FEATURING ARTICLE

Would a Planner be required to participate in the proposed construction of the Border “wall”?
Greetings LAP members,

On behalf of our Latinos and Planning Division Leadership I am happy to share our LAP Winter 2016 Newsletter and hope this message finds you well and excited to become involved in our division activities and events. The newsletter provides interesting articles to our membership, as well as, information on the upcoming LAP sponsored events scheduled for the 2017 APA National Planning Conference in New York City. We encourage you to attend this conference and are seeking members who would like to participate and become involved in planning our activities.

LAP members interested in helping with conference activities are encouraged to contact me or other members of the leadership team. We welcome your assistance and expertise. You can also reach us at Latinosandplanning2@gmail.com.

On behalf of the Division leadership team, we hope you enjoy the 2016 Winter Newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you in at the Big Apple this spring.

All the best to you!

Larry Vasquez, Chair
Phoenix APA National Planning Conference 2016 Recap
Mobile Workshop South Phoenix: Environmental Inequities and Environmental Justice

by Vidal Marquez, LAP Communication Chair

In collaboration with Planning in the Black Community Division and the US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Environmental Justice, our tour consisted of visiting Central City South and going to significant and historic locations along Phoenix’s African American Cultural Trail and historic Latino “barrio” communities affected by environmental justice issues and inequities. The main tour guide was Steve Brittle, a local attorney, working with many community leaders fighting against the harmful impacts of industrial facilities. We visited many sites where chemical facilities had once stood only to learn they had removed or burned down and had contaminated the land and air, leaving vulnerable children and the elderly to suffer long-term respiratory illness. One site such was the Fisher Sand Gravel Company, where in 2007 erected a seven-story asphalt plant without zoning clearance or permits from the City of Phoenix.

The facility was adjacent to a residential neighborhood. The odors and dust emanating from the facility generated complaints from businesses and residents. The City had contracts for rubberized asphalt from Fisher. A long battle by neighborhood activists ended in 2010 in court when the plant finally closed and removed the plant. After visiting many sites and learning of the struggle the community continues to fight, we were treated to an overview of the EJSCREEN at Cesar Chavez Library for a live demonstration. EJSCREEN is an environmental justice screening and mapping tool that utilizes standard and nationally-consistent data to highlight places that may have higher environmental burdens and vulnerable populations. EJSCREEN was created to meet the intent of Executive Order 12898 to focus federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions of minority and low-income populations with the goal of achieving environmental protection for all communities. There are numerous resources on Environmental Justice provided to the tour. Please visit our LAP Division webpage for more information. And visit the EJSCREEN at https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen
Informal housing is no longer a condition associated solely with Less Developed Countries. In Developed World cities like Los Ángeles, informal housing is found in every jurisdiction, every geography, every demographic, and every socioeconomic stratum. But you wouldn’t know that from the planning literature. Research is scant on informal housing in L.A. and other metro areas, despite the fact that informal development has been a characteristic of urbanism for decades. Moreover, because the city planning profession keeps code enforcement at arm’s length, planners rarely, if ever, go into communities and see unpermitted dwellings up close. These knowledge gaps constitute missed opportunities for planners to understand the “on the ground” realities of today’s informal housing market. Indeed, the more we know about informal housing, the better we can plan for it.

This realization was the driving force behind the session, “Crafting Mi Casa: Lessons of Latino Informal Housing Practice in Los Angeles” at the APA CA 2016 Conference in Pasadena, CA. The presentation was organized by four L.A.-area planners with unique housing insights. Moderator Jonathan Pacheco Bell is an L.A. County Land Use Regulation Planner with over ten years of zoning enforcement experience in South Central L.A. James Rojas is a hybrid artist-planner widely regarded as the godfather of Latino Urbanism. Vinit Mukhija is a UCLA planning professor and informal housing scholar. Mark Vallianatos is a policy expert and staunch advocate for affordable housing.

Challenged to deliver a session on housing resilience, they drew inspiration from L.A.’s Latino community. Latino homeowners renovate their homes based on imagination, needs, and know-how, sometimes without permits. This long-standing cultural practice has produced innovative housing models and redefined the basic dwelling unit in Los Angeles.

Conference Spotlight Lessons of Latino Informal Housing Practice at APA CA 2016
by Jonathan Pacheco Bell, Land Use Regulation Planner, County of Los Angeles

Panelists (left to right): Jonathan Bell, James Rojas, Vinit Mukhija, and Mark Vallianatos

The American Planning Association (APA) has identified a number of key emerging issues in the planning field (On the Radar https://www.planning.org/resources/ontheradar/). These policy areas, which deal with issues such as aging, diversity, food systems, and shrinking cities, summarize some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for both planning and the public. The Latinos and Planning Division, recognizes that two issues in particular: Aging and Livable Communities and the Changing Faces of America: Planning for a More Dynamic Population—speak directly to the needs of planning and engaging Latino populations in all age groups in decision-making processes. The following articles discuss some of these issues, drawing on personal and professional experience and exploring how planning for diverse communities impacts decisions related to housing and redevelopment.
Yet despite its ingenuity, Latino informal housing runs into considerable city planning obstacles, from rigid municipal codes to NIMBYism to the very real safety concerns of substandard garage apartments. The group felt that planners could learn a lot from an analysis of Latino informal housing practice. The resulting session entailed an in-depth look at the visual, spatial, policy, and regulatory implications Latino informal housing practice has in planning multicultural Los Angeles.

