

AIA | LA

THE 2012 AIA|LA ISSUE BRIEFS

**IMPROVING THE
ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMICS
OF LOS ANGELES: BY DESIGN**



ROTO Architects - Pacoima Neighborhood City Hall



The LADG - 620 South Main Street



Michael Maltzan Architecture, Inc. - New Carver Apartments

In these economically challenging times, how do we leverage our investments in infrastructure and public amenities to ensure that we are enhancing the aesthetics of our neighborhoods and making our communities more desirable and prosperous?

Healthy and beautiful places thrive and become economic engines that nourish and replenish our city's natural and financial resources. Enhancing the public realm to maximize economic and environmental performance is essential to the fiscal health of the City of Los Angeles, especially if we want to prosper in comparison to other world-class cities.

For over a decade, AIA|LA has coordinated our annual Legislative Day at City Hall to advocate for a more beautiful and better designed Los Angeles. City leadership has listened and we thank you! Working together, we've accomplished numerous initiatives to make the city a better place.

Together, we've successfully:

- Expanded alternative project delivery methods for capital investment
- Improved procurement methods for selecting architects
- Recommended a path to reduce the Gross-Receipts Business Tax
- Implemented key Development Reform strategies
- Updated numerous citywide planning and land-use ordinances

Many AIA|LA architects have been appointed to city commissions and design review boards. Numerous more have joined neighborhood councils and other community groups. We are delighted to serve as a leadership resource and we look forward to forging stronger connections in the years ahead.

For 2012, we are highlighting four key issues that will help further transform the City of Los Angeles into a more economically and environmentally sustainable place.

We recommend city leadership to:

- 1. Expand LADWP's Feed-In-Tariff Program**
- 2. Improve LADBS L.A.R.R. Process**
- 3. Optimize the Zoning Code Reform Process**
- 4. Appoint Architects to Serve on City Commissions**
- 5. Invest in Green Infrastructure + Green Public Spaces**

“When I'm working on a problem, I never think about beauty. But when I've finished, if the solution is not beautiful I know it's wrong.”
- R. Buckminster Fuller

**OBJECTIVE:
EXPAND LADWP'S FEED-IN-
TARIFF PROGRAM**



Brooks + Scarpa Architects - House in Venice, CA

ISSUE

In April 2012, LADWP initiated a 10 Megawatt Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) demonstration program. Applications have been accepted and contracts will be awarded in November. As a pilot program, AIA|LA recognizes that this is a positive first step. However, to help the City of Los Angeles meet the state mandated requirement of a 33% renewable energy portfolio by 2020, we encourage LADWP to pro-actively expand the FiT program and further streamline the application process so that more single-family homeowners and small-to-medium size businesses are able to participate. Through August 2012, only 26 applications had been received for a total of 7 MW of distributed power. Let's work together to ensure the program's long-term success and a sustainable future for our City.

PROPOSAL

Create a true feed-in-tariff by improving the program as follows:

- Create a simple, ideally one page contract
- Award access to the program on a first-come-first-served basis
- Offer a fixed rate of return to renewable energy suppliers
- Reduce the application fee to a nominal level
- Cover the interconnection analysis and any upgrade costs as part of the program rather than burdening the individual renewable energy supplier
- Expand the program with an additional 150 MW in 2014

