

CRA to shut down

The board of the California Redevelopment Association has agreed to dissolve the organization, and “most CRA staff will no longer be in the employ of the CRA” effective April 30, 2012. The CRA was formed in 1979 “for promoting best practices within the profession and in lobbying for local and redevelopment interests.” In an April 10 letter to the 360 members (<http://bit.ly/JnlPxM>) CRA President and Alhambra City Manager Julio Fuentes and CRA Interim Executive Director Jim Kennedy wrote:

“[W]e are confronted with the unfortunate reality that the years of incredible success with redevelopment — building affordable housing, creating jobs, cleaning up and reusing contaminated sites, and revitalizing communities — have now come to an end ... With the dissolution of local redevelopment agencies ... it has become clear ... that the business plan for CRA is no longer sustainable. The CRA Board of Directors has now concluded with great reluctance ... to initiate the dissolution of the association. The imperative [remains] for California’s communities to continue addressing their infrastructure, affordable housing, jobs/economic development, brownfield reuse, and military base reuse challenges. The next generation of tools and practitioners will build on the foundation left by redevelopment agencies.”

Josh Stephens, writing for CP&DR on April 12, notes that the “CRA had long fought for redevelopment agencies across the state and orchestrated the battle last year against Gov. Jerry Brown. Unfortunately for the CRA, the organization lost that battle and the war.” <http://bit.ly/IZyXJY> ■

Plan-it sustainably

Towards regional planning for sustainable transportation — A call for reform

By Katja Irvin, AICP, Sustainability Committee Co-Director

While browsing the new *Built Environment eJournal* from Social Science Research Network (SSRN), I saw and read *Sustainable Urban Development and the Next American Landscape: Some Thoughts on Transportation, Regionalism, and Urban Planning Law Reform in the 21st Century*, by Edward H. Ziegler (The Urban Lawyer, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2011). The author posits four issues that are likely to continue unless there is substantial reform to align land use policies to support regional transportation plans.

1. Local zoning control is likely to perpetuate automobile-dependent regional sprawl and is unlikely to result in sustainable jobs, housing, energy, transit, or infrastructure. In some communities, NIMBYism prevents efforts to build at sustainable densities and also does not allow for improvements such as urban trails and renewable energy infrastructure (e.g., wind turbines).
2. Development of higher-density housing will likely be scattered on less desirable sites, not part of walkable mixed-use neighborhoods. Despite a rising demand for multifamily housing, multifamily zones are still often located along interstate highways or commercial strips.
3. TOD will likely be limited in scope and density and provide few opportunities for auto-independent lifestyles. To date this has proven true in the Bay Area, with BART and Muni still waiting for transit-supportive densities and neighborhoods surrounding stations.
4. It is unlikely we will be able to afford to maintain both a public transit system and a private-auto infrastructure. The national infrastructure deficit is nearly \$2 trillion and increases every year, *and* we spend more per capita on transportation than any other country. Further, US densities and development patterns rarely support transit investments. Even in Portland transit ridership is lower than expected and traffic congestion is the top concern of residents.

The solution: initiate a regional policy framework that establishes goals and standards for sustainable local planning and zoning. To support efficient and affordable public transit the standards need to require densities closer to the European model, typically a one-mile radius with densities of 25 to 100 units per acre. To support auto-independent lifestyles, we also need to design for mixed-use neighborhoods — not just parking, houses, and roads for cars. Lastly, to make this happen we need a “new partnership between federal, state, local, and private-sector players to help metropolitan areas build on their economic strengths.”

California's SB 375 and our Sustainable Community Strategies seem to take baby steps toward Mr. Ziegler's call for reform. The problems

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he enumerates (NIMBYism, ensconced zoning, and displaced housing development) are clearly at play in the Bay Area. How successful One Bay Area will be in creating auto-independent communities remains to be seen.

An interesting report on sustainable energy infrastructure

Released in March 2012, *Bay Area Smart Energy 2020* (Bill Powers, P.E., Powers Engineering for Pacific Environment), "is a roadmap to rapid, cost-effective conversion to clean energy that relies on local resources." The report is available for download at <http://bit.ly/HNNIPA>

Sustainability committee

Send us your comments and suggestions, or to get involved in our publishing or education programs. Email co-directors Scott Edmondson, scott-e@sustainability2030.com; or Katja Irvin, katja.irvin@sbcglobal.net ■

LETTERS

Editor:

I really look forward to the *Northern News*. My hat is off to you for all that you have been and are doing!

George Mader, FAICP ■

Where in the world?



Photos by James Rojas, Alhambra CA (Answers on [page 18](#))

"That antagonistic language keeps us from having this broader dialogue. It allows us to remain polarized around issues that at their central core are universal. We all want to live in places that we like. We all want to feel safe. We all want access to food, shelter, recreation, entertainment. These things are universal." —Chuck Marohn, <http://bit.ly/GXL7Rn> and <http://www.strongtowns.org>