

The Sustainable Development Report

Issue No. 8 : February 2012



Estolano LeSar Perez ADVISORS LLC

ELP Advisors works with cities, agencies, stakeholders, foundations and business groups to craft strategies to grow thriving, healthy, vibrant communities.

Change in Leadership for Housing & Community Development



Cathy Creswell, head of the state's Housing and Community Development (HCD) agency left her post on February 14th. Ms. Creswell was with HCD for 25 years, and was appointed **Acting Director** of the department in January of 2011. She notes that her time at HCD had given her the opportunity "to work with the most dedicated, compassionate, and talented professionals and advocates in the world."

Ms. Creswell will be succeeded by **Linn Warren**. Mr. Warren was formerly Program Director at the California Housing Finance Agency and served as Chief of Multifamily Lending from 1990 to 1995.

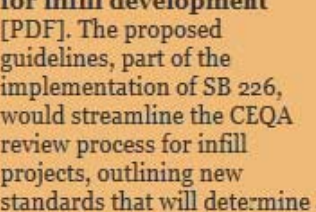
Human Infographic



This is what happens when GOOD attacks traffic: leagues of hip-looking young adults come together on the streets of downtown L.A. to show us how small actions can have a big impact.

In a city where drivers spend **72 hours a year** stuck in traffic, it's hard to believe that if just three percent of our drivers changed modes (bicycling, walking, transit), traffic would move 15 percent faster. For this, and other fun facts, check out the video [here](#).

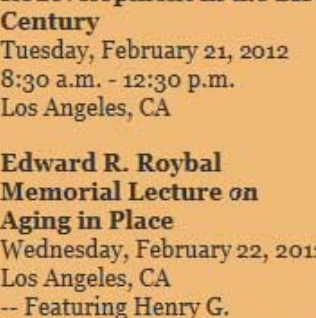
Infill Development CEQA Overhaul



The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) recently announced public workshops to solicit comments on **new CEQA regulations for infill development** [PDF]. The proposed guidelines, part of the implementation of SB 226, would streamline the CEQA review process for infill projects, outlining new standards that will determine a project's eligibility for a expedier review. To see the proposals and review the new performance standard click [here](#).

The workshops will be held on February 21st in Sacramento, February 22nd in Fresno, and February 23rd in Los Angeles.

Events



UCLA Ziman Center's California's Urbanscape: A New Paradigm for Redevelopment in the 21st Century
Tuesday, February 21, 2012
8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Los Angeles, CA

Edward R. Roybal Memorial Lecture on Aging in Place
Wednesday, February 22, 2012
Los Angeles, CA
-- Featuring Henry G. Cisneros, Executive Chairman of CityView

LA on the Verge of a Move LA's 4th Annual Transportation Conversation
Friday, February 24, 2012
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Los Angeles, CA

Complete Streets for 2012
Friday, March 2, 2012
Los Angeles, CA
8:00 a.m.

Growth, Innovation, and the Accelerating Pace of Urban Life: Are 21st Century Cities Sustainable?
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
Los Angeles, CA

ULI Urban Marketplace 2012
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
7:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Los Angeles, CA
-- Featuring ELP's Cecilia Estolano

California Water Policy Conference
March 8-9, 2012
Los Angeles, CA

Good Jobs Green Jobs Los Angeles Regional Conference
March 15-16, 2012
Los Angeles, CA

315 W. 9th Street, Suite 1010
Los Angeles, CA 90015
Phone: 213-612-4545
Fax: 213-488-3468

www.elpadvisors.com
www.lesardevelopment.com



Food, Fitness and Democracy



As we slowly recover from the traditional Valentine's Day chocolate hangover, we're thinking that if "food is love" then the growing movement around increasing access to fresh and healthy food is spreading a powerful message in some of our most underserved communities.

