



Lean, Green and Graying: Hope in Challenging Economic Times

Attendees at this year’s California Healthy Cities and Communities Conference heard a message of hope and opportunity, amidst the many challenges facing their communities. Speakers and participants inspired each other with their ideas and determination to convert these great challenges into opportunities to continue transforming California communities into healthy and livable places for everyone.

A Perfect Storm AND a Perfect Opportunity

Looking at the current economic crisis, skyrocketing obesity rates, the threat of climate change wreaking havoc on our world, and an aging population that will overwhelm current systems and resources, Marion Standish, Director, The California Endowment (TCE) sees great potential for change. After 21 years of California communities applying the principles of Healthy Cities to tackle the tough issues of the day, from smoking to smart growth, she sees that, “...people now get it. They understand that health has something to do with employment, that children’s asthma has something to do with the environment and that violence has a lot to do with poverty.” She encouraged attendees to build on this acceptance of the interconnected nature of community life to find single solutions for multiple problems.

In addition to her inspirational message, Ms. Standish outlined TCE’s

new 10-year initiative to significantly improve conditions in 14 California communities, while simultaneously achieving statewide policy and systems change. According to Ms. Standish, TCE’s focus on policy change reflects the recognition that we cannot afford the level of services needed for California’s vulnerable communities. Instead we must move stakeholders and elected officials to enact policies that will “lift up all communities throughout the state,” she stated.

Green – Legislation for Clean Air....a Healthy Cities Opportunity

The plenary highlighted another opportunity for applying Healthy Cities’ principles to a timely issue – climate change. Moderated by Katherine Aguilar Perez of the Urban Land Institute (Los Angeles District Council), panelists representing city, county and regional entities discussed how they are responding to California’s new air quality requirements.

Rick Cole, City Manager of Ventura, advocated for imbedding Healthy Cities in the “Blueprint” process mandated by SB 375, which he views as an “historic opportunity for California and each Californian.” He urged Healthy Cities advocates to become integrally involved in the development of the sustainable communities strategy required by SB



Plenary panelists engage in conversation at the 2009 CHCC Annual Conference.

375 and not wait to react until the plan is created.

As Riverside’s County Health Officer, Dr. Eric Frykman is keenly aware of the intersection of land use decisions and health, given the Inland Empire’s reputation of sprawl and its corresponding high rates of obesity and other chronic conditions. In response, the Public Health Department has played a key role in the development of a healthy

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community element for Riverside's General Plan.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is at the center of implementing SB 375. Huasha Liu, Director, Planning Methods, Assessment and Compliance, described how SCAG is engaging the 189 cities in its jurisdiction in the development of the required regional plans. Since this is the first time multiple agencies have been required to create a single plan, it presents a valuable opportunity to design healthy and sustainable communities.

Lean Times – Partnerships Are Key

Partnerships have always been one of the keystones of the Healthy Cities model; however, their importance as a survival strategy in the current economic climate was emphasized throughout the day.

Successful examples and lessons learned about developing and sustaining joint use agreements were provided by Bill Fortmueller (Vista), Rick Gould (Santa Clarita), Dave Moore (Rancho Cucamonga) and Gerardo Mouet (Santa Ana). The technical aspects of sharing facilities – contracts, scheduling, who pays for what and how to keep communication flowing – were valuable for communities trying to maintain services with declining resources.



Gerardo Mouet of Santa Ana moderates "What Works in Joint Use and Why It's Important—Voices of Experience."

In another panel, speakers shared their models for forging effective partnerships between municipalities and county health departments to stimulate Healthy Cities programs.

Jean Armbruster (Los Angeles County) gave an overview of Los Angeles County's new PLACE program, which is working with five cities to foster policy change that supports healthy, active environments. Angelica Baltazar (San Bernardino County's Healthy Communities program) and Dede Benson (Fontana) showcased a successful regional approach using county funding to seed development of Healthy Cities programs.

"...hearing the advice of the presneters, meeting the enthusiastic conference attendees and sharing ideas and ideals, provided us with our own stimulus package!"

