarts.org>

“We’re not Carmel, so we don’t have a gallery every other building,” said Thomas. “It’s opened up the opportunity to start working with general businesses.”

The fact that Yolo County is not Carmel – and that Watts isn’t SoHo – is central to the mission of ArtPlace’s grants. Coletta said that ArtPlace is deliberately giving grants to organizations that it believes can be catalytic in communities. But it is not choosing communities prima facie, either because they have thriving arts scenes or because they might seem like fertile ground.

“We believe that investments in artists and arts organizations who have a passion for this work and for their community are the ones where we want to make investments,” said Coletta.

“That is,” said Currid-Halkett, “a sound strategy.”

“I don’t think with the arts it’s, ‘if you build it they will come.’ I think it’s ‘build around what’s already there,’” said Currid-Halkett.

Building, however, may be only half the battle. The other part lies in the permission to build environments that complement the work that arts organizations are attempting to do.

Currid-Halkett noted that the typical arts neighborhood includes large spaces, live-work spaces, and often requires inexpensive real estate that fits artists’ budgets. In the past, zoning and other regulations have all but forbidden such neighborhoods in cities nationwide. Halkett said that planners deserve credit for letting artists colonize SoHo.

“There was this choice to root them out and what they actually did was rezone for the artists to live and work there,” said Currid-Halkett. “That is an absolute planners decision.”

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



>>> ArtPlace: Planners Can Foster Creative Places

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Many ArtPlace grant recipients are hoping for similar cooperation from the public sector in their respective jurisdictions.

“There are certain factors that enable vibrancy, and planners know very well what those factors are: Create a better public realm, and tend to buildings where they hit the streets,” said Coletta.

In some places, public sector officials are cooperating enthusiastically. Thomas, of YoloArts, said that she initially drew incredulous reactions from county officials who did not think that the arts had a place in either agriculture or economic development. Those attitudes appear to have changed.

“The health and the dynamism of an arts program in a jurisdiction is a key indicator of quality of life,” said Yolo County Economic

Development Director Ervin. Ervin noted that quality of life is almost impossible to measure – and, therefore, may not get much attention from public officials – but that it can be worthwhile.

“I’m not sure how much economic activity arts generates directly or whether that could be measured easily,” said Ervin. “It certainly enhances the experience of the visitor and... makes the place more attractive and, therefore, encourages placemaking.”

Ultimately, Coletta said that the ArtPlace movement should extend beyond just the 34 recipients of the initial grants and even beyond future recipients. Instead, she hopes that other communities and organizations, in California and elsewhere, will cultivate their own arts communities and creative industries.

“We hope to invest not only in projects that will move the needle on vibrancy in their communities but also those projects that we can learn from and that others can learn from,” said Coletta. ■

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>>> Intermodal Yard Seeks to Keep Trucks off Freeways

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

intermodal facility in the U.S.” This claim can be found in the draft EIR of the project, filed last month by the developer, BNSF Railways of Dallas, Texas. BNSF appears to be betting heavily on a government-relations campaign that emphasizes both environmental quality and improved efficiency in moving the metal boxes through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. And the company has some progressive, even eye-opening suggestions on how to improve better air quality. Yet we still must ask whether BNSF is overstating the benefits the intermodal facility to bring to the region, such as improved air quality and lighter traffic on the 710 Freeway, the antiquated road-

way leading to and from the ports.

An obvious tension exists between the goals of improving the air quality in the port area and the need to push millions of containers more quickly through the two ports onto waiting trains. The Los Angeles-Long Beach ports are the busiest in the nation, in part because they are primary point of entry for Chinese goods and/or American goods made in China. The aging 710 Freeway, which carries the bulk of the truck traffic to and from the ports, has undergone repeated studies for widening, although that prospect seems both expensive and politically volatile.