This month we're highlighting one of the most exciting strands in the sustainable economic development movement - the diverse and dynamic efforts to re-organize our relationship to food production, distribution and consumption in order "**to reduce hunger, improve public health, increase equity in our communities, create good jobs, stimulate local economic activity, and foster environmental stewardship.**"

And as we're trying to make healthier food options available to more people, we think it only makes sense that we also try to invest more in the bicycle and pedestrian improvements that will ease traffic, increase fitness and make our communities more livable. We hope that when the dust clears on the federal transportation reauthorization bill, our spending priorities will have shifted to a more sustainable path.

Perhaps Congress might benefit from the kind of Participatory Budgeting exercise that cities across North America are using to engage taxpayers in deciding how to allocate scarce public dollars. Here's a vote for a new twist on democracy.

Sincerely yours,

Cecilia V. Estolano | Jennifer LeSar | Katherine Aguilar Perez

Linking Health and Sustainability



The fresh and local food movement is one of the most vibrant forces sweeping through urban communities in the U.S. From **urban farms in Detroit, green carts in New York, to North Carolina's 10 percent campaign**, residents throughout the nation are being exposed to the benefits of **locally sourced food**. When coupled with a broader **healthy communities agenda**, the push for better access to fresh produce and locally produced food holds the promise of fundamentally transforming a multi-billion dollar industry. It also has the potential to drive demand for more sustainable communities.

Communities and policy makers alike are taking note of these trends, advocating for increased mobility options (public transit, walking, biking) and increasing access to healthy fruits and vegetables, particularly in historically underserved communities. Throughout California, a number of organizations are working on adopting healthy community strategies, receiving awards to regional food systems, developing models for sustainable food systems, and increasing awareness among youth about the importance of leading healthy lifestyles.

Groups throughout the state are receiving funding to implement healthy communities strategies. The Mayor of Baldwin Park recently teamed up with **First Lady Michelle Obama** and a number of funders, spearheaded by the California Endowment, to announce **FreshWorks**. The **\$200-million program** will "provide financing at or below market rates to encourage grocers to set up shop in underserved communities" throughout the state, according to the L.A. Times. Promoted, in part, as an economic development tool, the program is expected to create or retain 6,000 jobs in California and spur innovation in food retailing. As part of the program, First Lady Michelle Obama announced the first major investment: **\$20 million to bring "new grocery stores into City Heights, Inglewood and South Los Angeles."**

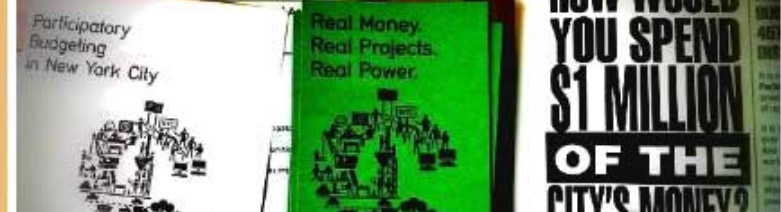
In addition, the Los Angeles County Department of Health (LACDH) received \$9.8 million dollars from the Centers for Disease Control as part of the U.S. Health & Human Services **Community Transformation Grants (CTG)**. LACDH will use the money to support existing community initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco use, improving nutrition and increasing physical activity. Grant recipients include the **City of Baldwin Park**, where funds will support youth-led efforts to ban junk food in Baldwin Park public schools, and finance "Healthy Selection" product aisles in existing businesses.

Baldwin Park is also part of the **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign**. The organization works with municipalities throughout California to "help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities' physical activity and retail food environments." They are working with over 100 California cities to make recommendations on land use, healthy food, and employee wellness policies. Among their built environment recommendations, the organization urges cities to invest in projects that increase opportunities for physical activity, address walking and bicycling connectivity issues in their communities, and to include health goals and policies related to physical activity in general plan updates. The organization also invites cities to build incentives for development project proposals that demonstrate a "favorable impact on resident and employee physical activity."