Bell opened the talk addressing the question, “Why focus on Latinos?” He explained that the group recognized creative solutions in the way Latinos transform traditional housing in L.A. Bell then introduced his concept of “Embedded Planning” developed from years of street-level informal housing enforcement. An embedded planner (conducting code enforcement, for example) gains awareness of what’s happening “on the ground,” leading to better understanding of which codes and policies are working, and which are not. The presentation included images and analysis of informal housing from his fieldwork. He concluded with three takeaways. First, Latino informal housing represents innovation. Second, Latino informal housing responds to outdated zoning codes. Third, Latino informal housing occurs when planning remains unknown in the community.

Rojas explained how Latinos bring cultural values to housing, private property, and public space. His analysis showed how Latino values at times conflict with the traditional planning, zoning, and design of single-family homes. This community adds their cultural living patterns to traditional American spatial forms to create a unique “Latin vernacular.” Replete with evocative imagery of Latino homes and spaces, Rojas’ presentation explored the ways Latinos creatively repurpose front yards, sidewalks, and garages. His synthesis highlighted the informal interventions that enrich L.A.’s built environment.

Mukhija explained how building 2nd units on single-family lots could solve Los Angeles’ housing crisis. His research of real estate listings found that informal dwellings (garage conversions, subdivided houses, etc.) are distributed throughout the City of Los Angeles. The prevalence of informal development across geographies and demographics demonstrates an existing demand for additional housing in traditional single-family zones. Latino informal development strategies can serve as inspiration for planners considering new housing codes and policies, Mukhija argued.

Vallianatos examined ways to regulate the informal housing market in Los Angeles. He drew upon existing and proposed policy frameworks relating to a multitude of informal housing types, including garage housing, unpermitted apartment units, rural owner-built housing,
accessory dwelling units, incremental settlements, and use of public land for self-built housing. Vallianatos concluded that the key feature of a sound informal housing policy should require upgrades to meet safety standards in exchange for legalizations and flexibility on zoning rules.

A lively Q & A followed the presentations. Audience members inquired about the impact of Design Review, parking requirements, and emerging state bills relaxing rules for new housing. Drawing from their presentations, panelists summarized ways the planning field can learn from Latino informal housing practice. Bell closed the session with two challenges for the audience. First, he reminded planners that you cannot plan from your desk. Planners need to be out in the community learning from the ground up. He prodded practitioners to consider adopting the “enforcement planner” model to achieve this benefit. Second, he challenged students to pursue informal housing scholarship. More diverse voices are needed to fill gaps in the literature. Undoubtedly there are students who’ve experienced informal housing personally, and their perspectives would add insights and credibility to the debate. That challenge was quickly accepted! As of November 15th, Bell is in touch with four students (doctoral, master’s, and undergraduate levels) who’re now researching informal housing in Los Angeles.

The panelists extend thanks to audience members and colleagues who’ve expressed support in advancing scholarship on Latino informal housing practice. There’s certainly more work to do, and the panelists welcome feedback. Jonathan Pacheco Bell can be reached at pachecob@ucla.edu and @c1typlann3r for questions or copies of the presentations. James Rojas can be reached at enactedenvironment.com. Vinit Mukhija can be reached at vmukhija@ucla.edu. Mark Vallianatos can be reached on social media at @markvalli and abundanthousingla.org.

Become an APA Ambassador

2017 Application Deadline: 12/31/16

Share the world of planning with your community. Become an APA Ambassador. APA Ambassadors increase awareness and understanding of the power and value that urban planning brings to communities. Particular emphasis is placed on reading audiences of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Ambassadors create two activities per year. Activities can take place in schools, community-based organizations, neighborhood leadership academies, community, meeting, career fairs, and more.
Would a Planner be required to participate in the proposed construction of the Border “wall”?

by Diana Benitez, Newsletter Editor

As the President-Elect shares his pick for HUD Secretary, DOT Secretary, EPA Secretary and continues with his plans for a fortified wall in our southern border it is apparent the impact Mr. Trump’s presidential tenure shall have in the world of planning and specifically, in our communities. His platform speaks of hate and fear. Our American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) ethics and principles as planners speak of social justice, the expansion of choice and opportunity, and promoting racial and economic integration (AICP Code of Ethics Section A sub-section f). His rhetoric has already begun to impact our civic duty as planners. Would a planner be required to participate in the proposed construction of a US-Mexico Border “wall”?

