

Councilmember Nestor R. Garcia
Floor Leader
Chair, Council Committee on Transportation & Public Works

TRIP REPORT
Kansas City, Missouri
and
New Bedford, Massachusetts
July 11 thru July 17, 2008

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CITY COUNCIL
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Introduction

The purpose of this trip was two-fold: 1) to attend the National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference and Exposition in Kansas City, and 2) to visit a demonstration project involving the processing of waste to energy. As the newly appointed representative for the Honolulu City Council to the Hawaii State Association of Counties, it was important to ensure that our Council, and our state, be represented at the national convention. I attended workshops that dealt with green building technology, protecting communities from wildfires, and how to deal with the media. The field trip to New Bedford comes at a time when the city is moving ahead with purchasing the H-Power municipal solid waste to energy plant, and adding a third boiler to the operation.

**2008 NACo Annual Convention
Kansas City, Missouri**

Before attending the Opening General Session of the conference, I learned that Kansas City is going through its share of bad economic news. There was an auction of bank-owned homes in the area, as well as announcement from Canada-based Bombardier that the company has opted not to develop a jet manufacturing plant in Kansas City (instead, the company decided to keep it "home" – and build it in Montreal).

The Opening General Session ran a video from presumptive Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain. The Senator told the assembled delegates that he, too, wants to follow-through with NACo's theme this year – "Restoring The Partnership" between the federal and local governments. McCain last addressed NACo at its legislative conference in Washington, D.C. last year.

Eric Coleman, commissioner of Oakland County, Michigan, addressed the delegates in this his last time that he will preside over a gathering of NACo (President Coleman attended the Hawaii State Association of Counties convention June 9-10 in Waikiki). The incoming president is Don Stapley, a supervisor with Maricopa County, Arizona.

The session then turned to its "live" speaker, David M. Walker, the President and CEO of the Peterson Foundation and former Comptroller General for the United States. Walker's presentation was a sobering one – in essence, he warned that the country is in dire fiscal straits similar to the environmental crisis featured in the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" (in fact, Walker mentioned that the Foundation will soon release its own documentary, entitled "IOU - USA").

Walker said that America is in a \$53 trillion hole – which he said equates to \$175,000 per person in this country. Walker said the country's fiscal condition "is worse than advertised" and that the federal government continues to spend \$1.20 for every dollar it takes in as revenue. He said a remedy would be to have statutory limits on spending, as well as Constitutional protections.

Walker says his Foundation is “citizen-centered” and wants the federal government to be more “goal-oriented.” He says while there is much talk about a fiscal deficit in this country – the real problem is a “leadership deficit.” He says the country should take a lesson from history. Walker said the Roman Empire fell because of several problems: the failure to secure its borders, being over-extended militarily, moral failures, and fiscal irresponsibility. Walker says the similarities can be seen today in America.

Workshop

How to Implement County Green Policies – Innovative Codes and Ordinances

The central question of this workshop was: while counties around the country are adopting new policies to further environmental protection, energy efficiency and sustainability, are the policies actually being implemented? The bottom line – it takes political will and courage to follow-through on ideas.

Christopher Duerksen, a principal with Clarion Associates, presented a draft “Sustainable Community Development Code” (he joked that he actually wanted to be a bond counsel, but didn’t have the personality!). The code addresses a wide range of concerns including climate change and greenhouse gas reduction, community health and safety, food production and security, housing diversity and accessibility, natural hazards/wildfire, renewable energy (solar and wind) and water conservation.

Basically, this model code showcases tables, indicating levels of achievement, starting with bronze, then silver, and the best, being the gold standard. The tables also identify obstacles towards achievements, and how to overcome those obstacles. Finally, the tables show that you can offer incentives in order to reach your desired level of achievement. The third feature was model regulations – with the caveat that the regulations had to be enforced. *(An example of a model code is attached.)*

Ms. Cosimina Panetti is the Training and Outreach Manager for the “Building Codes Assistance Project”. She told the attendees that buildings consume much of a community’s energy – up to 40 percent. That’s because it takes a lot of energy to ventilate, heat/cool and light structures. She said energy efficient buildings produce positive outcomes: reduces stress on the power grid, improves air quality (inefficient buildings give out more CO₂ into the atmosphere) relieves global warming and saves consumers money.