The basic premise of the BNSF intermodal

yard is fairly simple: To cut down on pollution, they will shorten the distance that trucks must travel. Located about four miles away from the ports, the facility is far closer to the ports than BNSF’s existing intermodal yard, which is 24 miles away in downtown Los Angeles. Shorter truck trips mean lower emissions overall, at least from those serving the new intermodal yard. (Many other trucks travel further to intermodal yards in the Inland Empire.) The shorter trip to the new yard means greater efficiency, with an expected increase of 1.5 million containers annually. The project sponsors, in the draft EIR, further claim that the project

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>>> BNSF Intermodal Yard, ctd.



Figure 2
Revised 10-31-2005
Project Site Area

BNSF's intermodal yard sits just north of the ports of L.A. and Long Beach.

ciency and sustainable practices, any claims to lighten traffic or reduce overall pollution, however, are not realistic.

Similarly, the decision to do business with only low-emissions trucks seems to send the right message to the trucking industry. But if other container yard operators do not insist on cleaner trucks, BNSF has not really changed the equation. The preferences of one yard operator for clean burning truck engines over dozens of others that do not does not stack up as a strong enough incentive to change the behavior of truck drivers. Keep in mind that the majority of truck owners are small, family-owned businesses that bought older trucks because the latter cost a fraction of the sticker price of newer models. These owners do not have deep pockets. One meaningful program, sponsored by the ports, was to buy older trucks and cut them in half with acetylene torches, while the owners got a grant to help buy a newer, less polluting vehicle.

A few dozen vehicles, however, are not enough to change the chronically poor air quality of the harbor area.

The resulting situation is an unenviable policy question that counterposes the needs of small business, the needs of big business, and those of public health. BNSF is "modeling good behavior," as they say in parenting class. The net improvement to the environment, however, remains questionable if others do not similarly change their trucks and their equipment.

But in the endless slow recovery, high-paying jobs are nothing to sneeze at. The best part of the BNSF container yard is that it promises 1,500 construction jobs for three years. Apparently the construction unions agree with me: In late October, when a group of them agreed to provide \$255 million in project financing in exchange for an agreement from BNSF to hire union labor. If BNSF can't clean the air in LA County's worst air shed, they can at least make blue skies for a lot of under-employed people. ■

- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

will improve traffic on the stop-and-go 710 Freeway.

BNSF offers several other green features: One welcome decision is to use all electric equipment to move the containers. Another idea is to incentivize truck drivers to use cleaner-burning vehicles, by refusing to do business with drivers with substandard emissions.

All these green ideas are admirable, as far as they go. But will they make a meaningful difference to the brown air hovering over this heavily trafficked freeway? Sparing an estimated 1.5 million truck trips a year is a good thing. But the 710 Freeway is a thoroughfare in which demand always is greater than capacity. If BNSF actually manages to create some room on the road, that room will be quickly filled other truckers, who are driving their high-emissions trucks to container yards deep in the Inland Empire, shooting out tons of greenhouse gases and particulates all the while. So in this theoretical situation, BNSF gets good marks for increasing its own effi-

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'Flexible' General Plan Update Raises Controversy in Tulare County

Plan draws criticism from all sides, including AG's office

BY JOSH STEICHMANN

TULARE COUNTY is a diverse 4,800 square miles, with extensive, mountainous public lands in the east, and some of the country's most fertile farmland in the west. It encompasses the Sequoia Park, parts of the Giant Sequoia National Monument and Sequoia National Forest, and every year hosts the World Ag Expo. How all of these diverse elements fit into a single general plan is the question that has vexed planners and stakeholders alike for the better part of the past decade.

While many cities and counties across the state have been promoting compact development through their recent general plan updates, critics contend that Tulare County's update does the opposite. Or it would if ever it was approved.

On October 19, the County Planning Commission postponed a decision on whether to recommend the General Plan Update to the Board of Supervisors, and instead voted to continue public comment on the plan during its next meeting, November 16, and directed the county Resource Management Agency to respond to critics of the plan, a coalition that includes the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Tulare County League of Women Voters, and the Kern-Kaweah chapter of the Sierra Club.

In 2003, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors direct the county Resource Management Agency to update their previous plan. That plan, adopted in 1964 and amended in piecemeal fashion, became, in the words of Dave Bryant, division manager for the TCRMA's Special Projects, unusable.