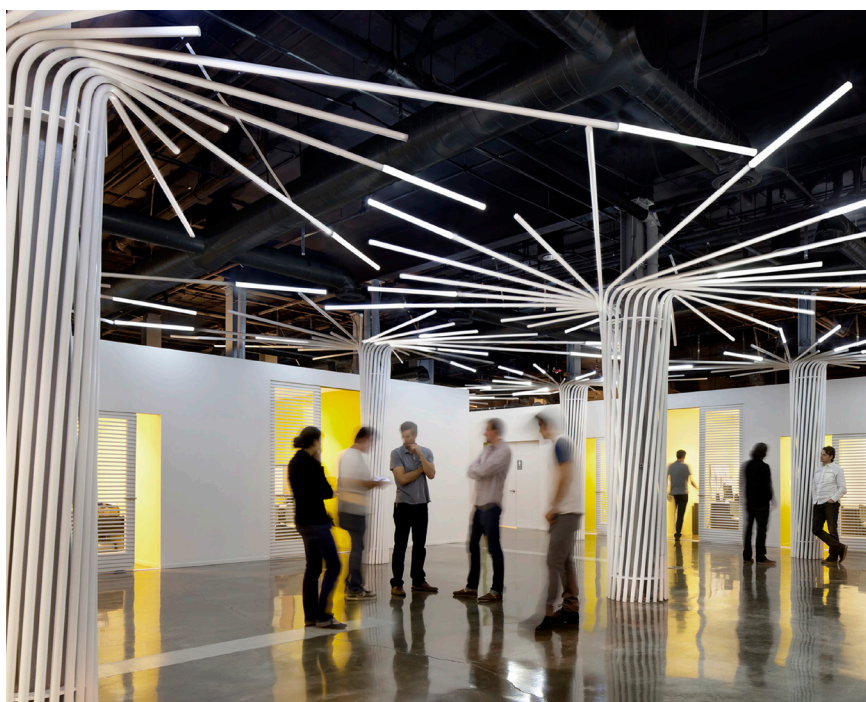
DISCUSSION

As Angelenos, we are fortunate to own our utility company. As a public entity financed by tax and rate-payers, LADWP can further evolve to serve the City of Los Angeles in two-ways: to continue to provide us with a safe, reliable and sustainable source of water and electricity, and to facilitate greater economic development by enabling property owners to earn a return on their investment in distributed power generation. Fostering incentives for people to create more energy than they consume, Los Angeles, and the entire Southern California region, can become stewards of a healthier planet and realize greater economic prosperity in the process. AIA|LA would like to work more closely with LADWP leadership to ensure the implementation of a true Feed-in-Tariff program.

The plan to expand the current 10 MW program to 150 MW in 2013 is a good start. To truly lead, LADWP should expand the program with an additional 150 MW of renewable generation available in 2014. Although we understand that LADWP's proportionate share of the AB 32 mandated statewide target of 750 MW is only 75 MW, AIA|LA encourages LADWP to take a leadership position by exceeding the minimal goals of the State and present a model to the nation in the ways Southern California is addressing climate change. In addition to expanding the size of the program, it is vital that LADWP streamline the application process. Hallmarks of a properly designed FiT are a simple contract (ideally one page), a low application fee, a first-come-first-served application acceptance process, and a fixed, pre-determined rate paid to the energy provider. Unfortunately, the LADWP program is more complicated than it should be. Particularly onerous is the high interconnection study fee and the fact that the applicant is expected to pay for interconnection upgrades to the grid. We encourage LADWP to modernize its power grid as a benefit to all rate payers so that we can avoid building remote plants and expensive transmission lines, which would otherwise be necessary without distributed power produced locally in Los Angeles.

LADWP needs this power to meet its renewable energy goals. Revising the program in the manner enumerated above will expand the pool of private interests able and incentivized to participate in meeting the region's renewable energy requirements. With 12 GW of power available in the Los Angeles basin (as shown in a recent UCLA Luskin Center For Innovation study), there is a genuine opportunity for Los Angeles to become a net-energy provider to the region. Robust FiT programs proven effective around the world are responsible for the vast majority of installed distributed power (as evidenced in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan). With an improved process, Los Angeles and its utility can help show the country the way forward.

**OBJECTIVE:
IMPROVE THE LADBS
RESEARCH REPORT PROCESS**



Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA] - Skid Row Housing Trust

ISSUE

AIA|LA is eager to continue lending its expertise and assist the LADBS and General Manager Bud Ovrom in clarifying and streamlining the Los Angeles Research Report (LARR) process. In June 2012, GM Ovrom asked AIA|LA to solicit feedback from architects about the current LARR Process. We issued a survey and received candid, anecdotal responses from 74 individuals. Most indicated their dissatisfaction with the current LARR process. In early August, AIA|LA and LADBS management met to discuss the survey and determine the best way forward to an improved LARR. We are extremely encouraged that Bud Ovrom, Ray Chan and Ifa Kashefi have committed LADBS management to this effort. Support from the City Council will help further prioritize LARR improvements as part of a greater development reform and economic development effort.