This question impacts current and prospective Regional Border Planners whose work entails supporting and collaborating with both sides of the border to promote healthy, safe and affordable communities. Our communities at the border share the same economy, water, infrastructure, language and blood. Our Chief of State cannot pretend that our work ends on the north end of the U.S. – Mexico border. As planners, we play an important role in facilitating and collaborating in the interaction of border cities. This can range from facilitating clean water access, sewage disposal facilities, easing traffic, quality housing, economic development to decrease high levels of unemployment, and supporting our low-income households. Mr. Trump’s rhetoric jeopardize the collaboration, respect and humility necessary to protect the health and safety of our border residents.

It is our duty as planners to speak out against unjust policies and decision that “oppose the needs” of the disadvantaged communities we serve (AICP Code of Ethics Section A sub-section f). This concern has been raised by many planners and has led planners Kurt Paulsen, and Michael Rodriguez to start a Change.org petition formally requesting a Formal Advisory Opinion from the Ethics Committee of the AICP on the proposed wall. They are asking the AICP the following question: “May an AICP certified planner ethically participate (in any way) in any activities (including but not limited to planning, design, building, implementation, financing) which directly or indirectly are related to the proposed construction of a “Border Wall” between the United States and Mexico.” The petition was created mid-November and has been signed by thirty-three AICP members. If you would like to hear a formal response from the AICP, please sign the petition.
Platicas for Local Economic Development in South Texas - 2016 APA Texas Chapter for the Student Project of the Year Award

by Edna Ledesma

The American Planning Association (APA) Texas Chapter has awarded Edna Ledesma the 2016 Student Project of the Year Award for her work on the Pláticas for Local Economic Development in South Texas.

The Pláticas, Spanish for conversations, were a collaboration between Texas A&M University, the City of Brownsville, and Texas Southmost College as an initiative to help address how to improve the city's local economy. The project team facilitated a series of focus groups that engaged: small business owners, local market vendors, market management, city officials, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. A total of 40 people participated in the pláticas.

The project organized three separate meetings (pláticas): one for vendors and business owners, one for city leaders, and a third where both sides could come together and discuss views. They City of Brownsville saw the pláticas as an opportunity to help portray issues of perception in relation to planning frameworks.

The role of Texas A&M University was to serve as facilitator and mediators between the city and local residents. An important local partner was the Architecture Program at Texas Southmost College that included local faculty and students (see link below). Fifteen architecture student volunteers from across the Rio Grande Valley served as discussion leaders and note takers for the focus groups. The participation of the students extended the scope and structure of the focus groups.

Some of the key lessons from the pláticas are: 1) vendors and the city recognized that there is a lack of capital and resources for small and microbusinesses and there is a need to make greater efforts to bring support to flea/markets markets. 2) The city saw its younger generation as their biggest asset, and market vendors stated that they, as human capital, are contributing to the local economy.

Edna Ledesma is a fifth year doctoral candidate in the Urban and Regional Science program at the Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP) Department. She can be reached at: ednalesmesa@gmail.com. The Pláticas initiative are part of her dissertation titled: “Place Attachment in Four Selected Latino Vendor Markets: Case Studies of California And Texas.” Her dissertation chair is Dr. Cecilia Giusti, Associate Dean for Outreach Diversity of the College of Architecture.

Interested in learning more?
Sponsorships: Latino Urbanism Panel at Cal Poly Pomona

Each year, LAP assists entities and agencies engage in their local community through Dialogos and by providing financial assistance to students. Sponsorships help support LAP’s efforts with increasing community engagement and financially assisting future planners learn about planning for diverse communities. Earlier this year LAP partnered with the APA Los Angeles Section on “Latino Neighborhoods in Transition Dialogo”, a panel discussion focusing on the immigrant community in Los Angeles and the changes reflected in these communities as a result of gentrification, lack of affordable housing and the informal economy. In the summer, we continued the discussion of the last Dialogo and collaborated with the LA’s Section Young and Emerging Planners Group for “Investment not Displacement: The Complexities of Planning in Diverse Communities” in South Los Angeles. And this fall, LAP was excited to have co-sponsored “Public Dialogo at CPP: Symposium on Latina/o Urbanism” at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. LAP is looking to grow our reach regionally and if your entities and agencies are interested in available sponsorships for Dialogos and Scholarships please contact LAP Vice Chair Esther Valle Rojas at valle.esther@gmail.com.

