

*Summer 1997*

A R C H I T E C T U R E

# CALIFORNIA





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# From the Editor: Should Architects Care Where Their Tax Dollars Go?

Each year our elected representatives to the state government go through a ritual to determine how the revenues of the State of California will be allocated to different purposes and agendas. This allocation process results in a state budget. This budget is intended to reflect the priorities of the people of California and establish the state's expectations for the expenditure of the collective contributed tax dollars from individuals and businesses.

Combining federal and state taxes, most employed Californians and their associated enterprises contribute 21 to 38 percent of their income in tax revenues. This means that each individual or business spends approximately three to five months a year working for the government—even if they are not on the government payroll. The table to the right documents the funding categories by type and percentage to the major components of state government for the 1977-78 and 1997-98 fiscal years. The graphs on the following page illustrates the type and magnitude of funding shifts in the state general fund budget over this twenty-year period.

It should be noted that the primary shifts occurred in three major areas: 1) In K-12 education the funding responsibility shifted from local funds to state funds. The rate of funding in this category has not changed considerably, only the source. 2) Higher education in 1977-78 represented almost 50 percent of the state general fund budget. In 1997-98 it commanded only 13 percent of the general fund budget. 3) Health and welfare services was allocated 5.34 percent of the budget in 1977-78 and

28.1 percent in 1997-98. This shift reflects greater responsibility for the state to fund health and welfare programs, and it also illustrates a significant increase in the type and size of health and welfare programs in California.

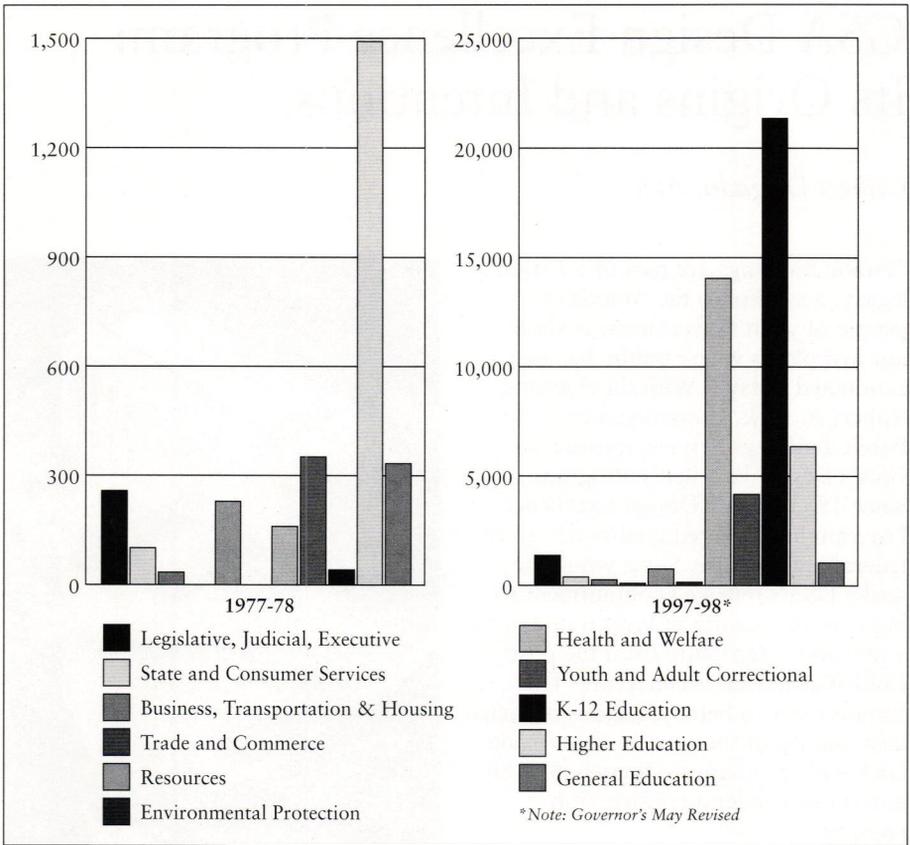
In addition to the general funds provided for operating state government and its programs, the legislature authorizes the sale of capital improvement bonds. In 1997-78 the state approved \$407 million in bond funding. In 1997-98 authorized capital outlay bonds were \$760 million, a 51 percent increase over 20 years. When these figures are adjusted for inflation, the increase in real dollars for construction is not significant. In both fiscal year budgets, 85 percent of the capital outlay funding was through the sale of general obligation bonds.

For architects and other environmental designers, the structure of the state budget has direct implications on

General Fund Expenditures by Agency  
State of California  
(Dollars in Millions)

	1977-78	%	1997-98*	%
Legislative, Judicial, Executive	256	8.59	1,416	2.74
State and Consumer Services	100	3.36	394	0.76
Business, Transportation & Housing	34	1.14	260	0.5
Trade and Commerce	0	0	98	0.19
Resources	227	7.62	782	1.51
Environmental	0	0	150	0.29
Health and Welfare	159	5.34	14,551	28.1
Youth and Adult	349	11.7	4,300	8.32
K-12 Education	41	1.38	22,082	42.7
Higher Education	1,482	49.7	6,589	12.7
General Government	331	11.1	1,070	2.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,979</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>\$51,692</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Note: Governor's May Revised



Comparison 1977-78/1997-98 State Budget Allocations

the type and, in some cases, the amount of capital improvements made to state facilities. The question is: Will the state build more schools, prisons, performing arts centers, city halls, roads and bridges or more assistance to affordable housing or other community support environments?

As architects, we sometimes like to think our agendas are exempt from politics and its associated outcomes, but they are not. Everyday lives of architects and other environmental designers are becoming more influenced by governmental action. We spend a significant amount of time responding to the regulatory and political context of professional practice. These activities play an important role in setting not only our design agendas and the result-

ing environmental quality, but also in influencing state government to fund facilities for the delivery of services and programs.