Workshop

Don’t Get Burned: Tools Your County Can Use to Reduce Wildfire Risk

The City & County of Honolulu had had its share of wildfires – there was a summer that counted numerous brush fires on the west side which, while there was no structural damage, injuries or deaths, nevertheless amounted to an inordinate amount of time and energy to battle at taxpayer expense.

This workshop featured best practices to prepare communities who face the risk of wildfires. Robert Roper, the chief of the Ventura County, CA, fire department, handed out brochures that highlighted the Ventura County Wildfire Action Plan that featured two approaches: evacuate early and stay and defend. Chief Roper said that “the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you.”

Don Westover, the fire manager for Nebraska, shared with the audience several ways that each state's forestry agency can help municipalities: planning with local fire departments, training city and/or county firefighters, fire suppression, aerial fire suppression, providing equipment, fuel treatment and fire prevention.

The workshop attendees also learned of a residential fire hazard assessment program conducted (with the help of student volunteers) by the state of Minnesota. The report card ranked homes as low, moderate, high or extreme risk in the event of a wildfire. The program also offers tips, ranging from minimal, to moderate, to high cost actions that property owners could take advantage of to prepare for the event of a fire.

Workshop Media Boot Camp: County News That Is Fit To Print

Even though I am a former TV news journalist, I always seek out new approaches to getting the city's story out to the constituency. This workshop featured Don Kappel, the director of public affairs for Chesterfield County, VA, and Brett Scott, the public information officer for Kent County, DE. At one time, our City Council discussed whether we should add a media relations officer to our staff (we had, for a brief time, someone on our staff who was to lobby the state on issues and matters we felt were important to the city).

Mr. Scott stressed an old saying by Thomas Jefferson "Information to the people is the most legitimate engine of government." Scott was formerly the official U.S. Marine Corps spokesman in Washington, DC. He said the media "is the only business protected by the U.S. Constitution – that they have a constitutional 'right' to ask questions." He noted that the trends in media indicate that most reporters are young, college-educated, have some experience, move from market to market, are paid less than they deserve, and are trained to sniff out the 5Ws and the H (who, what, when, where, why and how). Scott said that on balance, the media provide benefit to our citizens, benefit to local governments, and are a vital help during natural and man-made disasters. He also quoted Napoleon Bonaparte: "I fear one newspaper more than a thousand bayonets." He said the most common mistake when dealing with reporters is not knowing what you are going to say before you are asked a question.

NACO has a Media Relations Guide for the counties. I have one in my office.

Field Trip Review of Ze-Gen Waste-to-Energy Plant New Bedford, Massachusetts

Honolulu City Councilmember Todd Apo joined me on this trip to review a waste to energy plant in this Massachusetts town.

In the Fall of 2007, Ze-Gen entered into an agreement with the New Bedford Waste Services, LLC, through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to demonstrate the concept of using gasification to address waste and energy issues. Ze-Gen engineers have developed technology that relies on gasification – the conversion of a solid to gas, through a chemical process.

In this particular case, Ze-Gen engineers process construction and demolition waste through gasification to produce syngas comprising mainly of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. A full-scale plant can eventually be built using syngas to produce electricity. (NOTE: about 2,000 tons a day of municipal solid waste is incinerated at H-Power in Honolulu – which is then used as fuel to produce steam, which drives a turbine to generate 45 megawatts of electricity. Ze-Gen has not yet turned to solid waste as a source of fuel. That's because unlike construction waste, solid waste is an uneven, unpredictable blend that is more difficult to gasify efficiently, according to Ze-Gen).

The financials for this next generation technology are crucial for the City & County of Honolulu to understand. Councilmember Apo and I spent a day in Long Island, New York, speaking with Mike Kolodner, financial consultant to Ze-gen. Kolodner runs all the pro forma financials for various Ze-gen projects. We were able to discuss in some detail what financial benefits might accrue to the City with Ze-gen technology. Kolodner lives on Long Island (Southampton) and was unable to attend the New Bedford portion of the visit.

