

LOS  
ANGELES:  
**DESIGNING  
OUR FUTURE**

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The 2013 AIA|LA Advocacy Platform

**AIA | LA**

# For many, Los Angeles has long been the genial city,

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known for its temperate climate, diverse landscapes and the home of unfettered independence, entrepreneurship and creativity. Our built environment has mirrored these same features yielding a rich mixture of memorable private homes, cultural facilities, sports and entertainment buildings, university campuses and today, high-rise towers. Responding to this increasingly dense urban landscape, these buildings are often innovative, unique and trendsetting.

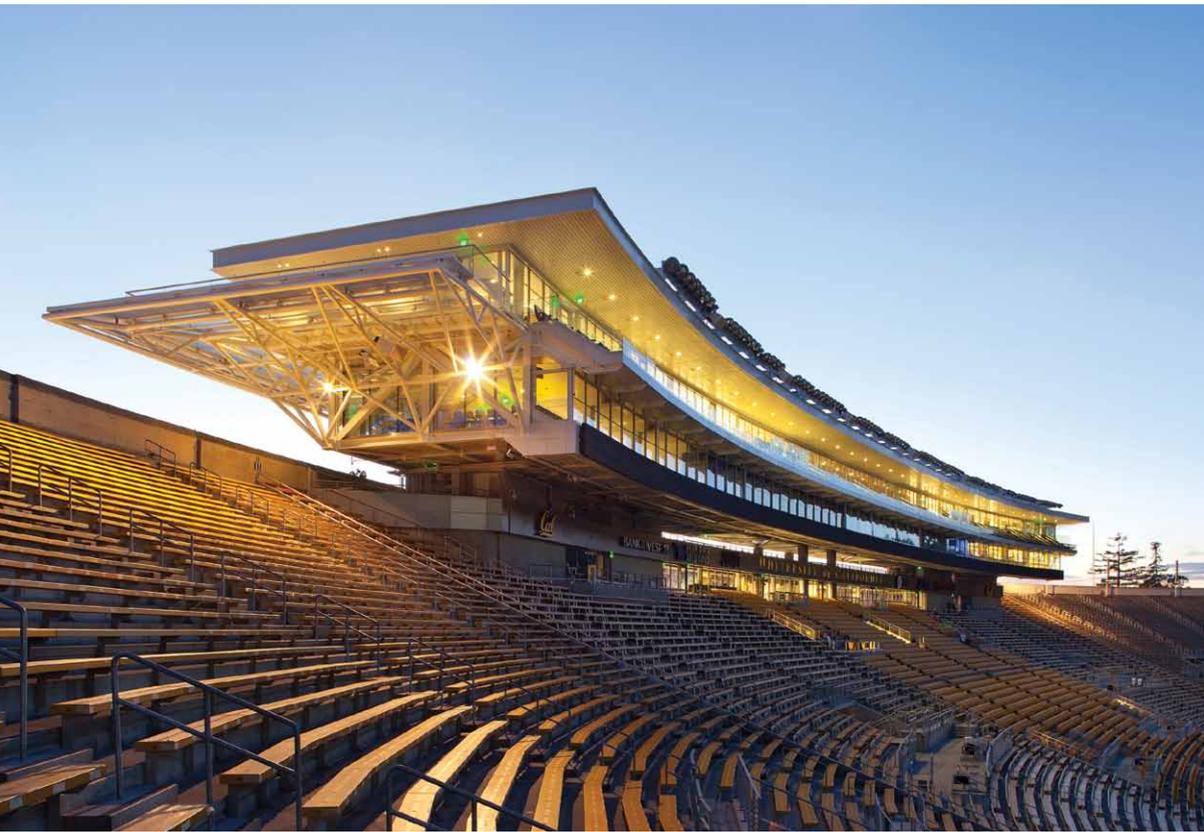
Notwithstanding these singular creative achievements, the growth of our city has evolved to the extent that the quality of life enjoyed by all Angelenos now hinges less on our prescient individual buildings as on the major public improvements we all choose to make as a whole community. Environmental health, mobility and public transit, the creation of parks and open space, the preservation and adaptive re-use of existing building stock and the enhancement of our neighborhoods are all among the most important issues affecting our physical environment and, to a large extent, our quality of life.

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects believes that a concern

for physical outcomes must be injected into all policy and managerial decisions in City government. Architects call this Design-Thinking, but in fact, everyone employs Design-Thinking when they attempt to visualize what the results will be when they take a position on any issue. Too often, policy positions are built along narrow lines correlated to specific constituent services. As a result, they fail to be viewed either in terms of physical outcomes or in relation to other important issues of the day. Integration is sacrificed, larger opportunities are missed and the public's sizeable investment in City government is marginalized.