PROPOSAL

To improve the LARR process the following changes should be implemented:

- Clarify that only structural components require a LARR report.
- Clarify that when compliant with the LA City Building Code, other test methodologies such as ICBO, UL, ICC, etc. are acceptable for all components – including structural components.
- Create a user accessible LARR data base
- Apprise all Plan Check Engineers of changes as they come on line.
- As a long term goal, work with the Division of State Architect to move this program to the State level so that structural issues are given the priority they deserve in California, as a statewide issue rather than an onerous regulatory patchwork.

DISCUSSION

Since the late 1960's, The City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety has provided the services of a testing lab to approve alternate materials and building products measuring quality, fire resistance, strength, effectiveness, durability and safety. Over the years, however, the process for obtaining a Los Angeles Research Report (LARR) has become cumbersome; we feel the process will benefit from a re-examination in light of citywide goals and priorities.

As currently implemented, the LARR process stifles creative innovation and adds an undue burden on development in Los Angeles. In order to ensure a holistic, design-thinking approach to updating the LARR process, AIA|LA encourages City Council and the Department of Building and Safety to re-examine whether Los Angeles needs a special and unique process, one not required by other jurisdictions. Our neighboring cities of Pasadena, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Glendale, Burbank, Culver City, etc., have no requirement for additional Research Reports; in all these locations ICC and UL listings suffice. New and innovative non-structural materials coming on line are not available to projects built in the City of Los Angeles without going through the burdensome, lengthy and expensive RR process.

The City should commit to fostering innovation and supporting manufacturers, material innovators and the design community as a whole by making it easier to utilize new building materials. More and more often we find that the research reports are redundant, simply a validation of reports prepared by qualified and nationally recognized testing agencies, not the result of research originated by the City. Clearly, the benefit of providing this service is questionable, and eliminating redundant procedures should be part of the City's larger goal of development reform. At the same time, the process itself may infer a liability onto the City for reports not fully researched and vetted by its agencies.

On behalf of our membership and our clients, we feel it is important to evaluate the economic impacts of the LARR process, and point out these impacts in light of other City goals.

AIA|LA looks forward to working with Mr. Ovrom and the LADBS leadership to refine the LARR process so that it offers the greatest benefit to the City and its residents and works together, in an effective way, with the ongoing process of development reform for Los Angeles.

**OBJECTIVE:
OPTIMIZE THE ZONING CODE
REFORM PROCESS**



a l m project, inc. - Sprinkles Ice Cream

ISSUE

The Department of Planning is currently engaged in a five-year, \$5M process to perform a comprehensive revision to the Zoning Code, a document that hasn't been substantially updated since its inception in 1946. The AIA|LA was a strong advocate for this initiative as it proceeded through Council. The Request for Proposal (RFP) published in August 2012 outlines a broad scope for the Zoning Code revisions as well as a substantial public process. The AIA|LA looks forward to active engagement on the Policy Advisory Committee, in addition to working in partnership with the Department of City Planning (DCP) as the scope and goals of the effort are further clarified.

In addition, we welcome the opportunity to work with DCP to develop planning tools that encourage great architecture and urban design. The revised Zoning Code will enable architects and designers to create great places that will truly enhance our City, improve our quality of life and move us forward as a world-class metropolis in the 21st century.

PROPOSAL

Create a world-class, uniquely compelling citywide zoning code that is clear and predictable by following these principals:

- Web-based and user-friendly;
- Encourages design innovation;
- Re-evaluates land-use compatibilities for the 21st century;
- Considers all other regulations which may make zoning concerns either redundant or reductive and consolidates otherwise conflicting regulations for clarity and consistency;
- Fully integrates a high degree of design-intelligence to rethinking the objectives/mission of the zoning code and integrates design guidelines and highlights best practices to enable and encourage design excellence;
- Provides a variety of tools necessary to tailor requirements for unique community plan areas and neighborhoods;
- Coordinates fully with the mobility element update currently in progress;
- Envisions the future narrative of Los Angeles and respects the dynamics of our past;
- Utilizes a broad understanding of the social, environmental and economic goals of zoning regulations in the 21st Century;
- Provides a well-designed, state-of-the-art and award-winning planning tool.

DISCUSSION

The first goal is to ensure that we are asking the right questions: What are the specific problems we are trying to solve and what are the achievable goals we want to include in development of the new Zoning Code? How can zoning and mobility be fully integrated for a well-designed city? How can we define compatible land-uses for today's urban environment and for the foreseeable future? How can a Zoning Code for the entire city provide requirements that are responsive to the unique characteristics of each community plan area, district and neighborhood? How can we craft this document to promote economic and environmental sustainability for our region?