The construction and demolition waste is processed as feedstock and is gasified in a 28-ton furnace set at 2,800-degrees Fahrenheit. Once slag from the process cools, it can be used in construction. There is no ash and no need for a separate landfill for ash removal, thus the carbon footprint is greatly reduced and creates far less of an impact on the environment. Ze-Gen is awaiting word from the state of Massachusetts to reduce or revise its restrictions on the incineration of municipal solid waste so that the plant can convert to that fuel as feedstock. Ze-Gen is working towards how to dispose of municipal solid waste as its primary goal. The company envisions a full-scale plant that would gasify 500 tons of waste per day and generate 30 megawatts of renewable energy for New Bedford.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Garcia', written in a cursive style.

Nestor R. Garcia, Member
Honolulu City Council
Council District IX
Floor Leader
Chair, Transportation & Public Works Committee

July 30, 2008

Local Strategies for Increasing Housing Accessibility and Diversity

INTRODUCTION

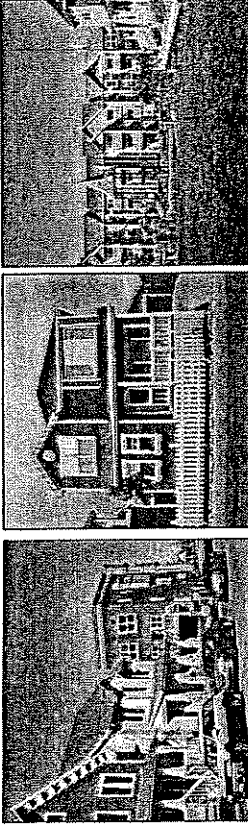
America's face is changing. The last few decades have seen an evolution in the demographic makeup of U.S. households, and these households now require new housing options to meet their basic needs and changing lifestyles. The increase of aging baby boomers, empty nesters, childless couples, and grandfamilies⁴ requires communities to reassess the type, location, and design of housing that is available to these households. They have need for smaller homes that require less maintenance, are located in closer proximity to services and community interaction opportunities, and are designed to address the physical limitations of aging and disabled persons. In addition, the nation's minority population has increased significantly in recent years; a trend that is expected to continue. Combined, the increase in these households and the fact that many of them fall into the lower income tiers of our economy makes it difficult to create equitable communities. Prevalent development patterns cluster housing by type and price points and typically do not provide a diversity of units within developments. The physical separation of households by income levels results in an imbalance in opportunities and ultimately affects the long-term success of low-income families and children, and in turn, the quality of life for all.

A diversity of local housing opportunities is now needed to maintain a sustainable quality of life. The American Dream of owning your own home hasn't changed, but the one-size-fits-all typical suburban single-family home found in a homogenous neighborhood is no longer the only solution for meeting demand. Some developers are interested in meeting the new demand of these households, but are unable due to outdated zoning and design standards. Development regulations need to keep pace with the changing needs of communities to foster the development of a broad array of housing options. Many communities have started to address these needs and provide new opportunities, incentives, or mandatory regulations to this end. Some communities urge new developments to offer a mix of housing unit types, sizes, and price points. Some encourage units to be designed to provide access to a range of ages and physical abilities. And others ensure that developments provide for more sustainable commuting patterns and community engagement opportunities by locating housing proximate to public transportation, employment centers, and needed services.

IMPLICATIONS OF NOT ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

Communities that do not address these changing housing needs will find that their citizenry will be forced to live in inadequate housing or to relocate to an area that can provide needed amenities and proximity to services. Elderly residents may find it necessary to spend fixed income wages to retrofit their home to provide better handicap accessibility. Young families may find limited housing opportunities for raising families in urban areas and may relocate to find adequate housing elsewhere. Communities may again become segregated, this time by socio-economic status, creating new community challenges. In general, when housing needs are not met, it affects the overall quality of living

⁴ Grandfamilies are households of grandparents raising their grandchildren. This type of household is on the rise. According to the 2005 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 6 million children living in "grandfamily" or "kinship care" households in the United States.



in a community. Providing housing options to a diversity of households improves their quality of life, and development regulations need to provide the framework to affect this change. This is but another step in changing the way communities are developed to create long-term, sustainable community environments.