—Michelle Bray Davis
Community Development Coordinator
North County Health Services, Oceanside

Two roundtable discussions, one on implementing the Healthy Cities model and the other on collaboration, also highlighted the importance of forging and sustaining partnerships. In the roundtable facilitated by Jerry Van Leeuwen (Escondido), participants shared successful strategies and received feedback on how to resolve current challenges. The collaboration roundtable was led by Margery Pierce (Oceanside) who, along with Michelle Davis (Oceanside), a long-standing chair of their coalition, shared some of Oceanside's unique partnerships and strategies for maintaining them.

Graying – The Boomers Are Aging, The Boomers Are Aging!

The dual themes of converting challenges to opportunities and the importance of partnerships in taking advantage of those opportunities was heard in the sessions addressing California's burgeoning older adult population.

Crispin Delgado (San Mateo County Health System) and Tina Sray (Chino) shared their community-based healthy aging planning models. Mr. Delgado presented the interactive,

Climate Change Legislation – What Does It All Mean?

California has enacted several major pieces of legislation intended to "solve" global warming and its associated consequences. Under the requirements of Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), California communities must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost 30% over the next 11 years (by 2020). By 2050, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced 80% below 1990 levels. For more information, visit the California Air Resources Board website <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/cc.htm>

In related legislation, in 2008 California enacted Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) which sets regional targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles by 2020 and 2035. SB 375 requires the development of integrated regional transportation, housing and land use plans to achieve the required reductions. More information is available at <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/sb375/sb375.htm>



computer-based model San Mateo developed to understand changes in demographics, interests and projected needs of their region's baby boomers. Ms. Sray described Chino's process for surveying residents aged 45-64 regarding their future needs for housing, services, mobility and lifelong learning. She presented preliminary findings and discussed the critical role the information is anticipated to play in their General Plan update and allocation of resources.

In the session on improving housing and mobility alternatives, Dorit Fromm of Design Research Communications presented a variety of innovative housing options for older adults from Northern Europe and the United States. Mary Poole (Citrus Heights) provided a case study on Citrus Heights' successful efforts to engage residents in the importance of walkability. Their efforts prompted action by the City Council to allocate Capital Improvement Program funds to meet needs identified in the walkability audits. 

~ Community Involvement ~

Community Volunteers Step in with VERVE!

This article is part of an ongoing series on innovative and promising practices that expand upon six domains featured in our publication, "A Healthy Community Perspective on Aging Well." The domains are: Varied Housing Options, Transportation, Community Involvement, Employment, Lifelong Learning, and Supportive Services.

The City of Rio Vista (Solano County) has a total population of 7,525. The population grew over 58% between 2000 and 2007. The median age of residents in Rio Vista is 40.7 years, compared to the California median of 33.3 years. The city encompasses just under 8 square miles and is located on the banks of the Sacramento River, almost halfway between the cities of San Francisco and Sacramento.

In 2008, Rio Vista like many cities across the country experienced dramatic decreases in property and sales tax revenues due to steep declines in the housing market, rising unemployment and marked reductions in consumer spending. City leadership took steps to curb costs, including reductions in city staff, freezing salaries, dipping into reserves and leaving vacancies unfilled. Funding cuts also hit school districts and recreation programs, such as youth softball and baseball leagues. Cuts and reductions to public services are often more noticeable in smaller towns where resources are frequently stretched thin even in the "good" times. Older adults who live on fixed incomes are especially vulnerable to local economic woes and like most everyone, many are hit hardest in the area of housing costs.

The City Council expressed interest in attracting community volunteers (e.g., retirees) especially those who might have some business experience. In response, a few local residents developed a business plan for implementing a volunteer service

program and submitted their idea to the City Council. In an attempt to quell some council members' fears regarding lack of capacity to manage and coordinate a city-wide program, the program concept was outlined in a business plan and based on a temporary employment agency model. As needs arose within the city and community, the tasks would be posted on the program's web site in a job description format so that all potential community volunteers could review. In addition to large community-wide events, the web site prominently promotes local schools as primary volunteer locations. Thus, the volunteer organization known as Volunteers Enriching Rio Vista Environments (VERVE) was established in October 2008.