Great architecture and urban design is essential to the economic vitality and quality of life throughout the City of Los Angeles. AIA|LA is overwhelmingly in support of enabling and encouraging design excellence as an essential goal of the new Zoning Code. Rather than see its role as restrictive, the Zoning Code must create a set of tools that encourage innovation in both the public and the private realm.

Furthermore, AIA|LA highlights the importance of having the new code provide clarity so that developers and community-members alike can easily understand requirements. The issues described in the code are three-dimensional and can most clearly and accurately be described with diagrams, drawings and other graphics. City documents, aimed at encouraging the growth and development of our city need to be clear in both their intent and their implementation; visual tools are an essential part of this process.

This is an incredible opportunity for the City of Los Angeles to take an active role in shaping its future. The new Zoning Code needs is our opportunity to promote a future that is vibrant, sustainable, responsive and beautiful.

**OBJECTIVE:
APPOINT ARCHITECTS TO
SERVE ON CITY COMMISSIONS**



MDA Johnson Favaro - West Hollywood Library

ISSUE

Design is a critical factor in the consideration of projects that will significantly affect and shape the future of the City of Los Angeles. There are many commissions, boards, and committees empowered to review development projects and to create and implement policies that have a significant impact on the built environment of our city.

PROPOSAL

AIA|LA requests that the City of Los Angeles expand the appointment of design professionals in general and architects in particular to sit on commissions, boards and committees with authority to review and approve projects affecting the environment of our city. 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
- 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 Heritage Commission
- El Pueblo De Los Angeles Historical Monument Authority
- Environmental Affairs Commission
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- Industrial Development Authority
- *Regional Boards* -
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

DISCUSSION

Architects, landscape architects and other design professionals are trained to understand and think critically and creatively about issues involving the physical environment. Architects and design professionals are necessary on appointed bodies that review projects and develop and implement design policies in Los Angeles. 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 will benefit greatly by inclusion of architects in the decision-making process concerning the built environment.

**OBJECTIVE:
INVEST IN GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE + GREEN
PUBLIC SPACES TO CLEAN
OUR REGIONAL WATERSHED**

Opportunity:
The Proposed Los Angeles
County Clean Water, Clean
Beaches Measure



Mia Lehrer + Associates - South Los Angeles Wetland Park



Belzberg Architects - Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust at Pan Pacific Park

ISSUE

Citywide, we face a lack of open space, our streets and roadbeds are degraded and impervious, and our River has historically been treated as a drainage channel. The County of Los Angeles Flood Control District is drafting a “Clean Water, Clean Beaches” (Water Quality Improvement Projects) parcel fee estimated to generate over \$270 million dollars annually to improve the infrastructure of the regional watershed. This is an unprecedented opportunity to create an exciting, livable, and sustainable city, with new public spaces and streets that simultaneously benefit the watershed.

With the mail home balloting for the measure imminent in April 2013, time is of the essence. The measure, as currently drafted, does not adequately address the planning and design criteria by which projects would be selected, does not emphasize the need for projects to be highly visible public amenities, and does not promote transparency in administering the measure. If this measure is to be supported by the public, it must offer the public tangible results that improve their lives in this city.

The AIA|LA urges the City Council to take an active role in establishing the criteria by which the water quality projects will be selected and funded, and urges specific set asides for projects which benefit the public in a visible, physical form, especially water quality components of Los Angeles River projects.

PROPOSAL

We encourage the City Council to promote River revitalization, complete streets and clean watersheds with the following recommendations:

- Request that the County of Los Angeles’ Department of Public Works appoint Design Professionals to all the proposed Water Quality Projects Oversight Boards and panels to provide a regional and coherent urban design vision.
- Instruct the City of Los Angeles’ Bureau of Sanitation to create funding set-asides for demonstrable, visible, green infrastructure, and in particular to allocate an annual funding amount of 30% of the City’s annual allocation for Los Angeles River Revitalization water quality projects, as a primary means of fulfilling the goals of the County of Los Angeles Clean Water Measure.
- Establish an official City of Los Angeles Oversight Committee to review and approve projects and programs that will draw upon the annual City funding from the Bond allocations.
- Instruct the City of Los Angeles’ Department of Street Services to adopt Complete Street design guidelines, to allow the ongoing implementation of green streets as a means of cleaning the watershed.
- Work with the County to establish clear project criteria to assure well designed, public amenity focused, cost-effective, measurable, multiple-benefit projects that green our public spaces while fulfilling the needs of the proposed County of Los Angeles Clean Water Measure.
- Reduce the percentage of revenue dedicated to administrative fees to less than the currently proposed \$54 million in order to increase spending on infrastructure implementation and to increase transparency in administering the measure.
- Expand the City parklet pilot program citywide in order to increase permeability and open space, and to convert underutilized spaces into amenities to clean the watershed.

DISCUSSION

AIA|LA supports the proposed County of Los Angeles’ Clean Water Measure’s intent to clean our rivers, lakes, beaches and coastal waters, and we recognize this as an unprecedented opportunity to work toward a number of goals that concerned citizens, politicians, designers and environmentalists have been discussing for nearly a generation. If approved by the voters in April 2013, the Clean Water Measure will impose a parcel fee on land in the range of \$54 to \$10,000 per annum. The measure is expected to generate an estimated \$270 million per year for the region, in perpetuity, with a direct allocation to the City of Los Angeles of approximately \$30 million, to be spent on projects that can substantially improve the health of our watershed.

(CLEAN WATERSHEDS continued...)

We feel it is essential that an undertaking of this magnitude have a regional, synthetic vision – an urban design – that overlays the implementation of the large variety of specific projects to be funded by this measure. Although the program intent specifically states that design is one of the major purposes of the funding, as currently conceived, the constitution of the Oversight Boards does not mandate the inclusion of Design Professionals. We urge the inclusion of design professionals on all of the new Boards and Agencies, both to assist in creating clear project criteria, and in generating a strategic and coherent urban design overview.

Complete streets, along with increased parkland, will alleviate the pressures on the storm drain system, using green infrastructure to help clean the watershed and provide benefits to the public - pedestrian and bike friendly streets, a revitalized River, mitigated storm water runoff, reduced heat gain, and open space for a park starved Los Angeles. AIA|LA recommends that the City of Los Angeles' share of the Clean Water Measure revenue be applied to these green infrastructure projects. The LA City Bureau of Sanitation, charged with representing Los Angeles in authorship of the Measure, should be instructed to specify set-asides for such projects in lieu of “invisible” projects, such as underground pipes, street-sweeping and maintenance programs.

The AIA|LA suggests that water quality related River Revitalization projects, which have been City Council approved in 2007, receive dedicated funding of no less than 30% of the City's allocation (approximately \$10 million annually), without the need to “apply” for funding. The Los Angeles River is a resource central to the health of the entire region's waters. We know how well you understand that revitalizing the Los Angeles River can provide much needed open-space, better connections between our communities, and improve our region's ability to attract investment.

Further, the AIA|LA urges that administrative caps proposed be reduced, in order to maximize the transparency of the program and the benefit to the public. AIA|LA is available as a leadership resource and we look forward to remaining engaged in the process of ensuring a healthy watershed for generations to come.

“I don't divide architecture, landscape and gardening; to me they are one.”
- Luis Barragán

OUR MISSION ::

PROVIDING THE LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Los Angeles chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA|LA) is an organization of over 3200 design professionals. Our mission is to provide leadership in improving the built environment of Los Angeles, and the health and wellbeing of the citizens that it supports.

It is with care and compassion for our city that we strive through various advocacy initiatives and professional outreach programs to highlight the vital role of architecture and urban design.

Advancing and expanding the vital role of architecture and urban design:

- Ensures a more attractive and livable city
- Fosters a healthier and more sustainable environment
- Builds “cultural capital” by attracting visitors and tourist dollars
- Enlivens communities and bolsters civic pride
- Enables greater cost-savings and a higher return on public investments

Our profession is the leading edge of a building industry that accounts for one in nine dollars of our national \$14 trillion gross domestic product. Architects are vital to the economic recovery of our city; when an architect is hired, 30 additional jobs are created to build what we design.



Michael W. Folonis Architects - UCLA Outpatient Surgery & Medical Building

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Zellnerplus - Matthew Marks Gallery