Landscape Architecture Digest

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Landmark Law Cutting Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through Land Use Signed in California

On September 30, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law **SB 375**, the nation's first law to produce quantifiable, cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gas emissions through smart growth planning. The law, introduced by Senator Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, is a means to reach the goals established by California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) by integrating disjointed planning activities and providing incentives for local governments and developers to follow new conscientiously planned growth patterns. AB 32 requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop regulations and market mechanisms that will reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020.

Under this new law, CARB will work with the state's 18 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to restructure their current regional transportation, housing, and land-use plans through a "Sustainable Communities Strategy" (SCS), requiring the MPOs to demonstrate that their future planning scenarios will result in a reduction in carbon. The SCS will address, for the first time, greenhouse gas emissions in a comprehensive manner to reduce the amount of vehicle miles traveled in each region. The bill would also authorize the legislative body of a local jurisdiction to adopt traffic mitigation measures for transit priority projects. Furthermore, the bill gives priority to transportation projects that limit commutes and curb urban sprawl, thus creating more sustainable development and increased multimodal transportation options and consequently healthier lifestyles and reduced traffic congestion.

Upon signing the legislation, Governor Schwarzenegger was quoted as saying, "This landmark bill takes California's fight against global warming to a whole new level, and it creates a model that the rest of the country and world will use."

Many landscape architects plan and develop multimodal transportation routes that provide access to all users. Not only do such techniques calm traffic congestion and make roads more safe, they also encourage alternative modes of transportation that significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as biking or walking.

Governor Schwarzenegger also signed SB 732, which will provide a comprehensive statutory framework to implement new programs under Proposition 84, the $5.4 billion initiative voters passed in 2006 for safe drinking water, water quality and supply, flood control, natural resource protection, and park improvements.

The bill requires the council to take certain actions to coordinate programs of various state agencies to do the following:

Improve air and water quality

Improve natural resource protection

Increase the availability of affordable housing

Improve transportation

Meet the goals of AB 32

Encourage sustainable land use planning

Revitalize urban community centers in a sustainable manner.

The council will also manage and award grants and loans to support the planning and development of sustainable communities.

The efficient use and equitable allocation of water resources is a great responsibility. By employing sustainable land-use practices that conserve and protect water resources, landscape architects are positioned to positively affect the conservation of natural resources while providing sustainable solutions to demands for water quality and supply.

SGV Tribune

Definition of 'rural' changing

By Bethania Palma-Markus, Staff Writer

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Laced with horse trails and full of quiet neighborhoods, the southeastern corner of the San Gabriel Valley is known for its tranquil, rural style. But residents of Walnut, Diamond Bar and Rowland Heights are facing the proposition that their little slice of country living could soon change forever.

An NFL stadium and two large housing developments are proposed for the region close to the 57-60 freeway junction, and many residents are not happy about it. Walnut Mayor Joaquin Lim, for instance, said he's received a flood of e-mails from angry residents who oppose an NFL stadium in neighboring Industry. "If you look at the history of Walnut, it's basically a bedroom community," he said. "The community all of a sudden faces a major, large scale commercial development, in this case a stadium, and for the people it's a culture shock."

But the march of metropolis sprawl is almost unstoppable, according to one expert. Because they are in the hills, communities like Walnut, Rowland Heights, Diamond Bar and Hacienda Heights developed later than other communities, contributing to their relatively rural feel, said Mike Reibel, a professor of geography at Cal Poly Pomona. But once the flat areas are built out, the hills come next, he said. "You'll probably see worse traffic and a gradual increase of the urbanness and density of the place," Reibel said.

The land once inhabited by Gabrielino Indians and used for cattle ranching had a population explosion once the railroad came through in the 1880s. Then the citrus industry began an effort to attract residents to the area. Soldiers passing through the Valley on trains during World War II could not resist the chance to move to the warm, fertile land. "You're using quality of life as an attraction to bring people in," Reibel said. "But you end up destroying it if you're successful." Many in southeast San Gabriel Valley communities are echoing that sentiment. The Walnut City Council voted to oppose the stadium at last week's meeting, officials said, in response to an outpouring of community concern over the project.

In Rowland Heights, residents are up in arms over a large apartment complex planned for the corner of Brea Canyon Cutoff and Colima roads. Many Diamond Bar and Rowland Heights residents have also expressed concern over a 3,600-home housing development on property owned by Aera, an oil conglomerate. "You have to look at any project as a cumulative impact," said David Rodriguez, president of the Rowland Heights Community Coordinating Council. He said residents are concerned about increased traffic, crime and decreasing property values.

Humans are not the only ones that could feel an impact. For more than 20 years, a handful of environmentalists have worked with the local dump and the government to preserve as open land a sliver that runs along the steep ridges of the Puente Hills. The animal corridor in the hills connects to wildlands stretching all the way to Mexico.

