Livable Places Update
Emerging Trends in Community Planning and Design

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New Partners for Smart Growth Conference A Hit in San Diego! The recent 11th Annual New Partners Conference in San Diego was a huge hit, attracting one of the most diverse and engaged audiences we have ever had. The nearly 1,400 participants were treated to some exciting new conference features, including an Internet Café (courtesy of AECOM), a Farmer's Market-style lunch featuring local food vendors and locally grown food in a park setting, sessions presented in Spanish with others being translated, and many more networking opportunities woven throughout the multi-day event.

Audio files of the sessions can be purchased through Hungry Mind Recordings (a link can be found on the conference web site). In mid-March, pdf files of about 95% of the PowerPoint presentations given at the conference will be posted at www.NewPartners.org for FREE download.

We are also currently undertaking a survey of participants to get feedback on the conference and find out what participants enjoyed most and what they plan to do with the resources, contacts and tools they obtained while attending. If you attended the recent conference in San Diego and would like to share your feedback with us, please contact Michele Warren at mkwarren@lgc.org. If you attended a previous New Partners Conference and would like to share what you have done through your work or in your community as a result of attending, we would love to hear from you!

Mark your calendars for the 12th Annual New Partners Conference, to be held February 7-9, 2013 in Kansas City, MO!

Redevelopment Agencies Are No More — So What Happens Now? Redevelopment has been a critically important tool for many communities interested in revitalizing their downtowns, building transit-oriented development, and reducing greenhouses gas emissions through infill development. Without this critical tool how do cities move ahead to implement smart growth?

Bringing us up-to-date: In June 2011, the California State legislature passed two bills that were signed by the Governor to dissolve California's network of redevelopment agencies. February 1, over 400 redevelopment agencies were shut down statewide.

This legislation requires local governments to turn over the responsibilities of closing down redevelopment agencies to a successor agency. In most cases, the local city government has chosen to oversee that task. Successor agencies are essentially acting as accounting firms, figuring out assets and liabilities, and submitting approval of oversight boards. Each is required to appoint a seven-member committee to oversee their work, and take responsibility for seeing that funds are disbursed to either the state or to creditors. For the next few decades, former RDA property tax revenue will go towards paying off debts but will eventually help the State's bottom line.

The City of Los Angeles has chosen another alternative, voting to wash its hands of its Community Redevelopment Agency and become a ward of the State. Former employees are now on the state's payroll and responsible for dealing with the 26 projects now in various states of completion.

Legislators are still looking for ways to promote economic development and affordable housing. The California State Senate passed a bill that would let local governments keep redevelopment funds that were earmarked for affordable housing, but didn't pass it with enough of a majority to get it implemented until next year. Such funds contain about $1.36 billion that will otherwise be redirected to schools and other local government functions.

Next Steps for Local Governments: Howard Blackson, Director of Planning for Placemakers LLC and others have been doing a lot of thinking about financing optionsthat cities might employ to replace redevelopment funds. A recent article in *Better Cities and Towns* quotes Blackson, "... municipalities are finally looking to newmodels modifying their decades-long reliance upon suburban planningtools to enable infill redevelopment."

With now vanishing state and federal subsidies, it's time to deploy the tools cities and counties still have available for making our communities more livable. The following provides some options:

Make Use of City-Owned Land: Many government agencies — such as cities, counties and school districts — and nonprofit institutions — such as universities, hospitals and churches — located in urban areas own excess land. Without giving this property away, they can become equity partners in a redevelopment public/private partnership project. Creative government entities can commit their land up front, at no cost, to an infill development deal in exchange for a later financial payoff. In addition, surplus state land could be made available to cities to help urban projects work.

Create a Nonprofit Organization to promote private financing of projects in the public interest. This concept has recently been implemented by the City of Roseville.

Develop a Form-Based Code or Master Plan: Cities can create "master plans" for whole urban neighborhoods that front-load the environmental and community review process so individualdevelopers can then construct projects more quickly, savingconsiderable money in the process. Form-based codes might focus efforts on easily funded policies, such as complete streets, healthy community design principles, or a neighborhood-scale urban runoff plan.

A city might allow a developer to construct a larger project than zoning allows or speed up the processing in exchange for the developer funding a public amenity included in the code.

Make Use of Local Tax Districts: Cities can establish landscape maintenance districts and business improvement districts. These taxing mechanisms allow local property and business owners to vote to finance better sidewalks, parks, or other neighborhood amenities through an increase in their taxes. The City of Lodi used a business improvement district to fund a spectacular transformation of their entire downtown over a decade ago.

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The community facility district and infr structure facility district are two additional taxation tools. They can be used to fund schools, new streets or utilities. They too require a vote of impacted property owners.

Make Use of Sales-Tax Increment Financing: According to Bill Fulton, redevelopment laws only affect property taxes but do not apply to sales tax. He reports that some cities have already made use of tax-increment financing drawn from sales-tax generating projects—essentially committing a portion of the future revenue stream to pay for infrastructure or subsidize development. This technique could be of use in funding urban projects with a retail component or an employment center that generates a significant amount of taxable business-to business sales.

Use Developer Impact Fees: Cities can charge builders a one-time fee to cover the cost of their project's impact on transportation, recreation, library and other public services, however the cost of deferred maintenance incurred before the builder entered the scene cannot be included.

Use the General Fund: Cities and counties typically devote a portion of the general fund revenues from sales and property taxes, hotel taxes and other sources to capital improvements. Most improvements to streets and streetscapes can be paid for from general fund monies. Bruce Liedstrand, former city manager of Mt. View, CA has long held that a bike lane or streetscape improvement can conveniently be built for little extra cost when a street needs repair work.

Employ Tax Abatement: Cities can reduce or eliminate property and salestaxes in exchange for a developer's construction of a road, park or other community amenity.

The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) startling new 2012 Report, "What's Next: Real Estate in the New Economy," concludes that the real estate world is hurtling into a different place and time. The ULI states that today, successful planners, builders, and investors must turn to, "multifaceted, town-centric land use patterns, which provide greater housing and transportation choices for residents and reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled." The world is changing rapidly and the most economically successful cities and regions will be those that make it easier and less expensive for the developer to construct these new building patterns. For a copy of this important, very readable report, go to http://uli75.org/whats-next/

To Learn More, Plan to Attend the Pre-Conference Session at the Ahwahnee Hotel on March 15: Assemblymember Bob Wieckowski will give us a brief update on what's happening to accommodate redevelopment in the California State Legislature; Cecilia Estolano, land use attorney and former director of Los Angeles' Redevelopment Agency, will lead us through existing city and county options for continuing to finance the revitalization of our downtowns and older neighborhoods, and Heather Fargo, former Mayor of Sacramento and Director of the California Strategic Growth Council, will moderate and add to the discussion. This is a two- hour session with plenty of time for questions. If you would like to attend, please contact Erin Hauge at erin@lgc.org.

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