This volume of *Architecture California* records issues and activities which have been either directly or indirectly influenced by state funding and/or legislative policy and action. This influence ranges from funding limits on capital projects, to registration and licensure authority, and design and code regulations. It is hoped that one or more of the articles which follows will open debate and expand our understanding of the political context of architectural practice.

W. Mike Martin, AIA  
Editor

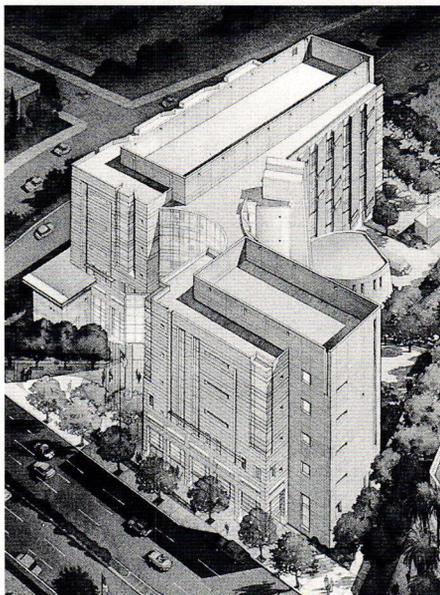
# GSA Design Excellence Program: Its Origins and Intentions

*Gilbert Delgado, AIA*

“Public Buildings are part of a nation’s legacy, a symbol to the American people of what Government is about, not just places where public business is conducted today.” With these words, Robert A. Peck, Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service, introduced GSA’s Design Excellence Program. Since 1993, GSA’s Design Excellence Program has elevated quality design in federal architecture. Some would describe GSA’s renewed commitment to improve the quality of federal design as a refreshing departure from the post Cold War federal architecture. This commitment to better design is particularly significant because in this decade, GSA will spend approximately \$10 billion on new federal construction projects.

In the four years since its inception, Design Excellence has produced buildings that have won awards and lived up to Peck’s inspirational words. In the beginning, the primary aim of Design Excellence was to bring into the federal fold greater creativity and a higher design standard. As the program unfolds, other important aims are emerging. GSA’s goals are to create opportunities for new and diverse architectural perspectives and to integrate design excellence concepts into other areas such as urban design and the design of interior spaces. Moreover, GSA, through Design Excellence principles, has demonstrated that quality design concepts can improve federal workplaces in their visual appeal and in their functional use.

In order to achieve design excellence, it took creativity and boldness



Evo A. DeConcini U.S. Courthouse & Federal Building, Tucson, AZ.

on the part of professionals at the GSA. Over the years, procurement procedures and other federal policies resulted in federal architecture that was produced with more concern placed on public accountability than architectural design. As a result, the selection procedures emphasized laborious procurement practices which submerged design issues.

It gradually resulted in a small pool of architectural offices doing most of the government’s lucrative design work. This kept many of the nation’s top designers from competing for federal work. According to GSA’s chief architect, Ed Feiner, FAIA, three primary factors led GSA to Design Excellence—“A large building program, the right people at the right place and time, and

political leadership interested in leaving a legacy of high quality buildings.” GSA had a valuable opportunity to not only improve the process, but to implement it on a grand scale. The extraordinary volume of work would also guarantee a high level of visibility and draw the attention and interest of many stakeholders in the design and construction of federal buildings.

In the spring of 1993, GSA hosted a workshop to investigate alternative selection processes for architectural service contracts. GSA invited professionals including Hugh Hardy, Eugene Kohn, Guy Obata, and Margaret McCurry to participate. The results of the workshop were the total transformation of GSA’s A/E selection process. The new process would emphasize quality architectural design.

#### THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SELECTION PROCESS

Streamlining the selection process was key to improving the quality of federal design and achieving the other important objectives of the Design Excellence program. Modifications of the selection process were made within the confines of the 1972 Brooks Act, a federal law requiring GSA to consider the architects’ qualifications ahead of their fees. The revised selection procedures simplified proposal requirements and reduced GSA’s evaluation time.

Currently, GSA is undergoing one of the largest building programs in its 50-year history. The streamlined procedures will have a significant impact on both industry and government. The current building program expands GSA’s demand for A/E talent and creates opportunities for the agency to seek new and diverse talent. By reducing the cost to compete for Federal work, GSA is attracting emerging talent and increasing the participation of small firms.

The changes level the playing field among different sized firms to compete for GSA business. Under the old system, firms competing for GSA work had to complete exhaustive Standard Forms 254 and 255 and appear at the first interview with a full team of consultants and contractors. Under Design Excellence, GSA no longer evaluates the entire design team during the first stage of submission leading to a short list. The cost of developing a team of consultants and preparing the documentation required by the SF-254/255s is deferred until a lead architect is shortlisted. By reducing the cost of the first stage of submission, more firms can easily compete. This has resulted in a broader portfolio of government work.

Since the revised program is design driven, the emphasis of the first stage review is on the quality of past architectural design rather than prior government experience. To assist GSA in the selection, the government team is advised by a peer. Once a firm is hired, GSA brings in private sector advisors, usually three, for the design concept review. In Feiner’s words, “Their role is to provide a private sector or academic perspective to make our work the best the architectural profession can produce.”

	Previous Selection Process	Design Excellence
Stage One/ Shortlisting	The firms submit SF-254s & SF-255s showing complete design and production team, management approach, etc.	The firm submits photographs of past work and supportive narrative.
GSA Evaluation Team	The team was composed of 4 to 5 members of the GSA regional office. Sometimes the team included a prominent tenant such as a federal judge.	The team consists of 2 to 3 members of the GSA regional office, a private sector peer advisor, and usually a prominent tenant.
Stage Two/ Selection	The firm submitted additional presentation materials as required and was interviewed.	The firm submits SF-254s & SF-255s showing complete design and production team.