We are fortunate in Los Angeles to have a new Mayor who is no stranger to complex urban issues, a motivated political leadership, an activist and vocal population and a design community willing and able to support progress in these areas. No longer just a maverick community of individuality and self-absorption, the City of Los Angeles, as it matures, can focus talent and resources on those collective efforts that turn a big city into a Great City.

**Scott Johnson, FAIA**  
**2013 President, AIA Los Angeles**



**TOP**  
California Memorial Stadium & Simpson Center **HNTB**

**BELOW**  
TAUT 2 X 8 Exhibit 2012 **Gillis**

**TOP RIGHT**  
The New Tom Bradley International Terminal at LAX **Fentress Architects**

**BELOW RIGHT**  
The Resnick Institute for Sustainability / Joint Center for Artificial  
Photosynthesis **John Friedman Alice Kimm Architects**



# Los Angeles: Designing Our Future

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## TEN POINT PLAN

**The future is now.** The City of Los Angeles stands at a crossroads in its evolution as one of the unique and great cities on earth. Increased investment in our regional transit system plus the comprehensive revision to the LA Zoning Code are underway, promising to remake the city at a scale and pace not seen in over 60 years. Renewed efforts are taking place to streamline city review processes and to re-orient personnel to be more customer-focused. Additionally, our political leadership has been transformed with a new Mayor, a new City Attorney, a new Controller and seven new Council Members. *Designing Our Future* begins with public vision and Los Angeles is poised to create that vision, one of economic prosperity, social equity and civic pride for all Angelenos.

With the goal of preserving and enhancing the quality of the built and natural environments of Los Angeles for future generations, AIA|LA offers its 2013 Advocacy Platform to the City's policy makers with a promise of unwavering support as they carry forward this important work. The AIA|LA's Ten Point Plan identifies what we believe is on everyone's priority list to create a higher performing and more beautiful city.

This **Ten Point Plan** promises to re-make our city in ways felt by all Angelenos. The AIA|LA stands ready to support civic leaders who see the long-term public benefit of *Designing Our Future* now.

- 1 Invest in a long-term Vision Plan for Los Angeles.
- 2 Maximize the impact of RE:CODE LA.
- 3 Streamline entitlement and permit procedures.
- 4 Create an Office of Architecture and Urban Design (OAU).
- 5 Incentivize high-density high-rise development in Downtown Los Angeles.
- 6 Build Complete Streets and include bike lanes, enhanced sidewalks, parkways and bio-swales in the proposed street repair bond.
- 7 Eliminate the Gross Receipts Business Tax.
- 8 Inventory all publically-owned real estate in the Los Angeles region.
- 9 Improve LADWP's Feed-In-Tariff Program.
- 10 Appoint architects to city commissions.

# 1

## Invest in a long-term vision plan for Los Angeles

### THE CHALLENGE

*In order to be DESIGNING OUR FUTURE, evolving attitudes about how we choose to experience our city require a thoughtful and shared vision of Los Angeles. Land use and transit are central to this vision supported by enhanced coordination between planning and permitting procedures. The community at large often does not clearly recognize the city's long-term goals regarding growth patterns and sustainable development. Furthermore, the overall needs of the region as a whole are often perceived to conflict with the immediate needs of an individual neighborhood that may not be comfortable shouldering its portion of those regional needs. To resolve these conflicts, a comprehensive narrative of how we want to evolve as a total city needs to be created.*

### THE SOLUTION

Most major world cities have established and updated Vision Plans. In the past decade, London, Paris, Tokyo, Sao Paulo and New York are among the many who have done so. Under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership, PlaNYC 2030 was created to bring together twenty-five city agencies to implement a plan that would prepare the city for one million more residents, build the economy, adapt to climate change and improve the quality of life for New Yorkers. Los Angeles is the largest metropolis in the State of California and the major contributor to its outsized economy. Neighborhoods are densifying rapidly, nowhere more notable than in Downtown, and relationships between transit, land-use and density are critical to livability and equal access. We invite Mayor Garcetti to embrace long-term planning and encourage the City Council to invest in a long-term Vision Plan that will motivate more people to share their own visions for a vibrant Los Angeles of the future.