The goal for the current update cycle was to modernize the plan, creating a single reference that would have both the breadth necessary for the next 20 years, and incorporate the changes in planning and environmental concerns introduced over the last 50 years, such as an emphasis on nodal transportation planning and fully integrating mandates of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The update was supposed to conclude in the fall of 2005.

However, requirements of AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act passed in 2006, re-

quired the county to submit a Climate Action Plan, which has meant even more delays in the process.

The new plan comprises three large sub-plans: the Rural Valley Lands Plan, Foothill Growth Management Plan and Mountain Framework Plan, along with a passel of previ-

While many cities and counties across the state have been promoting compact development, critics contend that Tulare County's update does the opposite.

ously adopted sub-area plans, including newly designated hamlet community plans and corridor plans based on projected growth, especially around Highway 99 and State Route 65.

As new policies, the plan "shall encourage" maintaining distinct urban boundaries, development based on existing infrastructure, and consistent land use within urban and hamlet development boundaries. The plan will also ensure that new development doesn't occur without adequate infrastructure, including access to potable water. Tulare County's rural population pulls primarily from groundwater wells, and a 2006 survey of those wells by the State Water Control Board found that of 20,000 private wells, 40 percent had unsafe levels of nitrates; more recently, a U.N. Human Rights Commission report also voiced concerns about Tulare County's water quality.

The plan was presented for public comment in 2008 but has been mired in debate ever since. Which will begin the next phase for the

county: Defending the plan.

From the beginning, there have been concerns raised about the level of planning in both the update and the Environmental Impact Report. The initial Draft EIR did not include a greenhouse gas inventory, nor a Climate Action Plan; remedying that led to the recirculated DEIR of 2008. That RDEIR led to a scathing letter from the desk of Susan Fiering, Deputy Attorney General, in May 2010. The letter holds that "the General Plan relies on unenforceable policies that 'encourage,' but do not mandate that growth will occur in certain areas, with the result that all important development decisions are left to the marketplace."

Fiering's letter continues to describe the plan as an "aspirational document" that fails to exercise control over growth, saying that the open-ended nature of the plan means that accurate description of the impacts is impossible, and that the DEIR neither considers nor imposes enforceable mitigation measures.

Lynda Gledhill, spokeswoman for the office of Attorney General Kamala Harris, says that they are reviewing the current iteration of the plan and final EIR, and that the attorney general is very concerned about the ramifications for the predominantly Latino and disadvantaged communities throughout Tulare County. If the plan hasn't changed substantively, the letter, including its implicit threat of lawsuit, "would speak for itself."

Similar comments were made by the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment, and by a coalition of critics including the Sierra Club's Kern-Kaweah chapter, the Sierra Alliance and the Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth.

Gordon Nipp, vice-chair of the Kern-Kaweah chapter of the Sierra Club, is incensed over what he sees as a lack of enforcement and performance criteria, and rejects the planners' and supervisors' arguments for keeping the plan flexible.

"It's so flexible that the county doesn't have to do anything," he said. "Flexibility allows the good ol' boys network to run things."

Nipp cited a range of issues, from relying

>>> Critics: Tulare Co. Plan Would Allow Mega-Developments

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

on coordination with state and area agencies to mitigate air pollution rather than a specific county plan, saying that the only local mandate comes from the Air District's indirect source rule, to farmland loss, to water quality — none of which are adequately addressed, according to Nipp.

"They don't have any mitigation methods. They haven't done any in the past, they're not committing themselves to any now, so why would we think that they're going to do so in the future?" asked Nipp. He said that if the planning commission and Board of Supervisors adopt the plan as its currently written, a lawsuit from the Sierra Club is likely, noting that the Sierra Club prevailed over the city of Tulare in a similar lawsuit.

Rich McIntyre, Campaign Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, concurs with Nipp.

"Instead of having infill, this plan has sprawl," says McIntyre. He says that the Board of Supervisors has taken the position that it's not their place to direct growth. "From the perspective of the alliance, that is exactly the role of supervisors. This plan is an abnegation of their role."