Feiner was instrumental in setting up a nationwide network of advisors to serve on GSA's selection panels. Advisors are appointed by the Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service for two-year terms. For projects over \$25 million, architects participate as advisors. They contribute to the design excellence process by helping to articulate the perspectives of both GSA and the customer and often can point out things not considered by either. In the four years since the implementation of the revised selection process, GSA has contracted with established talents such as AIA Fellows Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Robert Stern, George Hartman, Warren Cox, Hugh Hardy, Norman Pfeiffer, James Freed and others.

Other changes in the selection and review process reflect GSA's commitment to elevating federal design. GSA has incorporated the participation of users. When a project has special requirements, the selection panel may include a client representative, such as a judge or clerk, for design of a courthouse.

Recognizing that there is a pool of untapped design talent that may not qualify under more orthodox selection processes, GSA is exploring alternative methods of procuring design services, such as competitions. Recently, the San Francisco GSA regional office, in collaboration with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, awarded the redesign of a major public plaza to two designers in their mid-twenties, after a anonymous competition. "Competitions excite the system and create great interest across the profession," says Feiner.

The success of the new way of conducting business has not gone unnoticed. In 1996, *Architecture* magazine dedicated an issue to the exciting new portfolio of federal building designs. In all, 24 courthouses and a collection of various other building types were show-



Federal Building and Courthouse, Las Vegas, NV.

cased, demonstrating the federal government's new attitude towards architectural design. One of the projects, the new Phoenix Federal Courthouse designed by Richard Meier, FAIA, received a Progressive Architecture Award for 1996.

In 1990, GSA established a bi-annual design awards program to encourage and recognize innovative design in federal buildings and to honor noteworthy achievements in the preservation and renovation of historic structures. Recognizing that it takes a community of disciplines to produce great design, GSA honors individuals and projects in the fields of architecture, historic preservation, urban design, interior and landscape architecture, engineering, art and graphic arts. The juries are composed of nationally recognized professionals. In 1996, over 20 projects were recognized with six receiving Honor Awards.

Through Design Excellence, GSA is delivering an accountable process for achieving quality architectural design. The acknowledgment of its success has come in many ways. When the American Battle Monuments Commission embarked on the sensitive task of developing a selection process for the design of a monument to veterans of the World War II, they entrusted the process to GSA. And, the National Institutes of Health used the process to build a new \$400 million hospital.

## STAGE I: SELECTING THE SHORT LIST

Since the Public Buildings Service (PBS) selects finalists primarily on the basis of their design portfolios, submissions should clearly reflect the quality, attributes, and success of each project included. The lead designer's approach and philosophy regarding the submitted projects should be emphasized. The requirements in Stage 1 are:

### PRESUBMITTAL MEETING

PBS sponsors a meeting for firms responding to opportunities published in the Commerce Business Daily (CBD). At the meeting, PBS design professionals explain details and answer questions about the project and application procedures.

### A/E RESPONSE-THE CAPSULE PORTFOLIO

Firms respond by providing a short portfolio which usually includes:

- a cover letter referencing the CBD announcement, briefly describing the firm and its location, organizational makeup, and noteworthy accomplishments.
- a modified SF 254 and 255.
- documentation of up to 5 outstanding projects completed within the past 10 years. Documentation should include a one-page, typewritten description of each project, spelling out design objectives, approach, results, project significance, key features, and awards or peer recognition. Up to three 8-by-10 inch illustrations (photographs, drawings, computer generated art) may be used for each project. These can be before and after shots, interiors, elevations, sections, or other visual evidence of quality design.
- a statement of intent by the lead designer (maximum of two pages) that conveys his or her design philosophy, understanding of current design issues and approaches and solutions applicable to the PBS project.

- a profile of the lead designer, covering education, professional experience, and accomplishments.
- a lead designer portfolio documenting up to three projects. This should include no more than one typewritten page of narrative and three 8-x-10 inch illustrations for each project.
- The design firm may be asked to show that it has an active production office in a specific geographic location. If the firm is an association, joint venture, partnership, or other business entity established specifically for the project, a description of the business relationship should be included in the initial submittal.

### PBS REVIEW

The review panel evaluates the capsule portfolios and narrows the competition to a short list of three to six firms.

### PUBLICATION OF THE SHORT LIST

PBS notifies applicants of its selection of firms on the short list for further consideration and publishes the list in the Commerce Business Daily. The announcement includes criteria to be considered and the due date of Stage II submittals. PBS allows sufficient time—30-40 days for finalists to assemble design teams and prepare additional information for Stage II.

## STAGE II: FINAL SELECTION

In this stage, the PBS selection panel reviews the additional documentation requested from finalists and interviews representatives of the design teams. Finalists do not have to resubmit information provided in Stage I. Requirements for Stage II are:

### ASSEMBLE DESIGN TEAMS

Finalists submit information on each member of their design team, including outside consultants. Firms are encouraged to include small, disadvantaged,

and women-owned businesses on their teams.

#### COMPLETION OF REQUIRED FORMS

Need to prepare Standard Form 254, Architect-Engineer and Related Services Questionnaire, and SF 255, Architect-Engineer and Related Services Questionnaire for Specific Project. These forms, available from the contracting office, ask for detailed information on the A/E group's legal makeup (partnership, corporation, etc.), qualifications, and past projects. SF-254 covers general qualifications and past projects. SF-255 applies to a firm's ability to carry out the project advertised and requests information about proposed members of the design team, including consultants.

#### THE INTERVIEW

The PBS review panel interviews members of each project team. Candidates should be prepared to discuss all aspects of the criteria published in Commerce Business Daily and to demonstrate the ability to fulfill all project requirements. Emphasis will be placed on the unique aspects of the particular project, design philosophy, possible approaches in carrying out the project, and project management.