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2016 Scholarship Recipient
Brandon Ruiz

Brandon is a recent graduate from Arizona State University, having graduated with a bachelor’s of science in Urban Planning and a bachelor’s of science in Sustainability. He will go on to pursue a master’s in Urban and Environmental Planning degree this fall. His main points of interest are in energy, community development and the interconnections between the natural and built environment. He has had the opportunity to be involved with local schools, neighborhoods, and businesses in various applied research projects throughout his time at ASU. Along with being a member of multiple student organizations, he has also held leadership positions in Green Light Solutions, a student run sustainability consulting organization, and the Honor Society for Sustainability, a professional skill-building and networking oriented organization. He will take a position as treasurer for the Student Planning Association at ASU come this fall. At the international level, he has studied sustainable urban development in Spain and Morocco, as well as Mandarin Chinese in China. Currently, he holds a position as Program Associate with the Sonoran Institute working under the Western Lands and Communities Program, a joint initiative with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. In this program he works at the nexus of commerce, community, and conservation through helping inform urban policies and environmental Conservation efforts in the North American West.

The Latinos and Planning Division (LAP) of the American Planning Association (APA) strives to address planning issues affecting Latino communities in the U.S. as well increase Latinos in the profession. The purpose of the LAP scholarship program is to foster increased interest in the study of urban planning within the Latino student population at the advanced undergraduate and graduate levels. The program is open to third and fourth year undergraduate students and first and second year masters degree students. One scholarship of $500 will be awarded to be used for fees, books, or academic materials.

Recommended Reads

*KCET Lost LA: From the Eastside to Hollywood: Chicano Queer Trailblazers in 1970s L.A.*

*CoLab Radio: How do you Humanize the Planning Process to Prioritize Gender Equity?*

New Member Spotlight

by Annie Cruz-Porter

Annie grew up in Northwest Indiana, Lake County. The region instilled in her a need to recognize and account for spatial injustice. During the 1980s, a line dividing the northern portion of the county from the south determined who had access to resources and life opportunities. My earlier life experiences growing up in Northwest Indiana drive me and my work today.

When she attended The College of Wooster in Ohio she was very fortunate to obtain an internship at Project for Public Spaces which opened her eyes to planning for the first time. This led to her decision in pursuing graduate school and getting her first job out in Sacramento, California at a regional transportation planning agency. Her next step in life led her to England, working in the London suburbs on transportation planning projects. While in England, she wanted to further develop a geographic sense of urban life and planning, and took the opportunity to pursue a PhD. Annie will be receiving her doctorate in Spring 2017 while working at Purdue University. Her focus has diverted from transportation planning to community and economic development.

She has worked at the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) at Purdue University since May 2016. PCDR serves as a statewide resource for regional community and economic development projects, programs and research. Annie's current work focuses on conducting a Regional Housing Study for a five-county region in rural, southern Indiana. The construction industry needs better data on the type of homes that people need including, size, amenities, price points and location in order to attract a talented workforce in the future.

I welcome the opportunity to connect with others, so we can move the needle on the many housing, transportation, and workforce issues that serve as significant barriers to economic mobility in the Midwest. My email is: acruzpor@purdue.edu.

Downtown Santa Ana - APA’s Great Places in America

Downtown Santa Ana, California, was recognized as one of 2016’s Great Neighborhoods as part of APA’s Great Places in America program. Check out this blogpost!

Caption: Markers indicate the 1.5-mile loop through downtown. Photo by Roberta Rewers. https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9115044/
2017 APA National Planning Conference Preview
Mobile Workshop: Exploring Latino placemaking in Washington Heights

Here’s a preview of LAP’s mobile workshop for the National Planning Conference in New York City during May 6–9, 2017. We hope to see you there! Register now at https://www.planning.org/conference/

Latinos in Planning will be hosting a mobile tour of Washington Heights. Explore Washington Heights, a classic ‘port of entry’ neighborhood in Upper Manhattan at the New York foot of the George Washington Bridge. It has now become a social and political center for the growing Dominican and other Caribbean communities in the New York area.

Washington Heights is a classic ‘port of entry’ neighborhood that is becoming a social and political center for the fast-growing Latino community in New York. Traditionally working class, with pockets of poverty, Washington Heights faces issues of environmental justice, workforce development, and social integration. Today, like many immigrant communities, Washington Heights is facing the challenges of gentrification. Explore this neighborhood and how community, local economic development and planning organizations have addressed these issues. If you’re a theater fan, the neighborhood might sound familiar. It's the setting for “In the Heights.”

We will be learning how the immigrant community addresses EJ, gentrification and cultural tourism; immigrant business networks and street vendor incubator; history of immigrant placemaking; and transpo issues on high volume of auto and bus circulation in a dense urban environment.
Announcements

Join the crowd at APA’s National Planning Conference, May 6–9 in New York City. The program is packed with 400 activities including:

- A Masters Series for experienced planners
- Events for emerging professionals
- 10 tracks on targeted topics
- 50-plus mobile workshops
- New! APAs Career Zone

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