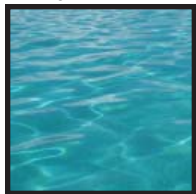


2008 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

American Institute of Architects, Los Angeles Chapter
 2008 Legislative Issues
 Political Outreach Committee
 Control Billboard Blight
 Implement Distributed Power Generation
 Water Conservation
 Make Great, Green Streets
 Selection of Architects
 City Appointments
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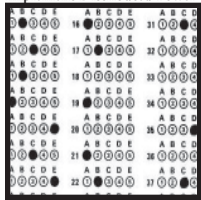
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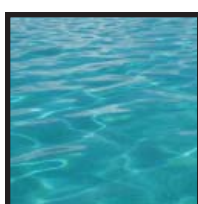
CONTENT



CONTROL BILLBOARD BLIGHT



WATER CONSERVATION



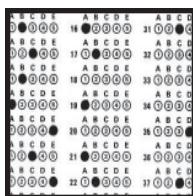
IMPLEMENT DISTRIBUTED
POWER GENERATION



MAKE GREAT, GREEN STREETS



SELECTION OF ARCHITECTS



CITY APPOINTMENTS



CONTACT INFORMATION





ISSUE

Ordinances allowing new billboards in Los Angeles lead to needed amenities but undermine existing ordinances meant to limit billboards. At present, City of Los Angeles billboard policy is inconsistent. Even as the City struggles to identify and regulate existing off-site signage, it moves forward with creative sign districts and signage supplemental use districts that add new off-site signs. New digital billboards raise the wrath of neighborhoods throughout the City. Taking the time to review existing policies and develop new ordinances will lead to a consistent Los Angeles approach where off-site signage is controlled with the benefits accruing to the people of Los Angeles

PROPOSAL

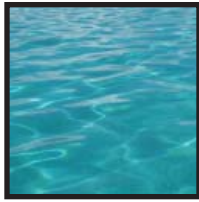
Adopt an interim control ordinance that prohibits the erection of any new off-site signs within the City of Los Angeles except in previously approved and adopted supplemental use districts and creative signage districts. During this period the City should convene a panel of citizens and professionals to recommend a Citywide policy that consistently regulates billboards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are at least three additional supplemental-use signage districts proposed in Los Angeles. While the City seeks funds from these billboard districts to realize important community-based projects, off-site signage advocates justify overturning citywide ordinances limiting billboards by pointing to the adoption of these same districts. In the past Los Angeles has adopted ordinances that have sought to limit billboards along freeways. Recent agreements allow for the erection of more signage and digital billboards along these byways. Digital billboards are now the source of both safety and welfare complaints. Communities are concerned that these signs are hazardous to drivers and intrusive to residential neighborhoods. At the same time there is little understanding regarding just how much revenue off-site signs generate and how much funding and consequent benefits the City should fairly realize from these signs. **The City is allowing the use of its visual bandwidth without understanding how much that bandwidth is worth.**

Because more off-site signs and sign districts are being proposed, because there are serious questions about traffic safety associated with digital billboards, because digital billboards are brighter and more intrusive at night than anticipated, because the City may not realize maximum revenue value from new or existing billboards, because it is a long term City objective to reduce the number of billboards, because one of Los Angeles' most precious assets is its scenery and viewscapes, because visual blight contributes to economic blight, and because AIA|LA knows that cities do successfully limit and or prohibit billboards and off-site signs, AIA|LA believes that now is the time to pause, consider what type of citywide off-site signage policies make sense, and develop new ordinances that both reflect community values and beautify Los Angeles to the benefit of all who are attracted to live, work and visit this City.

By adopting an interim control ordinance that prohibits the erection of new billboards the City will create a period of time to study, debate and determine new approaches to this issue. AIA|LA recommends that the City establish citizen and professional study group to make recommendations with regard to off-site signage policies. This group should be staffed by the Department of City Planning and other City departments as appropriate in order to facilitate realistic recommendations that can be considered for adoption by the City. AIA|LA looks forward to lending expertise and assistance in the implementation of these recommendations.