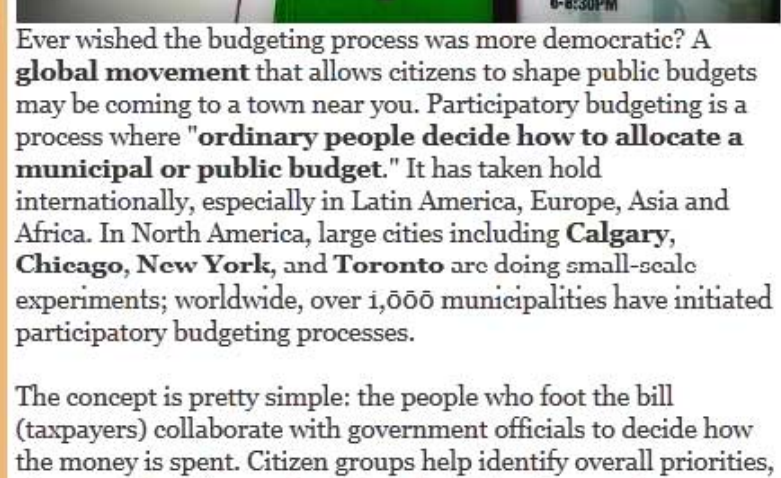
Organizations in Los Angeles are promoting healthy community strategies to increase access to "**good**" food, promote physical activity, and to **use local food sourcing as an economic development tool**. In 2009, the City of Los Angeles created a **Food Policy Council** to increase the availability of fresh produce in the city and region-wide. Founding Chair of the Council, Paula Daniels notes that California leads the nation in agricultural exports**, yet "very little of the food that is produced in the region is consumed in the urban core. Over one million L.A. County residents suffer from food insecurity." To address these issues, the Council envisions the re-invigoration of our **local and regional food system** - strengthening our network of small and mid-size growers and connecting them to end customers in Los Angeles.

You don't necessarily need to know what a **Regional Food Hub** is, or what exactly goes into conducting a **foodshed assessment**, or how to **structure a sustainable food procurement policy** [PDF]. But it's important to know that building healthy communities is more than getting people to eat their veggies. It's about creating a system that encourages a healthy citizenry through a series of policy incentives, public education, local investment, and regional coordination.

**The original version of this issue misstated that California "leads the nation in agricultural imports." The state actually leads the nation in agricultural exports.



Budgeting for the People, by the People



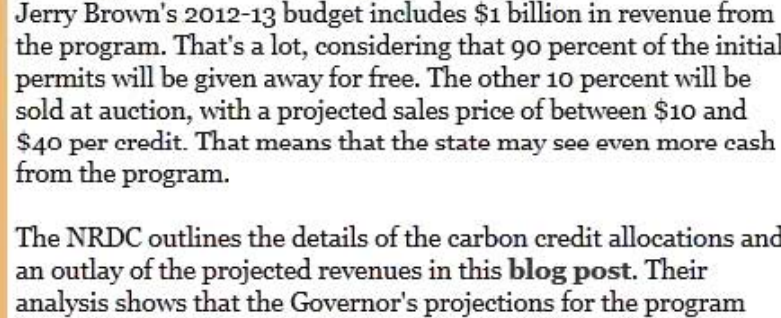
Ever wished the budgeting process was more democratic? A **global movement** that allows citizens to shape public budgets may be coming to a town near you. Participatory budgeting is a process where "**ordinary people decide how to allocate a municipal or public budget.**" It has taken hold internationally, especially in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. In North America, large cities including **Calgary, Chicago, New York, and Toronto** are doing small-scale experiments; worldwide, over 1,000 municipalities have initiated participatory budgeting processes.

The concept is pretty simple: the people who foot the bill (taxpayers) collaborate with government officials to decide how the money is spent. Citizen groups help identify overall priorities, choose projects for new investments, and make spending decisions. The process has been shown to increase citizen participation in local government and, in some international contexts, has been shown to improve conditions for the poor.

To learn more about participatory planning check out the Participatory Budgeting Project website. And if you're in New York City in March you may want to register for the **international PB conference**.



Trading Carbon Means Big Bucks for California



In August California will begin its experiment in carbon trading, and the government is **anticipating big returns**. Governor Jerry Brown's 2012-13 budget includes \$1 billion in revenue from the program. That's a lot, considering that 90 percent of the initial permits will be given away for free. The other 10 percent will be sold at auction, with a projected sales price of between \$10 and \$40 per credit. That means that the state may see even more cash from the program.