The AERA project would interupt the corridor, some say. Everyone living along the Puente Hills needs to be aware of what changes could come, said Bob Henderson, a Whittier city councilman, who also sits on a board that preserves open space in the hills. "All the neighboring cities are going to have to consider the impact of all these things together," he said. "The cumulative impact is going to be massive." Developers, however, said they are going out of their way to make sure that open space is a priority in any new project. And some complain that, no matter what they try to do, environmentalists do not seem to want to work out any kind of compromise. "More than half of the property is going to be open space," said Aera representative George Bayse, who said the company is in the process of producing an environmental impact report.

John Semcken, spokesman for billionaire developer Ed Roski Jr.'s Majestic Realty said the proposed NFL stadium will be better than a warehouse park, which was originally anticipated. The stadium, he said, will only be used maximum 45 days out of the year, and the complex will include an entertainment area that will house a movie theater, restaurants and a live-action theater - similar to Universal CityWalk. "I think the impacts to the neighborhoods will be minimal," he said, adding that the stadium is being built in an existing mountain. "The (environmental impact report) clearly addresses issues with respect to noise and light," he said. But despite mitigations, it is likely the Valley's rural character is gone forever.

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Duck farm slated for transformation

By Bethania Palma-Markus, Staff Writer: SGV Tribune
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LA PUENTE - After seven years of waiting, it looks like things are finally starting to happen at the old duck farm, where officials are planning to build a park.

Plans to turn the 57-acre property off the 605 and 10 freeways - once Woodland Farm - into a regional park have yet to materialize, but officials with the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy say groundbreaking is finally in sight.

"The duck farm is our crown jewel, and we're champing at the bit to have that site open to the public and have it used for the purpose we bought it for," said Belinda Faustinos, RMC executive officer. "We have a commitment to move ahead and get the property open as soon as possible."

Officials said the size and complexity of ownership on the property contributed to the lengthy time frame for building the park, which the RMC first proposed buying in 2001. "It's been a long time coming," said Jane Beesley, RMC director of special projects and interpretation. The first phase will include the park entrance, a dog park, community garden, meadow, trails along the riverbed and the assessment of an old Mediterranean-style house the Woodland family lived in. "By the end of two-and-a- half or three years," she said, "I would hope we'd have (phase 1) completed."

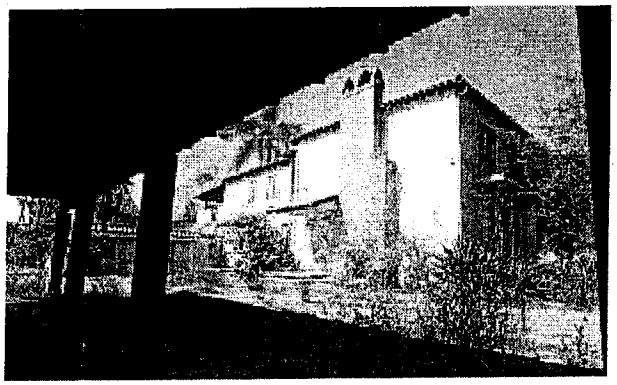
The land was once home to one of the nation's largest poultry farms, marked by cages holding thousands of ducks raised for meat. The animals were kept in stacked cages, and the farm became famous for a stench that could be detected by passing motorists on the 605 Freeway. When the property went up for sale, Hacienda Heights environmental consultant and activist Jeff Yann went straight to the Trust for Public Land with a vision.

"I used to run along the river and to me it was just a big, beautiful open piece of property," said Yann, former chair of the Sierra Club's San Gabriel River campaign. "Once it was for sale, it was a logical next step for me to approach TPL." The trust purchased the property in 2001 with the intention of selling it to the RMC, but Industry threatened to sue because part of the property is within its border. Three years later, the city conceded it would have limited use for the site and backed away, paving the way for the RMC to purchase the land in 2004 for $4 million.

Phil Iriarte, deputy executive director of urban redevelopment for Industry, said there are no hard feelings. "We're pleased with the use and hopefully everything

comes together for them," he said. "There aren't a lot of parks in that section of the Valley, so to me that is the best use."

Beesley said construction drawings are being done and groundbreaking for the first phase of the multi-phase project should happen about this time next year.



The Rivers & Parks Conservancy plans to build a park on the duck farm land next to the 605 Freeway south of Valley Blvd. in La Puente. The farm house, which is on the west side of the 605 freeway, shown here on Thursday September 4, 2008, will be assesed during the first phase of the project, which will begin in about 1 year and be completed the year after that. (Staff Photo by Raul Roa)