McIntyre cites the recent plans in Mariposa and Nevada counties as solid and sustainable, and brings up a specific sore spot for many of the critics of the plan — a proposed development in Yokohl Valley that would comprise 30,000 new residents and 56 square miles of new urban development for the county, also cited by Nipp as one of the big beneficiaries of the new plan. McIntyre says that the Yokohl Valley east of Visalia development would be prevented by the sort of plans adopted in Mariposa and Nevada counties, but not in Tulare County.

"The plan basically allows new development whenever, development wherever. Either you're going to have infill and infrastructure replacement, or you're encouraging sprawl," McIntyre said, emphasizing that the situation is especially dire for lower-income residents. "It's the disadvantaged communities that always pay the price for bad planning."

McIntyre also complains that the comments made by critics haven't been adequately integrated into the final revision.

"The comments we made were extensive, and there has been no movement. The supervisors have dug in their heels."

Supervisor Steve Worthley disagrees: "We went through a process of public comment — we're not proposing any drastic changes or

anything out of the character of Tulare."

Likewise, he says that the complaints miss the point of the document.

"It's a general plan — you're very careful to avoid specifics," said Worthley, adding that projects would be evaluated individually, with details appropriate for those projects.

The plan itself does contain roughly 50 pages of responses to the public comments, and specifically addresses the complaints about the enforceability of the "should" (as opposed to "shall") language repeatedly used in the general plan. The argument, from Brian A. Garner's "A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage," is that the "should" language creates a directory provision, requiring "substantial compliance only; not exact compliance." The RMA sees this as allowing for the necessary flexibility required for a truly general plan, saying in their response, "'Should,' as used in General Plan policy development, is a less rigid directive to be honored in the absence of compelling or contravening considerations ... They are clear expressions of the policy makers' (i.e. Board of Supervisors) intent to rely on the subject policy to guide relevant decisions, and so must be recognized and analyzed in such decisions."

The responses also address complaints over the level of detail, holding that beyond the statutory requirements, counties have wide latitude in implementation, and that the implementation in Tulare County will be primarily set by lower-level and more local regulations.

"The general plan, in addition to being a policy document, is a guide — there will be a host of implementation policies as it proceeds, specifically updating zoning and ordinance codes," said Bryant.

And while McIntyre has complained that the county is asking critics to take the assertions of smart growth and effective mitigation efforts on faith, Bryant responds by cataloguing the outreach process: "There have been multiple public outreach efforts during the general plan process. After release of the 2008 version of the plan staff has included recommendations to improve clarity in the land use element, provide for long-term sustainability of water resources, and initiated a climate action strategy. In 2010 and 2011, staff conducted 26 public outreach meetings in the 8 cities and unincorporated communities."

Some critics have been mollified — the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment said that the changes made between the 2008 plan

and the current revision shifted from a policy of essentially leaving poor rural communities to wither in order to shift growth to more urban areas, to supporting them with infill and infrastructure, especially through the new Hamlet designation. Alegria de la Cruz, legal director of the CRPE, said that the changes meant that while the CRPE still had concerns over the implementation process, they would work with local partners to ensure the interests of their constituents, rather than further participating in the planning process.

According to Worthley, part of the problem that smaller communities in Tulare County have, especially with regard to water supply and utility infrastructure, is one of scale, and that the updates to the general plan address that.

"We're trying to get them to a level of self-sufficiency. We're suffering some of the consequences of a failure to grow these communities, and we're looking to share the opportunities," said Worthley.

Worthley is confident that the plan will pass the next hurdles, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

"We're feeling good. We feel good about the plan and the direction of this county, which is in line with our history."

But for opponents of the plan, passing at the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors would mean taking their case to the courts. Once the plan is approved, a lawsuit is very likely, said McIntyre.

Ultimately, the disputes over the adequacy of the language in the Tulare County general plan are legal questions. To resolve them will probably require litigation, which will only further delay the comprehensive update. For now, anyone seeking to build or develop in Tulare County will have to make do with the filing cabinets.