GOALS FOR HOUSING DIVERSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The goals for this chapter are to:

- Raise awareness on the changing housing needs facing our nation's communities;
- Offer methods to create more diverse housing opportunities by removing regulatory barriers from local development regulations;
- Identify incentives for developers to encourage development of a full range of housing options to meet local demands; and
- Suggest mandatory requirements to create more diverse and inclusive housing communities.

DRAFT Sustainable Community Development Code Framework

HOUSING DIVERSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Create Incentives	Bronze (Good)	Silver (Better)	Gold (Best)	References/Commentary	Code Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expedited review and waiver of fees for development of a diversity of units, or units with visibility or universal design features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require residential units in urban areas to include family-friendly amenities, such as parks and play grounds on site. Require variations in lot sizes and densities in larger developments. Require minimum densities in larger residential developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce a percentage of units within urban developments to include 3+ bedroom units. As a planned unit development compensating community benefit, require mix of housing types. Require variation in multifamily building size/footprint to encourage different unit sizes and configurations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide density bonuses when incorporating a variety of housing products in a development. Implement a mandatory development points system for incorporating community objectives such as a range of housing types, development of affordable units, and using visibility design standards. Require certain number of units to be "adaptable" or include visibility or universal design standards. Require a mix of housing types within residential developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Visitability: A New Direction for Changing Demographics," <i>Practicing Planner</i>, (2004) "Living First in Downtown Vancouver", <i>Zoning News</i>, Beasty, (2009) <i>A Blueprint for Action: Developing a Livable Community for All Ages</i>, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Partners for Livable Communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fort Collins, CO – "Practical Housing for All" standards that encourage use of universal design concepts http://fcgov.com/ohg/ Paramatta, Australia – Mandatory mix of units by number of bedrooms and "adaptable" features (i.e., easy conversion of home design to meet elderly/disabled needs) http://www.parramatta.nsw.gov.au/datasheets/pdf_files/0014272800_CEP_2003.pdf Vancouver, British Columbia – design guidelines for high-density housing aimed at families and children. http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commissres/guidelines/H004.pdf Fort Collins, CO, minimum residential density requirements. Chapel Hill, NC – required mix of housing sizes in Planned Developments http://www.townofchapelhill.com/index.asp?NID=1165 St. Lucie County, FL – Towns, Villages and Countryside Overlay - requires mix of units types
<p>Enact Standards</p> 					

POTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES:

- Calculating the number of accessory dwelling units, elder cottages, and other senior housing units available and comparing with demand.
- Calculating the number of multi-family housing units and number of bedrooms per unit in urban areas.
- Calculating the number of new homes implementing visibility and universal design standards.
- Calculating the number of intergenerational housing development units available.
- Conducting a housing needs assessment.
- Calculating the housing diversity in a community using the LEED-ND Housing Diversity Measurement or similar index

* Visitability is a design approach driven by the principle that all new homes of all types should be designed and built with basic levels of access. The intent is for the disabled to be able to "visit" and access the homes of their non-disabled peers and for disabled persons to be given the capacity to continue residing in their own homes. Basic features of Visitability include one-level, no step entrances, accessible doorways, and a bathroom on the entry level floor. It does not entail comprehensive accessibility within the residence.

City Council
City and County of Honolulu


CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 7-30-08

Traveler: Nestor Garcia
 Event: 2008 NACO Annual + Special Waste Energy Meeting
 Location: Kansas City, MO
 Dates: From July 12, 2008 To July 18, 2008

Description	Amount	Notes
1. Registration Fee (FY08)	490.00	
2. Airfare (FY08)	1,293.89	
3. Hotel	1,153.16	Rate: No. of Billable Days:
4. Meals	37.05	
5. Ground Transportation		
6. Tips		
7. Other	374.00	cancellation (Hotel Providence)
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment	(1,783.89)	
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT (FY09)	1,564.21	FY08 - \$1,783.89
		FY09 - 1,564.21
		TOTAL TRAVEL EXPENSES: \$3,348.10

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:


 Signature of Traveler

Aug 5, 2008
 Date