#### THE SELECTION

PBS panel members evaluate the finalists' strengths and weaknesses based on the portfolios, SF 254 and 255, interviews, and other selection factors. The panel then ranks the firms and prepares a written recommendation.

#### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

According to Feiner, "Starting a program is not easy, but keeping it going, making sure it does not get stale is much harder. The work on the boards and talent are light-years ahead of where we were only four years ago, and we expect this improvement to continue." Feiner

#### 1996 Projects Receiving GSA Design Awards

Project	Award for	Credits
The U.S. Courthouse, Foley Square New York, New York	Architecture	Kohn Pederson Fox Associates PC
U.S. Port of Entry Calexico, California	Architecture	Dworsky Associates
U.S. Courthouse Boston, Massachusetts	Building Designs in Progress	Pei Cobb Freed & Partners
Evo A. DeConcini, Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse Tucson, Arizona	Building Designs in Progress	Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates
U.S. Custom House New Orleans, Louisiana	Historic Preservation	Waggoner & Ball Architects
U.S. Court of Appeals San Francisco, California	Historic Preservation	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, LLP
Justice, Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Courthouse Newark, New Jersey	Art	Diana K. Moore Artist

#### Several Projects in California Received Citations

Project	Award for	Credits
The Federal Building Oakland	Architecture	Kaplan McLaughlin Diaz
Vincent E. McKelvey Federal Building, U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park	Architecture	MBT Architecture
Little Aviators Child Care Center, Hawthorne Federal Building, Lawndale	Interior Design	RAW Architecture
Energy Conservation Project, Chet Holifield Federal Building, Laguna Niguel	Engineering, Technology, and Energy Conservation	Southern California Edison Southland Industries CRSS Constructors
"Watersongs," Vincent E. McKelvey Federal Building, U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park	Art	Douglas Hollis Artist

continues, "This is our generation's opportunity to show that during our mark on civilization, we had something to say about our values, aspirations, and hopes to future generations."

*Gilbert Delgado, AIA, is a staff architect for the General Services Administration Pacific Rim Region based in San Francisco.*

# Community-Based Design: Seeing the Future in Community Values

Bruce A. Race, AIA, AICP

*Communities across California are expressing renewed interest in their public places. After years of retreat, the definition of "cocooning" has expanded to include the neighborhood, local shopping street and downtown, as citizens adopt proactive roles and help set design agendas. More and more, citizens expect to have a say in public and private investment decisions that impact the public domain.*

## COMMUNITY-BASED DESIGN TRENDS

As California grows and ages, several clear trends have emerged. Communities show increasing interest in revitalizing their central places, enhancing pedestrian-friendly addresses and advocating quality architecture. Most significantly, policymakers are beginning to incorporate citizen input in community design policy, encouraging public participation in the development of community design plans and forming design review committees.

Newcomers during California's booming 1970s and 80s are now settled. They recognize their vested interest in their communities. They know more about local history, are more aware of local architecture and design traditions, and are more concerned with fiscal and environmental impacts of new development. As a result, preserving the scale and character of cherished places has become a policy condition. Communities' interests focus on the value created by physical and cultural memory. Victorian and Craftsman neighborhoods, ethnic districts, old in-

dustrial districts and even tie-dye era places are venerated for the memories they represent.

Changed values and citizens' desire to shape new and preserve existing public places have had a number of positive effects. Increasingly, policy makers look for input from citizen advisory committees (CACs), task forces and special committees formed to guide professional planning and design teams. Such groups often act as the sponsors of the public participation process. They may also host public workshops, take the lead on public outreach and education, and document the results of civic discourse. Whether blended from standing advisory boards and commissions or created from special interest groups, these CACs have tremendous responsibility, as well as great clout, in establishing urban design parameters.

Now public sector clients come to architects for help in facilitating community participation in identifying design solutions that reflect local values. The way architects work with communities shapes their expectations for quality design and environments.

## ARCHITECT'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY DESIGN

The architect's role in community-based design is often lost in media preoccupation with Deconstructivism and Neotraditionalism. Those architects who provide design and planning services for communities operate in a world of policy and politics. Likewise, those who provide design services to

private developers also face public and political scrutiny. In both cases, architects must help inform the discussion and document the results.

#### DESIGNING THE PROCESS

Helping develop a community-based design process requires an understanding of what types of decisions a community needs to make. Just as every community is unique, no two processes will be exactly the same. However, every community design effort goes through three general overall phases: a period of discovery, understanding the available options, and deciding how to make the preferred approach a reality.

Credibility is a primary objective of every community process. Credible community design and policy efforts do not happen by accident. Successful planning efforts are scripted and planned to ensure the community understands recommendations and policies. A credible process, one that the community "buys into," captures community values. A credible process has three characteristics.

1. The process is inclusive. All citizens and special interests must have access to the planning discussion through outreach strategies that include all groups on all sides of critical issues.
2. The process is informed. Because values are intrinsically emotion-laden, they must be discussed openly and directly. Factual information regarding central issues is critical.
3. The process is open and visible. Participants need to see their input documented and reflected in the outcome of the design process.

#### INFORMING COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Whether the issue relates to community character, traffic patterns, demographics, historical sites or fiscal matters, information is essential. Emotion can

only be tamed by information which allows participants to develop a clearer understanding of the critical issues, design options and potential outcomes of various planning futures.

#### DOCUMENTING THE RESULTS

Architects must help communities document public values, ideas and decisions. Each decision requires a visible trail that chronicles popular understanding of the issues and choices. The ideal community design process is self-documenting. Each step, workshop, focus group, meeting or survey adopts an approach that guides the community through the discussion and documents the preferences expressed. This makes for an open and visible process and, therefore, adds to its credibility.