Bryant is circumspect. "The county has done its due diligence, circulated a final EIR. At the end of the day, the planning commission will decide the fate. There will be concerns that will be raised and concerns that will be addressed. At this point, it's premature to speculate on satisfying everyone." ■

Josh Steichmann is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.

► Resources:

Tulare County General Plan Update:
<http://generalplan.co.tulare.ca.us/index.html>



Starbucks Initiative Could Brew Up Urban Vitality

I AM WRITING THIS MISSIVE from the living room of a Starbucks. Not that you'd care where I'm writing from. Except this time it's relevant.

Here on Montana Avenue, in Santa Monica, I'm joined by other folks who are also on their laptops, recovering from yoga, or just biding their time. The guy sitting at my table just sold a pilot to Fox. That's nice for him. A few weeks ago I sat next to Hillary Swank here. She's not hurting either.

But others aren't so lucky. To its credit, Starbucks seems to want to do something about it.

Starbucks is setting up a quasi-charitable fund called Create Jobs for USA to give loans to small business proprietors. Starbucks is signaling that if the federal government refuses to take measures to promote community development and if banks refuse to lend money – because they long ago decided that lying and lobbying offered the clearest path to profits – then the task must fall to Americans themselves.

As Joe Nocera wrote admiringly in the New York Times a few weeks ago, Create Jobs for USA will be “a mechanism that will allow us citizens to do what the government and the banks won't: lend money to small businesses... this time, Schultz is not tilting at windmills.”

There's something admirable here, something not so admirable, and something both self-serving and transcendently brilliant. All of it could help cities.

The admirable part is that Starbucks has an idea that might help both businesses and out-of-work Americans, and it's putting up \$5 million of its own (nearly bottomless) funds to do it. The less admirable part is that this move could be considered just another cloying public relations gesture.

Yes, those “Indivisible” wristbands are going to get old really fast. But here's a timeless truth that Starbucks is acknowledging that no other major company has. As a business that operates literally at street-level in almost every community in America, Starbucks has finally turned a decades-old claptrap about corporate America on its head. We know how “well” General Motors has done. Starbucks has finally realized that what's good for America is what's good for Starbucks. Not vice-versa.

Say Starbucks' scheme works, and small businesses hire more employees: what does that mean? More prosperity, disposable income. What does that mean for Starbucks? Duh. Selling more coffee. More people who need a caffeine fix on their way to work. Fewer people taking up space because they have nowhere else to go and nothing else to do.

This is the best kind of self-interest, building on the inverse relationship between marginal spending and income is so axiomatic – to everyone but Republicans – that it hardly bears mentioning. It's the sort of thing that Walmart, Old Navy, McDonald's and every other company that markets to the bottom 99 percent should clue into. General Motors might want to think about it too. (Bank of America and Morgan Stanley... they can just keep doing what they're doing.)

What does this have to do with land use? Plenty.

As I, and many others, have written before, hypercapitalist chain stores – which have benefitted as much from regulatory kindness as from business savvy – have not been kind to urban America. Starbucks is another story. On the one hand, they're every bit as homogeneous as McDonald's. But they've also activated countless urban places in cities and strip malls across the country. I only lament that America couldn't have a few more independent coffee places, whose profits don't go to Seattle and stockholders but rather stay in their local communities.

But that's exactly what Starbucks' initiative could do. In the best of all worlds, if this kind of self-help scheme works, some of those small businesses might just be coffee houses – and both they and Starbucks will have plenty of customers to go around. They say that a rising tide lifts all boats. If that tide is made of coffee, then so be it. This country needs any help it can get.

If this scheme works, then maybe I, and everyone else in America's cities, will have a few more nice places in which to spend a Tuesday afternoon.

