California Air Resources Board Moves To Curb Greenhouse Gases: AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, requires that Californians reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, 25% below business as usual. In order to effectively implement the cap, AB 32 directs the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to establish statewide targets, develop regulations and track our progress in meeting them.

The largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions comes from the transportation sector, mostly cars and light trucks. While a change in vehicle fuels and increased auto efficiency will get us part of the way to the state’s emission reduction goals, they are not enough. Land use patterns must be modified to give people transportation options other than the car.

To address the transportation/land use challenge, the ARB dedicated this year’s annual Haagen-Smit symposium to developing the land use strategies needed to assure that California reaches its AB 32 greenhouse gas reduction targets. Among the 60 individuals invited to participate were LGC Board members Jake Mackenzie, Pam O’Connor, Brian Brennan, and Executive Director Judy Corbett along with other LGC members including Rick Cole and Bill Fulton. During the four-day event, participants were charged with producing a set of recommendations for the ARB’s implementation of AB 32. The final result was a “Haagen-Smit Resolution.” Resolution measures included the establishment by the ARB of quantitative, per capita emission targets for vehicle emissions on a regional or local level. In addition, the Blueprint model should be implemented in major urban areas and Local Climate Action Plans should be encouraged and linked back to regional Blueprints.

Large-scale new development should be low impact. This might be achieved through regulatory actions, targeted incentives, and/or targeted funding. It was widely agreed that local zoning codes must be modified to both allow and encourage compact, mixed-use, low-impact new development. Further, regional and local governments need better planning tools, funded by the State, to estimate the CO₂ reduction potential of proposed new development projects.

Reliable, continuous funding to support all the recommended measures should be secured. This money could come from redirecting existing state resources in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions from new sources.

The above-recommended measures will be reviewed at a hearing in Sacramento on May 14th at the California Energy Commission. Many more opportunities for public input will follow in the near future. For information, go to www.lgc.org and click on “New Project: Implementing AB 32” or contact Kate Wright at kwright@lgc.org.

California Transportation Commission Follows Suit on AB 32 Implementation: The California Transportation Commission is the body that approves the expenditure of state and federal transportation dollars. Led by Executive Director John Barna, the Commission will soon be voting on an Addendum to the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines. The addendum will direct those applying for funding under the RTP Process to address the climate change impacts and greenhouse gas emissions of proposed projects and include a projection of VMT in the project’s environmental review.

The new policy will favor investments in areas where land uses in a city or county general plan are expected to result in reduced VMT (thus fewer greenhouse gas emissions) and therefore supports putting transportation investments into transit, programs for walkability, bicycling and other alternative modes. It also favors projects with transit access, housing near transit, and plans that are consistent with a regional blueprint.

The LGC participated in the work group that developed the Addendum. Although the new policy does not currently have the force of law, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies are strongly encouraged to adhere to it.

To Meet Market Demand, Plan for More Infill: In an environment of loan foreclosures and falling housing prices, some types of housing are doing better than others. While homes in exurban areas are losing value, infill development in urban areas are doing relatively well.

According to the California Planning and Development Report, “While the single-family market was starting to slip, multi-family construction held steady during 2006, accounting for 35% of all new housing starts, compared with 26% during 2005. Small infill projects continue to be built, with or without government subsidies.

The San Francisco Bay Area’s Metropolitan Transportation Commission continues to be an aggressive booster of transit-oriented development. This spring it will award $7.5 million in grants to cities and counties that are developing plans to increase densities within a half-mile of transit centers. Fifty jurisdictions have applied for grants, indicating the increasing popularity of such development.

The City of Hayward has been among those leading the way for transit-oriented development. In 1993, under the leadership of Mayor Michael Sweeney,
the City adopted a plan to develop housing adjacent to Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations. As a result, today there are 763 residential units located within a short two-block walk of BART. Visitors to the area can observe long, townhouse-style buildings no taller than three stories in a neighborhood that is somewhat reminiscent of Santa Barbara.

Fresno Has Plan To Turn Green: The City of Fresno adopted a 2025 General Plan in November of 2002 that changes the patterns of growth in the City, encouraging new development to be “in and up.” Last year, to facilitate the implementation of this goal, Fresno’s Mayor Alan Autry and Council President Henry Perea initiated the preparation of a Green Element for the general plan in order to, “transform Fresno into a sustainable green city.” The completed element, Fresno Green, now consists of 25 strategies and accompanying implementation tactics. The City’s long term goals include reducing commute trips by 20% and overall greenhouse gas emissions by 25%.

To achieve these ends, the City plans to develop policies that support New Urbanist or Smart Growth principles. This means supporting higher density, mixed use, and walkable, bikeable neighborhoods and putting every resident within 1/4 mile of a transit stop.

Implementation measures include an update of zoning codes to promote increased densities around activity centers and updated subdivision design standards that make it easier to walk or take a bike.

Building codes are to be updated in Fresno to make residential and commercial properties more energy efficient. Already solar panels are sprouting up on commercial and residential buildings as well as at the Municipal Service Center and the Airport.

The City is partnering with the San Joaquin River and Conservation Trust to develop a 23-mile, 6,000-acre greenbelt with recreational trails.

To monitor whether the goal — a 25% reduction in citywide greenhouse gas emissions — is being met, the City is creating an accounting and auditing system, and joining the California Climate Action Registry. According to a City document, “Being ‘green’ — environmentally responsible — is no longer just a fad and technologically cool, it is imperative.”

Important New Resources: Form-based codes have become accepted as the antidote to zoning that makes driving easy and walking difficult, and an increasing number of communities are adopting them. Form-based codes go beyond zoning regulations, the authors detail the various components of this type of zoning and then go step by step through the process of creating and implementing them.

A new book, Form Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities and Developers is now available. Written by three recognized leaders in the field of New Urbanism — Daniel Parolek, Karen Parolek and Paul Crawford — this book is the first to address this subject comprehensively.

After defining form-based codes and explaining why they are a necessary alternative to conventional zoning regulations, the authors detail the various applications of form-based coding at various scales from countywide development code replacement to the preservation or evolution of downtowns.


The Urban Land Institute recently published Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change, written by Reid Ewing, et al. This document details the latest research by leading urban planners that illustrates how better land use practices can be a crucial strategy in combating greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles. The authors make the case that one of the best ways to get people to drive less is to build pedestrian-friendly places with a mix of uses, where people can walk, bike, or take transit from their homes to offices, schools, restaurants, and shopping.

The authors also provide information that points to an increased market for compact, walkable development. The list of market incentives include changing demographics, shrinking households, rising gas prices, and lengthening commutes that are leading to a consumer demand for smaller homes and lots, townhouses, and condominiums near jobs and other activities.

The book recommends policy changes that can be implemented at the local and regional level to make green, compact neighborhoods more available and more affordable. The book can be ordered online at the Urban Land Institute by going to www.uli.org/bookstore.

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