#### RAISING COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALITY DESIGN

The community-based design process should be educational and create an opportunity for communities to "self actualize." Communities will then better understand their own physical form and learn what factors influence changes. In the course of a successful process, many participants view their communities in new ways and achieve a growing appreciation for quality design. Higher community expectations usually lead to interesting assignments for architects as well. The three case studies that follow show some of the ways architects are "upping the ante," raising community expectations for architecture in three very different community design programs.

#### CASE STUDIES

##### CARMEL: DESIGN TRADITIONS PROJECT

California communities considered desirable destinations and addresses have long-standing architectural and planning traditions that acknowledge their



Carmel, California citizen design teams work to define the desirable characteristics of their residential neighborhoods.

spectacular natural settings. Design policies in such communities generally build on these traditions in an attempt to shape new development. Carmel, for example, has fashioned a community-based design process that frames new development as an extension of the village's architectural memory.

Carmel's Design Traditions Project involves the community in assessing valued assets of its historic wooded residential areas. The process raises public awareness of the architectural and natural assets that make Carmel a unique California place. The community uses its popular assets as a foundation to review potential policy options and design management tools.

#### EL CERRITO: REINVENTING THE CENTRAL PLACE

Many postwar California communities are now discovering or initiating traditions unique to their community environments. California's recovery from the recession of the early '90s has created economic conditions that permit communities to initiate a dialogue about how to shape the next generation of growth. New residential neighborhoods and redevelopment of older commercial areas offer opportunities for change. One popular theme, adopted by El Cerrito, involves a reconfigured shopping environment to play the role of a town center, which aided commu-



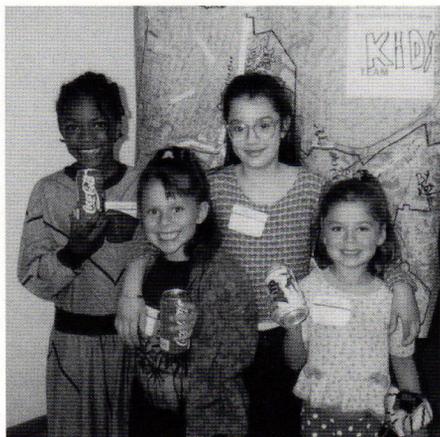
El Cerrito, California citizen workshop participants explore conceptual approaches as they create a new village center.

nity-based efforts to reinvent their central place.

The 30-year-old El Cerrito Plaza lost its anchor department store and required a new tenant mix strategy to survive changes in retailing. During 1996 and 1997, El Cerrito spent several months working through a community-based planning process to develop a framework plan for a new village center. The community had to review a variety of economic, tax base and design objectives before the Redevelopment Agency solicited private sector partners for the project. El Cerrito adopted a three-step process: define the planning opportunities and options, identify the urban design principles and test their plan. A summary set of design objectives was then used to solicit a private sector developer partner and guide the site planning and design approach.

**SAN PABLO: UPDATING THE GENERAL PLAN**  
Increasingly, California communities are including community design or image elements in their general plans. They have found community image, land use and economic development are interdependent variables in terms of overall livability.

In San Pablo, the general plan update process included aggressive public outreach. A series of workshops focused on land use, community design and economic development and gener-



In San Pablo, California, “Kids Design San Pablo” provides a fresh view on how children use cities and dream of the future.

ated public input into an integrated vision for the community. Using an alternative futures gaming workshop, community design teams developed long-term visions for the city. Subsequent workshops focused on district land-use strategies, community design, economic development, and implementation. The result was a popular city-wide vision that integrated community design with land use and economic policies.

#### COMMUNITY DESIGN TOOL BOX

The uniqueness of each community and each project means architects must tailor their approach to community participation to fit every assignment. A variety of interactive design methods exist to facilitate participation and help communities better appreciate design issues.

*Environmental Walks.* Most community-based design efforts allow participants to become the experts as they help define the issues. Environmental walks, for example, guide participants along a fixed route as they analyze planning and design opportunities. A list of questions helps focus their observations on particular issues.

*Cognitive Mapping and Drawing.* One effective warm-up exercise involves asking citizens to draw from memory their community or neighborhood. When planning a particular site, for instance, participants need to consider its context. Ask them to draw the surrounding neighborhood or city. This technique works exceptionally well with children. With adults, as an impromptu exercise, it often stimulates productive discussions.

*Gaming Solutions.* Design games help citizen design teams explore alternative futures effectively. Although these games can be complex, they offer several valuable features: they are interactive, visual and self-documenting. Rules can be formulated by participants as they react to prompter questions that focus on critical issues. Game boards can be based on a site diagram, an aerial photo or even an abstract map diagram. Game pieces contrived from colored pieces of cardboard or cut paper may be used in combination with colored markers. Ideally, participants move game pieces around the board and negotiate their final location.

*Testing Scenarios.* “Test driving” design plans add a new layer of player involvement as teams engage in role-playing. After defining various user scenarios, then map the experience of someone walking through the design. Outcomes may be summarized in a series of stories, plotting movement with colored markers or notes. The economic impact of a project may be addressed by pasting down play money where the scenarios produce sales.

From self-guided walks to elaborate design games, the methods selected depend on the issues the community needs to resolve and their stage in the design process. Involvement is the key. Participants need to feel their concerns have been addressed; they need ad-

equate information to work through the emotional aspects that surround issues; and they need to face the consequences of alternative design decisions. When citizens feel they played a genuine role in the process, they produce better results.