ISSUE

In light of our region's diminishing supply of water and to ensure our ability to meet growing demand for water, the City of Los Angeles must adopt additional water conservation policies and become a model of water efficiency, reuse, and conservation. AIA|LA endorses Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's water conservation May 2008 initiative "Securing L.A.'s Water Supply".

PROPOSAL

AIA|LA requests that the City Council, the Department of Public Works and the Department of Water & Power embrace the Mayor's initiative, and work with regional and State water agencies to remove code obstacles to technologies that use water more than once. The City has done an excellent job of reducing water use growth over the last twenty years even while the population has grown significantly. While past efficiency gains are important, the City must continue to rethink how water is used – and reused.

DISCUSSION

Los Angeles is a temperate and generally dry climate, yet we landscape and use water as if we were in a humid and rainy zone. For too long Los Angeles residents and landowners have taken clues for how to live in this part of the world from ideas developed primarily in the more humid climates of the East Coast and Europe. To do so, Los Angeles imports water from most of the Southwest. This is unsustainable from both an ecological and a social point of view. The Southwest's population is growing rapidly and its water supply is fixed if not in decline. Now is the time to expand our water conservation measures and policies.

The recommendations contained within "Securing L.A.'s Water Supply" are an excellent continuation of this City's conservation efforts. The initiative includes steps to enforce current water use restrictions, encourage residence and business conservation through rebates, educate the public through an awareness campaign, expand the recycled water network, and modernize dam, water treatment plant, and aquifer infrastructure. But the most important aspect of the initiative is the planned Tillman Wastewater Treatment Plant's upgrade to enable groundwater recharge of purified wastewater (currently the purified wastewater is dumped in the ocean). The technology to implement groundwater recharge is well tested and proven. It is even being done by Orange County with a plant that came on line this year.

In addition, AIA|LA recommends the City of LA adopt the following conservation and reuse measures:

- Work with the County and State officials to reduce restrictions on grey water use
- Remove administrative obstacles to approved on-site storm water retainage techniques.
- Require a combination of drought tolerant, native, and xeriscape planting for the majority of landscape areas for all City projects and all private projects over 50,000 sf
- Encourage drought tolerant, native, and xeriscape planting for residential front lawns
- Encourage use of waterless urinals

Each practice has been implemented in a major municipality such as Santa Monica, Phoenix or San Francisco. Wise water use will ensure the City of Los Angeles thrives into the future. Adopting additional water conservation measures will allow Los Angeles to lead the nation into a sustainable future. AIA|LA looks forward to lending expertise and assistance in the implementation of these recommendations.



ISSUE

Los Angeles should create a distributed power generation (DPG) network by encouraging its customers to install on-site power generation in excess of what than they can use. The mechanism to achieve this result is called a “feed-in-tariff” or FIT. Current policy at the Department of Water and Power (DWP) discourages property owners who wish to install on-site power generation.

PROPOSAL

AIA | Los Angeles requests the City of Los Angeles through the Department of Water and Power adopt a FIT to encourage DPG and endorse SB 1714. Through its utility, the City of Los Angeles should incentivize its customers to install more power generating capacity than needed for their specific site. DWP should adopt a FIT policy that pays customers for excess power generated on-site and put on the grid (current policy allows for a credit in most cases.) In addition, the FIT should be structured to pay customers at rates that are comparable to “green” renewable generation rather than “brown” carbon-based generation.