# 2

## Maximize the impact of RE:CODE LA

### THE CHALLENGE

*As the City of Los Angeles proceeds with its effort to revise its citywide zoning code, RE:CODE LA holds the potential to update the historic 1946 Zoning Code to a dynamic web-based code, providing clarity and universal access. All architects, planners, engineers and builders will be using this new zoning code as they work to meet the needs of their population and build our future city. This new code must be easy to use, flexible and open to new ideas as they emerge.*

### THE SOLUTION

The revision of our zoning code allows Los Angeles to update itself for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, establishing a framework for how LA will grow over the next 100 years. We encourage a zoning code that requires better, more consistent baseline development standards and allows architects the flexibility to meet these goals in innovative ways that incentivize good design. We support the development of a code that expresses a clear vision, is easy to follow and is nimble in response to future needs.

- Use the new code to build upon innovations the city has made in both density and transit.
- Coordinate the code with other planning and design initiatives to counteract development on a “project by project” basis.
- Incorporate more discussion of good design principles so that Agency staff is in a better position to evaluate innovative design ideas.
- Keep it simple, clear and concise.
- Mesh the new code with the realities of infill development and integrate all standards mandated by other city departments.

# 3

## Streamline entitlement and permit procedures

### THE CHALLENGE

*Current permitting and approval processes are time-consuming and cumbersome, often in the service of resolving redundant, inapplicable and/or contradictory directives. The burdensome time and costs navigating these complexities often undermine the outcome and detract from the pool of resources available to supply direct and tangible benefits to the public. An institutional change in the culture of city staff is called for to insure better customer service, support business creation and add much-needed housing and jobs to the region.*

### THE SOLUTION

AIA|LA encourages city leadership to streamline development services in a way that achieves greater clarity and certainty. Better coordination of the requirements of multiple departments and agencies is needed. Recent managerial innovations like the Transit Corridors Cabinet, the Restaurant and Hospitality Express Permitting program and the Parallel Design-Permitting program are excellent examples which facilitate greater dialogue between city staff and the design community, resulting in better architecture.

Simplifying the review process will make better use of valuable human resources, facilitating more innovative projects directed at solving increasingly complex design and environmental issues. With a more predictable process, the development community can redirect resources to deliver projects of greater public and private benefit. Simplification sends an encouraging message to the investment community and supports greater economic development in the region.

Many major cities have already implemented an integrated approach to entitlement and permit processing. In the case of New York City, a number of significant and complex projects have recently been realized in record time. New York's self-certification program saves valuable city staff resources and restores design responsibility to the architect where it belongs. AIA|LA looks forward to working with the City and sharing specific recommendations on how to improve these processes.

# 4

## Create an Office of Architecture and Urban Design (OAUD)

### THE CHALLENGE

*The potential realignment of city departments and the zoning code revision underway collectively represent unprecedented change to our entitlement and permit processes.*

*As a result of this change and the increasing number of complex projects that involve mixed-use buildings, transit-oriented development, public/private ventures and higher densities, professional experience and technical knowledge are vital in executing city reviews with sensitivity and success. Additionally, the Mayor, Council Members and staff, and Commissions frequently find themselves adjudicating issues of complex development projects wherein experienced design input is vital.*

### THE SOLUTION

We recommend the creation of an Office of Architecture and Urban Design (OAUD) composed of experienced design professionals. This office of two to three people, will serve as advocate and liaison within city government for these complex project issues and approvals. The presence of the OAUD promises to benefit all stakeholders: the City, in elevating the quality of its review process in public, public/private and significant private projects, the Development Community, in assisting to knowledgeable expedite project reviews and the Design and Construction Community who are the agencies' primary clients in executing built work here.

The growing number of issues which development projects are being asked to address in a major city such as Los Angeles turn on a familiarity with urban design, aesthetics, transit interface, sustainability and emerging and more complex building types. The OAUD will provide in-house design counsel to the City on these important topics.

# 5

## Incentivize high density high-rise development

### THE CHALLENGE

*As our city grows to accommodate future generations, it will be essential to direct that growth away from environmentally sensitive areas, away from the city's low-density transit-challenged perimeter and toward more sustainable transit and highly-serviced areas. Given the suburban history of Los Angeles residential development, it will also be necessary to steer high-rise, high-density development away from low density single-family neighborhoods that define the character of much of the city. Downtown and other existing urban centers that already provide density, amenities and public transit opportunities are the logical targets for this growth. In order to optimize these conditions, changes to our zoning and building codes will need to be made, allowing higher densities, taller buildings in some cases, mixed-use zoning and changes to our Building Type regulations which restrict density.*

### THE SOLUTION

In August, the City's Chief Legislative Analyst recommended a strategy to incentivize high-rise development in Downtown Los Angeles. Subsequently, Downtown Councilmember Jose Huizar put forward a motion that will expedite elements of the Downtown Community Plan and Downtown Zoning Code revisions. These actions would add a menu of incentives to encourage real estate developers to take full advantage of the area's potential. AIA|LA supports an incentive package that would include measures such as the following:

- Streamlined entitlement processing.
- Greater flexibility for mixed-land use in the Downtown Zoning Code.
- Floor area bonuses and greater TFAR flexibility.
- CEQA exemptions for urban-infill projects.
- Waiver of site-plan review for projects that adhere to the Downtown Design Guidelines.