*As California matures, communities rely more heavily on local experience and customs. At the same time, the architect's role in this coming-of-age urbanism changes, too. Architects, trained to understand the layers of economic, urban design and historic traditions of cities, are becoming teachers and guides to communities seeking to focus on their uniqueness, articulate their identity and plan more effectively to face the future.*

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# Government and the Architectural Profession

*Mehrdad Fariivar, AIA, Esq.*

The process of designing buildings and cities in a highly regulated society such as ours is closely tied to governmental policies and shaped by governmental regulations. The government, at its various levels, affects what gets built as well as how it is built. The practice of architecture is regulated by state agencies regulating licensure and forms of doing business and by courts interpreting and reinterpreting the meaning and application of laws and regulations, defining and redefining the responsibilities of the architect.

Under our system of government, these functions are exercised through the three branches of government: the executive (or the regulatory), the legislative and the judiciary, and at three levels: local, state and federal.

Government affects the architectural profession in at least three areas: 1) licensing and forms of doing business, 2) approvals and permits [entitlements], and 3) enforcement of contracts and resolution of civil disputes. Of these, the first two are largely the domain of the legislative and regulatory branches of government at the state and local levels while the third is a function of the judicial branch of government primarily at the state, but also at the federal level.

## LICENSING AND FORMS OF DOING BUSINESS

Architects are licensed by the state. The practice of architecture is regulated by state law in all states. In California, Business and Professions Code,

Sections 5500 to 5610.7, govern architectural practice. The pertinent sections of the Business and Professions Code are gathered into a bulletin and published each year as "The Architects Practice Act" by the Board of Architectural Examiners, the body created by the state to regulate licensing in the architectural profession. Business and Professions Code sets forth certain basic definitions of the profession and forms of business entities that can be created to engage in its practice. These include sole proprietorships under real and fictitious business names, partnerships, associations, corporations, architectural corporations, and joint ventures. Federal and local levels of government do not, by and large, play a role in regulating the practice of architecture other than by requiring local business licenses and by taxation at the federal level.

Some of the current issues affecting licensing and forms of doing business in California as pertains to architects are: 1) narrowing down those areas of design for which there is no requirement for the designer to be a licensed architect (exempt areas). At present, these areas include single-family houses and up to four residential housing units not exceeding a basement and two stories in height, ranch buildings and garages with certain material and height restrictions, 2) allowing architects to practice as limited liability partnerships (LLPs). Limited Liability partnerships are a form of partnership where, unlike a general

partnership, one partner is not held liable for acts or omissions of another partner, provided that each partner has distinct areas of responsibility. At present only accountants and lawyers can practice as LLPs in California, 3) design-build legislation currently pending, seeking to exempt design-build entities from the statutory requirement of being licensed as both design professionals and contractors, as a prerequisite of offering design-build services, and 4) the PEGC Initiative, a proposed ballot measure sponsored by the 8,000 strong, Professional Engineers in California Government, which seeks to allow PEGC members to compete with private architectural and engineering firms, based on price, for performing professional architectural and engineering services in connection with projects such as schools, hospitals and correctional and court facilities that are funded by the state. A recent addition to the Practice Act is Section 5536.22 of the Business and Professions Code requiring written contracts between architects and their clients.

#### ENTITLEMENTS, APPROVALS AND PERMITS

Increasingly, navigating a project through the maze of required governmental approvals and discretionary permits is one of the primary considerations that defines the project. In the case of smaller projects, it is one of the most important functions of the architect to manage that process. In larger and more complex projects, a team of professionals, including engineers, lawyers and other consultants, performs that function along with the architect. In either case, the architect is expected to be knowledgeable about the rules, both procedurally and substantively, that govern the entitlement process.

While most of the detailed zoning and building envelope regulations are originated locally, they are sometimes affected by state and federal law. For

example, the application of state mandated "density bonus" law in California, per Government Code, can increase the permitted residential densities in the multifamily housing zones by as much as 50 percent. Another example is the state mandated "granny units" in the single family zones that requires that local governments permit the addition of such units in single family zoning districts throughout the state. As for enforcement of building codes, certain projects such as state universities and hospitals are "plan checked" at the state level—not the local level. The plan check function at the state level is performed by the Department of the State Architect (DSA).

While the review process of the environmental impact of specific projects is generally governed by state law (California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA), federal agencies can have parallel jurisdiction along with the state over certain aspects of environmental review. For example, where development affects the habitat and protection of certain endangered species such as the desert tortoise in San Bernardino County, both the federal Department of Fish and Wildlife and the state department of Fish and Game have review and permitting jurisdiction over a project that affects such a habitat. Another example is the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA, which parallels the state Title 24 laws, but is enforced by local and not federal or state agencies.

At each level of government, whether local, state, or federal, the entitlement process can engage the functions of all three branches of government, sometimes simultaneously. In reviewing and scrutinizing projects, city councils, planning commissions, and other bodies take action in various governmental capacities, including fact finding, quasi-judicial and administra-

tive capacities, but their actions, if challenged, can be reviewed and scrutinized by the judicial branch.

Current issues in the area of entitlements in the urban areas of the state include 1) affordable housing, 2) public transportation, 3) mixed-use zoning districts, 4) residential densities, 5) revitalization and preservation of old urban centers, 6) sustainable development, and 7) habitat conservation of endangered species.

#### **ENFORCEMENT OF CONTRACTS AND RESOLUTION OF CIVIL DISPUTES**

The judicial branch of government settles civil disputes, enforces contracts, and with the aid of a jury, makes findings of fact and draws binding legal conclusions. At the local level there are three court systems whose jurisdiction is determined by amounts in controversy: 1) Small Claims Courts have jurisdiction over claims not exceeding \$5,000; 2) Municipal Courts adjudicate claims of up to \$25,000; and 3) Superior Courts have jurisdiction over amounts in controversy exceeding \$25,000. The appellate courts decide questions of law, appealed to them from the courts below. All unresolved factual matters are remanded back to the trial courts from which the case originated for resolution by a new trial. The decisions of the Courts of Appeal are published as "case law," and affect the outcome of cases that follow them in deciding common issues of law. Matters of federal law, such as bankruptcy or copyright are adjudicated in the federal court system as are matters involving citizens of different states where the amount in controversy exceeds \$50,000.