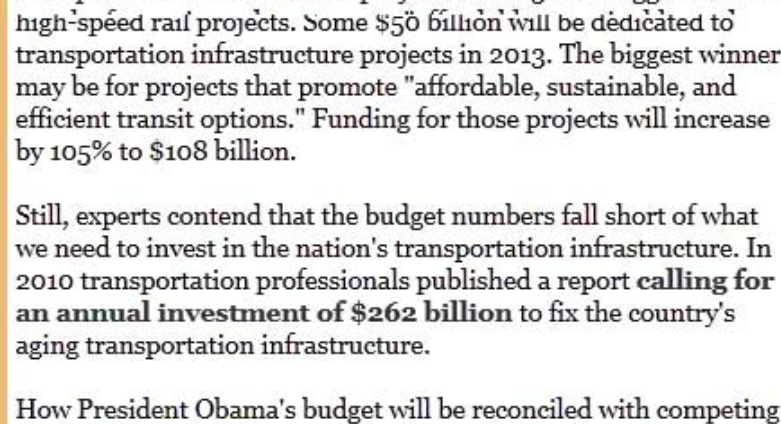
The NRDC outlines the details of the carbon credit allocations and an outlay of the projected revenues in this **blog post**. Their analysis shows that the Governor's projections for the program are reasonable. By their estimates, the program will generate over \$500 million annually over the next three years, and it is expected to reap even more revenue when emissions from the transportation sector are regulated in 2015.

The money raised at auction will be used to implement the state's 2006 climate legislation (AB 32). Proposed spending categories include clean & efficient energy, low-carbon transportation, natural resource protection, and sustainable infrastructure development. Transit oriented development advocates note that under the "sustainable infrastructure development" category, the Governor's budget **contemplates using those dollars to fund transportation and housing projects.**

Although \$1 billion dollars may not seem like much in our cash-strapped state, economists predict that once the program is fully implemented, carbon trading could bring in more than \$15 billion annually for the state.



Transportation Budget Gridlock?



In this era of budget cuts and revenue shortfalls, transportation may be one of the few bright spots in the federal budget. In President Obama's most recent budget proposal, **federal transportation will increase by about two percent**. It outlines a six-year, \$476 billion surface transportation plan with \$47 billion dedicated to developing high-speed rail projects. Some \$50 billion will be dedicated to transportation infrastructure projects in 2013. The biggest winner high-speed rail projects. Some \$50 billion will be dedicated to transportation infrastructure projects in 2013. The biggest winner may be for projects that promote "affordable, sustainable, and efficient transit options." Funding for those projects will increase by 105% to \$108 billion.

Still, experts contend that the budget numbers fall short of what we need to invest in the nation's transportation infrastructure. In 2010 transportation professionals published a report **calling for an annual investment of \$262 billion** to fix the country's aging transportation infrastructure.

How President Obama's budget will be reconciled with competing versions from the House and the Senate is yet to be seen.

The House's **controversial** bill provides \$200 billion less than the president's plan, with a five-year timeline. Once again, the bill attempts to axe some \$925 million that primarily fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The proposal also ends a decades-old provision that uses gas tax funds for public transit. And, **just for fun**, the bill also includes a provision that "would open a portion of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to energy exploration to generate money for road projects." A **broad array of groups** have come out against the bill for a myriad of reasons. The opposition includes civil rights groups, **The Episcopal Church**, **conservative groups**, and unions.

What all of this means in the long-run is still uncertain. As we've seen time and again in our recent political climate, the competing budget proposals from the House and the Obama Administration represent two diametrically opposed visions of how to invest in essential infrastructure. The House bill prioritizes highway and road construction over transit, bicycling, and pedestrians. And the President's proposal incrementally shifts the nation's transportation spending priorities towards a more sustainable path. This conflict is unlikely to be resolved until after the November elections, which is unfortunate, since our nation's transportation future is hanging in the balance.