DISCUSSION

Currently the United States lags behind the world in DPG. America generates approximately 5% of its power needs through DPG; this compares to the developed world average of 10% and is a factor of 10 below Denmark’s DPG percentage. In comparison to DPG, large scale remote power generation has the following disadvantages:

- Uses large tracts of rural land and requires transmission lines which mar the landscape
- Transmits energy over long distances and loses energy in transit (\$20B annually in the US)
- Is vulnerable to terrorist sabotage

In contrast, DPG has the following advantages:

- Provides power at the source of consumption
- Localizes infrastructure development and maintenance, and utilizes developed land
- Improves reliability of the power supply
- Lessens strain on the power grid and reduces the need for additional large-scale power plants
- Creates micro grids with the utility distributing customers’ excess power to customers in the immediate vicinity

In this country, the obstacles to DPG are regulatory. Ample precedents exist to make DPG work. Possibly the most successful use of a FIT to spur renewable DPG is in Germany. From 2000 to 2005, dramatic growth in Germany’s renewable energy market occurred with a doubling of “DPG” electricity fed into the grid and a seven-fold increase in installed solar photovoltaic capacity. By 2007 the German installed solar base was over 2,500 MW. By contrast, the installed solar capacity in the US is 150 MW even though our solar resources far exceed those of Germany.

Germany’s success is directly attributable to it’s national FIT program. A FIT encourages renewable DPG by creating a power contract where the utility buys energy generated by a customer at a set rate for a set period of time, typically 10, 15 or 20 years. For the rate to be effective, it must be set at a level commensurate with the wholesale cost to produce the power whether it be solar, wind, or other renewably generated power.

Recognizing FIT’s value in achieving the Renewable Portfolio Standard, in September of 2006 Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law AB 1969 which authorized the State’s first FIT, applicable to large water and waste water agencies. In February of this year, the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) expanded the program to include all investor owned utilities. Currently under consideration in the State Assembly is SB 1714 which will require all utilities – investor owned and municipal – to accept FITs. DWP should take a leadership position and implement a AB 1969 / SB 1714 compliant FIT.

To help ensure a sustainable future, the City of Los Angeles through the DWP should remove barriers to DPG and implement a FIT. AIA|LA looks forward to lending expertise and assistance in the implementation of these recommendations.



ISSUE

Coordinated policies that implement great and green public streets and boulevards enhance the walkability, sustainability, appeal and economic competitiveness of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles' 6500 miles of streets are the most visible open spaces of this city. Yet these public resources are too often given over to a single purpose - the primacy of the automobile. Existing Los Angeles standards lead to under-designed and under-utilized streets limiting opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists and all who enjoy this city's great outdoors. Los Angeles streets should be treated as an urban living room - the primary place where the people gather and enjoy everyday life. Cities will increasingly compete based upon the quality of streets and boulevards as environmental and sustainable amenities that are used and enjoyed by residents, workers and visitors. The City should demonstrate a renewed commitment to improve its streets and boulevards. Great streets are green streets; Los Angeles has many, but so many more are needed to realize the promise and value of our environment and our city.

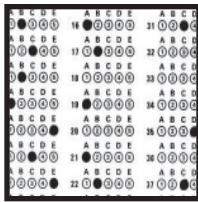
PROPOSAL

- The City Council should adopt and expand the street standard policies developed by the "Downtown Street Standards" committee to the larger city.
- City departments should be tasked to utilize the community-plan update process to identify Great and Green Streets.
- Council Members should identify specific Great and Green Street demonstration projects within their own district that can be immediately implemented.
- The City of Los Angeles should appoint a task force made up of citizens including representatives from the architecture and landscape architecture communities to develop a long-term Great and Green streets mission statement and propose policies incorporating funding and maintenance criteria and design parameters. A range of City departments and agencies should staff this task force.

DISCUSSION

In 20th Century Los Angeles street design policy prioritized the needs of vehicular traffic to the detriment of the environment, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. In 21st Century Los Angeles widened sidewalks will encourage pedestrian use, trees and landscaping will cool and filter polluted air, in-street storm water management will address storm runoff and pollution, and bicycle paths will reduce reliance on automobiles.

The Department of City Planning's Urban Design Studio and the Department of Public Works Green Street Committee have already begun working to establish new standards for Los Angeles streets that prioritize people and sustainability over cars. These efforts should be supported and expanded. AIA|LA recommends utilizing a broad community planning process that involves the efforts of decision-makers, citizens and staff to focus on the potential of streets to form a key part of a great and green public realm. AIA|LA believes that well-designed, multi-purpose streets become the environmental heart and economic center of neighborhoods and communities. AIA|LA looks forward to lending expertise and assistance in the implementation of these recommendations.