In the City of Los Angeles, Downtown and other urban centers must exemplify the positive relationships between high density, high-rise development, mixed-use neighborhoods, pedestrian-friendly environments and the confluence of multi-modal public transit.



**TOP** Kona Residence **Belzberg Architects**

**BELOW** Broadway Housing **Daly Genik**

# 6

## Build complete streets in the proposed Street Repair Bond

### THE CHALLENGE

*In 2008, the State of California passed The Complete Streets Act (AB 1358) which requires cities, as they update their circulation rights-of-way, to plan for a balanced multi-modal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of the street. With limited financial resources available for street maintenance and repair, the City of Los Angeles suffers from a large failing network of streets and sidewalks. At the same time as the City is updating the mobility element of its General Plan, efforts are underway to issue a \$3 billion bond to pay for street repairs. This proposed bond has the potential, if properly written, to serve as a tool to do much more than pave potholes and resurface streets. If the bond's scope is expanded to include bike lanes, sidewalks, parkways and bio-swales and if the principles of a Complete Streets policy are embraced, transformational place-making can grow out of these important improvements to our public rights-of-way.*

# THE SOLUTION

## Create a complete streets Street Repair Bond

With over 6,500 miles of streets and 10,750 miles of sidewalks, Los Angeles has a unique opportunity to transform its network of transit corridors into comfortable and safe places for people who walk, bicycle, drive and use public transit. Rather than designing streets with the singular goal of moving automobiles as quickly as possible, AIA|LA recommends that city leaders pursue an approach that multiplies the benefits to Angelenos:

- Safer, healthier communities
- Repaved roadways
- Repaired sidewalks
- Enhanced watershed management
- Enhanced street tree canopies
- Verdant parkways that function as open space

## Build the MyFigueroa streetscape project

Led by an outstanding team of architects, urban designers and transportation engineers, the MyFigueroa project will transform Downtown's major north/south arterial into a connective and multi-functional open space accessible enjoyed by more Angelenos. Acknowledging the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and autos, the right-of-way will become more friendly, safe and beautiful, enhancing the value of businesses and property along the route. This kind of comprehensive approach to street development that incorporates multi-functionality, beauty and economic vitality is sorely needed throughout Los Angeles. AIA|LA encourages city leaders to recognize the catalytic benefits this demonstration project can have for the entire city.

# 7

## Eliminate the gross-receipts Business Tax

### THE CHALLENGE

*Due to the unique contractual relationship Architects are required to have with their clients, Architectural firms typically coordinate the professional services of a wide range of specialty consultants. In Los Angeles, it is common for an architectural firm to pay business taxes on the billings of these pass-through consultants for which the architect earns no fee. In addition to the architect's tax, the consultant also pays tax on the same scope of work. In effect, this is double taxation and an explicitly unfair system that disenfranchises the important and growing service sector of our economy. The double-taxation encourages architects and related design professionals to relocate to neighboring communities like Culver City and Santa Monica where these taxes are not paid twice.*

### THE SOLUTION

In 2012, the Los Angeles City Council commissioned the Business Tax Advisory Committee (BTAC) to recommend ways to reduce and eventually phase out the gross-receipts business tax. Although much effort went into that plan, the recommendations of the committee have yet to be implemented. The architectural community is unified in its opposition to the double taxation on pass-through income and requests that the gross-receipts tax be phased out promptly. AIA|LA encourages city leadership to do the following:

- Create consistency and fairness in the administration of the business tax.
- Revise the requirement that architectural firms must pay tax on the same receipts on which their consultants are paying (double taxation).
- Incentivize high-value, service sector job growth that will attract more high-paying jobs to Los Angeles.
- Administer a more streamlined audit and appeals process.
- Develop and adopt a Taxpayers' Bill of Rights.
- Pursue a 15-year phase-out of the business tax.
- Clarify what constitutes a "new business" and reward loyalty to firms that remain within Los Angeles.

Reforming the city's gross-receipts business tax will lead to job growth, economic expansion and an increased sales tax base. Reform will also facilitate increases in property values and taxes, increase city revenue from permits, licenses and fees and encourage business location within the City of Los Angeles.

