

AIA Bay Area Regional Forum

The American Institute of Architects

AIA Central Valley - East Bay - Monterey Bay - Redwood Empire - Santa Clara Valley - San Francisco - San Mateo County - Sierra Valley



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 27, 2006

TO: David Downey, FAIA - Chair AIA150
American Institute of Architects

FROM: Philip J. Bona, AIA, APA
AIACC Vice President for Legislative Affairs
AIA San Mateo County Past President

RE: A Blueprint for America Challenge
for the AIA150 Celebration for 2007
Housing the Next Million - Community Design Charrettes
To Take Place All Over America During April 15 -22, 2007

In support of the AIA's Blueprint for America Initiative and the Center for Communities by Design, I present the following draft Table of Contents and concept Overview for your consideration. The current document is written with a focus on California leaders but with some effort I am able to adapt it to the national AIA audience.

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Overview: Blueprint for America

In 2007, the members of the American Institute of Architects will achieve the milestone of 150 years of service to the profession and more importantly to the nation. Since 1857, the Institute has promoted the value of close working relationships between its leadership and local communities by creating a better future for America through design.

Last year the United States was responsible for approximately \$1.12 Trillion in construction that employed over 100,000 architects. As the AIA, architects have much to celebrate and much more to offer communities in sustainably shaping cities through smart growth and transportation equity.

There is an outstanding opportunity to celebrate America's recent accomplishments and best practices in implementing livable communities and sustainable architecture through exemplary design. There is also an opening to proactively reach out to communities, local leaders, legislators, and colleagues to demonstrate alternative futures for communities across the country in light of constant demographic growth.

The U.S. population is expected to increase 33% to 376 million by 2030. Barring some unforeseen natural or economic calamity, in order to serve the nation's growing population, almost 60 million new housing units will need to be built in the country by 2030. In a 2005 survey, the AIA asked state and local policy officials about issues affecting their communities. Seventy-eight percent of these leaders said that, compared to other political and economic concerns, "housing" and "livable communities" issues were either "one of the most important" or "very important" concerns. Close to two-thirds of those surveyed said they were directly involved in initiatives to address these issues.

Since this growth translates to building over 60 million new U.S. households in the next twenty-five years, it will be a valuable gift to the country to develop a smart growth blueprint for every small, medium and large city. The challenge proposed here is for AIA leadership in each region to step forward using the processes identified herein and lead a community effort to discover opportunities for this growth. Using the unifying theme of "Housing the Next Million" during the 2007 AIA 150 Celebration, architects can explore the opportunity for new transit oriented development solutions in communities all over America. Using best practices already being implemented around the country, architects and civic leaders will analyze and provide visions for affordable and market rate housing, and mixed-use infill development. To help gain recognition, this theme needs to stimulate the sensibilities of each intended local and statewide audience. To the Architects the message may be

quality sustainable buildings; to the builders - better blueprints; to the owners - cost effective design; to the developers - consistent and appropriate regulations; to the city planners - smart growth practices; to the politicians - smart growth policies, and to the public the message is safe, healthy and attractive communities with equal access to transportation. Another important message addresses public transportation equity. It has become a critical factor in the development of successful urban and even suburban fabric. Accessibility to and from jobs, home, shopping, and park and recreational space can make or break even the best Zoning and General Plan intentions. Sometimes infrastructure can physically isolate or divide a community in half. Often cities need to reunify around the removal of such barriers.

Some Grassroots groups across America are challenging transportation and housing inequities at the local, metropolitan, state, and federal agency levels to develop just, healthy and sustainable communities with benefits for all sectors of society. In this regard, community leaders are beginning to question policies that use tax dollars to subsidize suburban sprawl and that suggest the demise of urban inner-city neighborhoods. For example the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California has successfully implemented a coalition organizing drive to win support for fair-share housing goals in the General Plan updates of fifteen high-growth cities.

There has been much dialogue over the past several months among AIA leadership regarding the importance of this housing and quality of life message in regard to the AIA 150 efforts. AIA leaders have the opportunity to lead efforts in diverse communities over the next few years to first discuss and then take action to creatively and systematically provide for 90 million more people. The opportunity to engage architects as skilled leaders, planners, and designers in this kind of grassroots effort will meet as many challenges as there are faces. Outreach to a variety of groups in their community can bring different resources and tactics to bear. It will be necessary to use the membership's time wisely. These leaders will need to select a mix of short-term community enterprises to ensure people stay engaged and celebrate small victories while building towards long-term efforts that can create truly fundamental change.

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The remainder of this 50+ page document describes a step by step approach on how the AIA leadership will be able to conceive, plan for, carry out, and benefit from a Community Design Charrette. I am soliciting AIA to publish and distribute the document electronically and in binder form to all AIA components with all credits due its creators. There is even the potential of a website.