Current topics of interest in the judicial arena include the following: 1) proliferation of construction defect litigation in multi-unit housing, 2) validity of limitation of liability and indemnity clauses in construction and architec-

tural contracts, 3) the application of the "Certificate of Merit" statute, and 4) the interpretation of statutes of repose and statutes of limitation.

Construction defect litigation has recently become enough of a concern to have also become a source of recent, sometimes conflicting, legislative initiatives seeking to both retain the status quo and to reduce and discourage non-meritorious litigation. It is argued by home builders and others that unless the laws are changed, the production of multi-unit housing will suffer, further increasing the shortage of affordable housing in the state.

The validity of limitation of liability clauses was recently challenged by an appellate decision which was subsequently "depublished." Such clauses are thus valid in California if properly drafted.

The application of "Certificate of Merit" law has generated several recent appellate rulings. "Certificate of Merit" law requires that before a design professional is sued for malpractice, the plaintiff's attorney must consult with a professional in the same discipline as the defendant to determine whether, in the view of the person consulted, the law suit has merit. Some of the decisions pertain to the discoverability of the identity of the professional consulted. That information can only be revealed in a judge's chambers, upon "favorable conclusion" of the case against the design professional. That term has not been further defined by the courts.

Another recent opinion has permitted consultation with a design professional in a different discipline than the defendant, pursuant to the "Certificate of Merit" law. In that case, a shopping center roof canopy collapsed, and the owner sued both the architect and the structural engineer. A structural engineer was consulted, however, before the architect was sued to satisfy the re-

quirement of the "Certificate of Merit" law. The attorney for the architect appealed based on the violation of the "same discipline" provision of the "Certificate of Merit" law. The court ruled that it was permissible to consult an engineer in this case because the issues were structural, and the structural engineering was provided through the architect. AIA California Council, along with other professional societies, petitioned the California Supreme Court to have this case reviewed. The petition was denied.

Recent decisions have also established that notwithstanding the four-year and ten-year statutes of repose, a design defect lawsuit against a design professional must be brought within three years of the discovery of the defect or its clear manifestation, regardless of whether the defect was present at substantial completion of the project.

The interplay between significant court decisions and new legislation is particularly interesting in that it demonstrates the circular nature of the impact of government on the profession. Architects must keep informed about developments at all levels and all branches of government to be able to adapt to the constantly changing environment within which they practice.

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# Political Action Committees and the AIA

*Michael Coleman, AIA*

When receiving a Bachelor of Architecture from University of California, Berkeley in 1962, I saw architecture as a way of joining my artistic and engineering interests to make a positive contribution to society while earning a living. After obtaining my architecture license, I refused to join the AIA for almost 15 years. My refusal was based on the bylaws of the AIA California Council, which state that "The object of this Council shall be to...make the profession of ever-increasing value to society...and to advocate on behalf of the membership and the architectural profession in California." I wholeheartedly agreed with the "ever-increasing value to society," but I felt lobbying simply for the benefit of architects was too narrow a focus. I finally joined the AIA and much to my delight, it was full of people who were concerned about the future of the profession, and they were willing to be persuaded that change was good.

Now, 15 years have passed, and I find myself in the position of arguing FOR lobbying. It is not because I have become narrower in my concerns. It's because of Political Action Committees (PACs). Very few people with whom I have talked, deny that PACs are a major contributor to the deterioration of representative democracy in the United States, but they argue that the PACs are a necessary evil. I disagree. A real crisis is facing the profession with the Professional Engineers in California Government (PECG) Initiative heading for the ballot. In order to fight this initiative, we must individually get in-

involved in the campaign. We must EACH do lobbying. We must do everything within our power to defeat the Initiative—but not through PACs.

Many people believe PACs were created as a political reform following the Watergate scandal, but according to Common Cause, the first PAC was established during World War II following enactment of the 1943 Smith-Connolly Act. Among these temporary law provisions was one that extended a ban on corporate contributions and expenditures in federal elections to labor unions. The ban was specifically targeted at John L. Lewis, then president of the United Mine Workers of America and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Lewis established the National Citizen's Political Action Committee to collect voluntary contributions from mineworkers and others. Instead of directly using labor union treasury funds, Lewis used NCPAC's funds to make large contributions to Roosevelt's campaign. The name for this method of influencing politics has remained ever since.

The theory behind PACs is that they are simply a method for many individuals to pool their resources to gain political power. In a limited way, that is true. But in actual practice, PAC money is special-interest money that is used as part of the sophisticated lobbying campaigns to let interest groups buy the enhanced ability to affect the public policy decisions made by state legislatures or by Congress. This of course is why AIACC is a contributing member to two PACs.

Some of the AIACC membership have said the PECG Initiative is so onerous that we have to do whatever we can to defeat it, but they don't know what to do. What kind of leadership do we demonstrate when we sink to the lowest common denominator to get our political way? As architects, we think of ourselves as problem solvers, as members of a noble profession. The end cannot justify the means. As history has shown us many times, we must use the creativity, of which we are so proud, to find another means.

I have been accused of *throwing the baby out with the bath water* with this issue. I think it is very important to look at this. Defeating the PECG Initiative is very important. If our industry is not willing, however, to hold the moral high ground, how can we expect others to be honorable? The PECG members are obviously willing to lie and cheat to gain their ends. I have a lot of faith that we understand the dangers of the PECG Initiative, and that we will individually find creative ways to fight—and win. The bath water is not just filthy, it's totally corrupting to everything that touches it. Don't depend on that water to get the baby clean, much less keep it alive. Don't put the baby in that bath! Find another tub, now! Get AIA out of PACs and defeat the PECG Initiative at the same time!