# 8

## Inventory all publically-owned real estate in the L.A. region

### THE CHALLENGE

*The City of Los Angeles owns and manages a substantial amount of real property and public facilities. LADPW, LAWA, the Port of Los Angeles, the Department of General Services, LAPD, LAFD, Department of Parks and Recreation and LADOT are among the many agencies, which oversee these properties. Currently no comprehensive inventory exists to catalogue them, assign value to them, acknowledge their proximity to one another or establish their level of utilization. At the same time, there is no wider up-to-date inventory of all publicly owned properties in Los Angeles, which includes assets of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), METRO, the County of Los Angeles, the State of California and the Federal Government.*

### THE SOLUTION

As the City of Los Angeles contemplates and plans for significant growth in the coming decades, DESIGNING OUR FUTURE requires an understanding of what resources currently exist and what their potential value might be in the face of growth and change. Real property assets controlled by public agencies in the city are significant and frequently well-located, occasionally underutilized and may provide strategic value to Angelenos in the context of envisioning the future and continuing to plan.

AIA|LA strongly recommends that the City, parallel to the current RE:CODE LA effort, establishes a Committee to Map Los Angeles (CMLA) with the goal of comprehensively inventorying all public properties, mapping their locations, assessing property valuations and evaluating utilization. Taken as a whole, these properties, whatever their long-term status, are too significant to not be a part of the conversation of how we continue to grow and improve the quality of life in Los Angeles.

# 9

## Improve LADWP's Feed-in-Tariff program

### THE CHALLENGE

*Last year, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) initiated a 150 MegaWatt Feed-in-Tariff pilot program that enables the private sector to supply the electrical grid with renewable energy. AIA|LA recognizes this as a positive first step toward energy conservation and applauds the leadership required to move this initiative forward. Following this first step, we believe this pilot program can be substantially expanded and improved. Even greater levels of energy production in Los Angeles can be attained to support the 7 GigaWatts of power consumed by LADWP customers per year.*

### THE SOLUTION

AIA|LA recommends that LADWP improve the Feed-in-Tariff program as follows:

- To ensure a broad base of support, allocate the FiT to currently unqualified market segments such as residential, multi-family residential and small scale commercial applicants (currently the program is available to large scale installations only).
- Reduce the bureaucratic barriers to entry by creating a simple one-page contract (currently the application is long and requires an attorney).
- Make the program predictable so that solar developers can assess their risk in a program that awards access on a first-come-first-served basis (currently the program is awarded by auction).
- Offer a fixed rate of return to renewable energy suppliers (currently the price is set by an auction).
- Reduce the application fee to a nominal level and cover the interconnection analysis and any upgrade costs as part of the program rather than burdening the individual energy supplier with them (currently LADWP requires the provider to upgrade LADWP's grid infrastructure driving costs beyond affordability except for the largest installations).

AIA|LA recommends a policy of locating power production close to the source of consumption (Distributed Power). This policy has many advantages over the current practice of building large-scale remote production centers.

- > Like the evaporation of water in transit, the transmission of power over long distances imposes a significant loss estimated at \$20 billion per year. Distributed Power is generated at or very near the site of its consumption, minimizing waste.
- > The construction of remote industrial-scale power plants and the transmission lines necessary to move the power to consumers can endanger environmentally sensitive areas, are controversial and are costly to adjudicate and build. Distributed Power can often be built in new or existing buildings, avoiding open space and habitat loss and minimizing legal challenges.
- > A Distributed Power network is resilient as it is decentralized. Large plants and centralized transmission lines are susceptible to catastrophic failure as well as to terrorist attack.

According to a study from UCLA's Luskin Center for Innovation, potential solar resources in the Los Angeles basin exceed 12 GigaWatts per year. Help us move Los Angeles to a strong, clean and resilient power future by improving the LADWP Feed-in-Tariff program.

# 10

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## Appoint architects to serve on City Commissions

### THE CHALLENGE

*Design is a critical factor in the consideration of projects and policy initiatives 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 public policies that have a significant impact on land-use regulations and the built environment of our city.*

### THE SOLUTION

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 commissions, boards and committees. These names are available to the City upon request. The City will benefit greatly by including architects in the decision-making process concerning the built environment.



**TOP** St. Thomas the Apostle School **Griffin Enright Architects**  
**BELOW** 28th Street Apartments **Koning Eizenberg Architecture**



TOP Frank/Kim Residence **B+U**

BELOW Genentech Executive Office Building **Johnson Fain**

RIGHT Potrero Heights Park Community & Senior Center **Lehrer Architects LA**

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Scott Johnson, President AIA|LA



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