ISSUE

The current Request for Qualifications (RFQ) based method of selecting architects for City projects limits competition and the ability of a broader range of firms to compete successfully for these City-sponsored projects.

PROPOSAL

The City should request that the Bureau of Engineering determine means to **amend the present RFQ selection process and implement additional alternative methods of selecting architects in order to capitalize on the diverse strengths of an increased number of firms.**

DISCUSSION

The present RFQ process places an undue weight on past experience on City-sponsored projects and therefore limits the number of firms that can effectively compete for a given project. The RFQ process also requires a significant expenditure of time and money and lacks emphasis on design as a selection criteria, discouraging many firms from even entering the process. The AIA|LA recommends that the present RFQ process be amended to include the following:

- **Establish a two-phase submission process.** A first phase of a broadened selection process should seek overall professional qualifications and evidence of quality design work. These wider ranging criteria would be the basis for a short list for a second phase where the City's needed due diligence process could be addressed.
- **Allow more flexibility in the media that firms are allowed to present their work.** Consider allowing digital and website submissions.
- **Amend the selection/evaluation criteria.** Split the 30% for Technical and Past Experience into: 10% for municipal facility project experience and 20% for all other types of projects.

Recommended additional and/or alternative methods for the selection of architects are:

- **Emphasizes the importance of design quality through portfolio peer review.** Establish design quality as an important criteria and invite qualified peers to contribute to the evaluation of this factor of consideration.
- **Establish a small-project category.** Create a small project category for projects with construction budgets of 10 to 20 million dollars for which the criteria of previous municipal experience would be eliminated. Presently, City projects budgeted less than 10 million are executed by the BOE staff.
- **Establish more compensated competitions.** Institute and fairly compensate short-listed architects to produce design proposals in a limited number of compensated competitions.
- **Establish more open competitions.** Strategically implement open competitions for selected projects of broad civic significance.

In 2005 and 2006 AIA|LA worked with the Bureau of Engineering to sponsor two symposiums where both City and State officials participated and suggested some of the above recommendations. Other proposals were developed based upon the request of Council members to provide specific recommendations for amending the present RFQ process. AIA|LA believes that now is the time to implement these concepts and looks forward to lending assistance towards their adoption and implementation.



ISSUE

Key decisions that shape the future of Los Angeles need to be considered from a design point of view as well as other points of view by City of Los Angeles commissions, boards, and committees whose actions influence the built environment of Los Angeles.

PROPOSAL

AIA|LA requests that design professionals in general and architects in specific be appointed to sit on the following commissions, boards and committees. The list of such entities includes but is not limited to:

- Affordable Housing Commission
- Area Planning Commissions of Central, East LA, Harbor, North Valley, South LA, South Valley, and West LA respectively.
- Board of Airport Commissioners
- Board of Building and Safety Commissioners
- Board of Harbor Commissioners
- Board of Library Commissioners
- Board of Los Angeles Export Terminal
- Board of Neighborhood Commissioners
- Board of Public Works Commissioners
- Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners
- Board of Transportation Commissioners
- Board of Water and Power Commissioners
- Community Redevelopment Agency
- Cultural Affairs Commission
- Cultural Heritage Commission
- El Pueblo De Los Angeles Historical Monument Authority
- Environmental Affairs Commission
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- Industrial Development Authority
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- Planning Commission

DISCUSSION

Design professionals and architects are trained to understand and think critically and creatively about issues involving the built environment. Numerous commissions, boards and committees are empowered to create and implement policies for the City of Los Angeles that have a significant impact on the physical environment. Qualified architects and design professionals such as landscape architects hold too few of the positions on these groups. **AIA|LA maintains a list of architects interested in serving as members of the above mentioned commissions, boards and committees; these names are available to the City upon request.** The City of Los Angeles will benefit greatly by inclusion of architects in the decision-making process concerning the built environment.

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