– JOSH STEPHENS | OCTOBER 18, 2011 ■



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Symposium Discusses Ways to Plan for Healthy Cities

ON OCTOBER 7, the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects held a symposium to discuss opportunities to design communities that promote greater physical activity and equitable access to healthier lifestyles. The event brought together architects, planners, landscape architects, policy makers, urban designers, public health professionals, and students. The major theme of the symposium is the need for greater cross-collaboration between architects and planners, and public health professionals to effectively and comprehensively address the problem of obesity. Highlights of the event for me are:

Public Health: Dr. Paul Simon with the L.A. County Department of Public Health provided important background on the historic connection between city planning and public health, with statistics on childhood obesity and healthcare spending that demonstrate the severity and urgency of the problem. Dr. Simon also highlighted various ongoing efforts by the Public Health Department to create healthy communities, including the Policies for Livable, Active Communities and Environments (PLACE) and Renew Environments for Nutrition, Exercise, and Wellness (RENEW) programs.

Planning: Los Angeles City Planning Director Michael LoGrande discussed the city's efforts in healthy design and planning such as: plans to incorporate a health chapter into the General Plan Framework, along with implementing ordinances; development of a health-centric transit-oriented development template in South L.A. along Metro Blue Line stations; and update of the Mobility Element of the General Plan to give Angelenos a full range of options including biking, walking, and public transit.

"Living Streets": Consultant Ryan Snyder presented the idea that a living street is one in which the needs of automobile drivers are secondary to the needs of users of the street as a whole; it is a space designed to be shared by pedestrians, playing children, bicyclists, and low-speed motor vehicles. Snyder's presentation focused on the Model Street Design Manual that was created through a writing charrette involving national experts. This manual focuses on all users and modes, seeking to achieve balanced street design that accommodates automobiles while ensuring that cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users can travel comfortably and safely. (The manual is available for download at <http://www.modelstreetdesignmanual.com/> [↩])

Community Engagement: Lark Galloway-Gilliam with Community Health Councils contended that the community needs to be engaged in any process to design and redesign communities. She pointed out how past planning efforts lacked vision on the part of leadership and reflected disconnect between different public agencies responsible for planning, transportation, housing, and redevelopment. Gilliam also stressed the need to speed up in coming up with strategies to help the residents of underserved communities.

Recreational Space: Carolyn Ramsey discussed the Trust for Public Land's successful efforts in improving and increasing usage of existing parks through "fitness zones." Fitness Zones are easy-to-use outdoor gyms designed to promote general health and introduce a new set of healthy activities to the park experience. Installed in existing parks, the equipment is designed to be durable, vandal resistant, and appropriate for teenagers and adults of all fitness levels. To date, 29 Fitness Zones have been installed throughout L.A. County and more are planned in the near future.



VIDEO COURTESY OF CHOOSE HEALTH LA

An idea that was briefly mentioned during the symposium, but not fully discussed was the temporary closure of some streets for recreational activities. Inspired by Bogotá's Ciclovía, Los Angeles has held three Ci-clAVia events (most recently on October 9), which opened up some city streets to pedestrians and bicyclists, creating a temporary network of public space where participants could walk, bike, socialize, and learn more about their city. Closing streets temporarily recognizes the urgency of addressing the recreational needs of residents. Los Angeles could learn from New York City's Playstreets Program created by the city's Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Transportation, and Parks to battle childhood obesity. This program is a quick and low-cost way to create active play space, and is a health measure that directly targets children, the city's most important at-risk population.

Other ideas also deserve some consideration. For example, given the success of mobile libraries, and the lack of land and money to develop permanent recreational facilities, mobile park spaces may also be employed as a way to bring in outside resources to a community in need. Mobile gyms provide additional opportunities for residents to work out and are flexible in that they can be parked at any location where vehicles are allowed. Also, the conversion of existing buildings for recreational use is growing in popularity and has been carried out by both commercial interests and public agencies. Warehouses, for example, have been converted to sports facilities for indoor soccer, badminton, handball, and batting cages.

The symposium was successful in many ways. Hopefully, it would lead to the rise of more political and professional champions in the architecture and planning realms, and the development of timely, effective solutions to promote greater physical activity in our communities and address the obesity crisis.

Clement Lau is a freelance writer and a planner with the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

— CLEMENT LAU | NOVEMBER 1, 2011 ■