So far, two retired professionals are applying their skills in the development of economic stimulus grant proposals and have submitted three water district grant pre-applications to the State Water Board. By doing this, the City of Rio Vista will be put on a priority list for federal grants under the newly enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Nearly \$7,000 has been saved as a result of the volunteer grant-writing efforts. Another project involves the replacement of a retaining wall and irrigation system located on the middle school grounds involving a local service organization and a school Parents' Club. VERVE is also currently recruiting for volunteer appraisers who can help appraise City owned property that may be sold in the future to raise revenue.


Even though everyone in the community was affected by the downturn, many residents, especially older adults, began to increase their volunteer activity and engagement in local youth and general city maintenance activities. According to City Treasurer Hale Conklin, "the City has saved over \$10,000/year in



Town entrance sign welcomes visitors to Rio Vista.

donated labor and materials as a result of local volunteers dedicated to maintaining the over 80 planter boxes and landscaping associated with the 'Welcome to Rio Vista' town entrance."

Community involvement or "civic engagement" is always at the forefront when considering ways to leverage dwindling resources. The beauty of volunteer service in the community is that it also provides meaning and purpose to those seeking a greater role in helping others in need, as well as enhancing the health and sense of well-being by those who volunteer.

Intergenerational activities that connect older adults and younger people produce multiple benefits, such as encouraging greater civic engagement which result in reduced isolation and loneliness; and helping to dispel negative "ageist" stereotypes often held by older people regarding younger people, and vice versa. 

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California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC) assists cities and communities with developing, implementing and evaluating inclusionary, community-driven programs, policies and plans, which address environmental, social and economic determinants of health. CHCC advocates a broad definition of health: a shared vision; widespread community participation; system reform; collaborative partnerships; engaging local assets; and a means to measure progress and base improvements upon results.

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Events & Resources

Events

Safe Routes to School Conference

August 19-21, 2009

Portland, OR

http://www.bta4bikes.org/at_work/saferoutes_conference.html

League of California Cities Annual Conference: Strong Cities, Strong State, Strong Nation

September 16-18, 2009

San Jose, CA

http://www.cacities.org/resource_files/27908.LCC017-AnnualConferenceBro-Web.pdf

2009 National Environmental Public Health Conference: Healthy People in a Healthy Environment

October 26-28, 2009

Atlanta, GA

<http://www.team-psa.com/2009nephc/main.asp>

Web Sites

Urbanicity's - Cities Online

<http://www.urbanicity.org/Site/CitiesOnline/USA.aspx>

California Air Resources Board

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/homepage.htm>

Publications

California State Plan on Aging – 2009-2013

– The State Plan is mandated by the federal Administration on Aging as a condition for the State to receive federal Older Americans Act funding. The final plan will be posted on the California Department of Aging web site by June 30, 2009. Visit <http://www.aging.ca.gov/>

Park Equity and Public Health

Toolkit – Released by the Trust for Public Land. Designed to engage and inform community leaders as well as parks and health advocates as they consider the built environment in their communities and its effect on a broad range of issues related to health, social justice, the environment, and quality of life. Visit http://www.tpl.org/tier2_kad.cfm?folder_id=3548

The Road Less Traveled: An Analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled Trends in the U.S.

– A report released from The Brookings Institution analyzes changing driving patterns, measured by Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) primarily between 1991 and 2008 at the national,

state, and metropolitan levels. Visit http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/1216_transportation_tomer_puentes.aspx

Time to Join the CHCC Network

If you would like to join the California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC) Network – now is the time!

The CHCC Network is a membership program which provides a means of affiliation with the California program and the international Healthy Cities and Communities movement. Network membership runs from July 1 to June 30 of each year. Annual membership dues are \$250.

It's easy to join – go to www.civicpartnerships.org. Already a member? Don't worry, you will receive your renewal notice via mail.



California Healthy Cities
and Communities