We must continue to lobby. We must continue to make contributions to the candidates and issues of our choice. But, we must do this as individuals. Individuals working together, individuals coordinating our efforts, individuals consulting with the best campaign organizers in the country. We must not do it through PACs.

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*Michael Coleman, AIA, is a practicing architect in Oakland California and a member of the AIACC Board of Directors representing the East Bay Chapter. He serves as an active member of the Architects and Planners for Social Responsibility.*

# PAC's Money and the Message: Campaign Finance in the Age of Mass Media

*Robert L. Newsom, AIA*

Former Speaker of the California Assembly Jesse Unruh once remarked that "money is the mother's milk of politics." A powerful statement from a powerful political figure who made and destroyed the political fortunes of many California politicians. The Speaker's statement, however, is hardly a revelation. For better or worse, money drives today's elective politics. Whether it comes from the National Rifle Association or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, so-called special interests are funding increasingly expensive campaigns to see to it that candidates representing their diverse interests get elected.

I confronted this issue as I assumed the Co-Chairmanship of the Architects Registered in California Political Action Committee, ARC PAC. I volunteered my time to help lead ARC PAC to raise the funds necessary to defeat a constitutional amendment ballot initiative that the architectural profession has termed the Competition Killer. No doubt you have already heard of this initiative that would effectively eliminate the private sector's participation in public design, require competitive bidding for public design contracts, and require design professionals to indemnify the state against any legal action resulting from the performance of a contract. The Professional Engineers in California Government (PECG), a state employees union, is the sponsor of this initiative and has one stated goal: more civil service jobs.

Back to the PAC issue. I quickly learned that Mr. Unruh's statement rings particularly true for ballot initiatives in California. Initiative PACs are not to be confused with "candidate" PACs. No money can nor will be contributed to a candidate for office from ARC PAC. Rather, the money raised will be spent on mounting a massive media campaign to communicate our message to the public that the Competition Killer is bad public policy and that the voting public should mark "no" on their ballots on election day. I offer no apologies for the fact that we live in an era of mass media. The fact is, television, radio, and direct mail are the tools our society uses to communicate with one another these days and access to those communication tools isn't cheap. I love a good whistle-stop political campaign just as much as the next guy, but I like winning more, and in politics you have to go to the airwaves to be successful.

Is the PAC system perfect? Of course not, it was designed by human beings. Having personally contributed to ARC PAC and filled out the requisite phone book size Fair Political Practices Commission report, you may rest assured that PACs are heavily regulated. California continues to wrestle with its campaign finance regulation in the form of the recently passed Proposition 208, a sweeping overhaul of the campaign finance system that established limits on corporate and individual contributions for candidate PACs. Some

will argue that 208 went too far, others will argue that it didn't go far enough. I believe it establishes reasonable limits, allowing those who wish to voice their support of a candidate through their checkbook to do so, within reason. It should be noted that 208 did not alter Initiative PACs.

Eliminate PACs? I am uncomfortable with eliminating a constituent's ability to pool their resources and participate in the political process as they deem appropriate. It is, in my view, a birthright in this country to speak and associate freely. And to blindly assume that those individuals who do participate in PACs are corrupt is wrong. It is further erroneous to believe that Big Corporations are the only players in the PAC game. The rank and file of the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters managed to scrape together \$60 million during the last Congressional and Presidential election cycle. And a visit to the Secretary of State's office in Sacramento reveals that grocers, auto mechanics, doctors, farmers, lawyers, bankers, automobile owners, retirees virtually everyone has created a PAC. PACs are people too.

Mass media campaigns and the PACs used to fund them have produced a new brand of grassroots politics. Grassroots is still grassroots, but because of the mass media influence, the costs, methods and vehicles in which we execute grassroots politics have been altered forever. It is every citizen's right to participate in the political process, whether by leafletting neighborhoods or by paying for the printing and distribution of the leaflets. It is every citizen's responsibility to demand through regulation that the system be open, honest, and free from corruption.

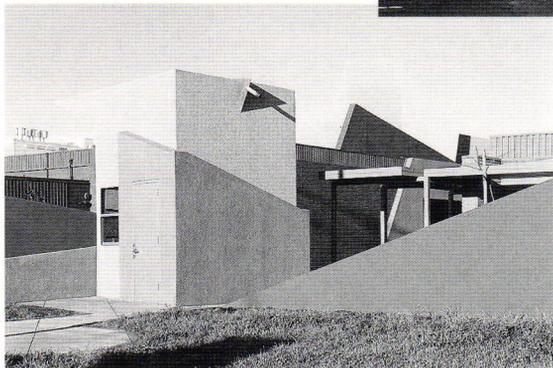
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*Robert L. Newsom, AIA, is Senior Vice President of DMJM in Los Angeles and is Co-chair of the Architects Registered in California Political Action Committee.*

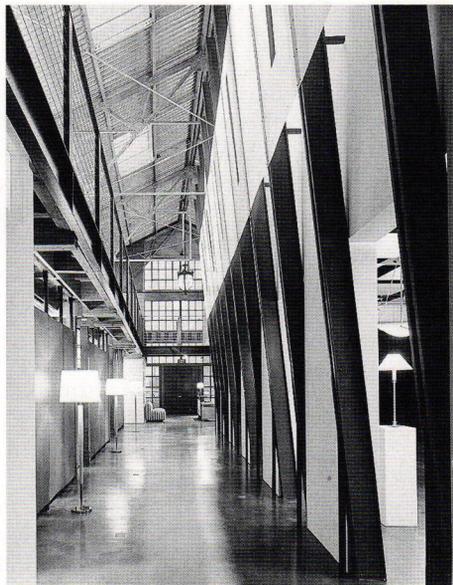
# 1997 AIACC Design Honor and Merit Awards



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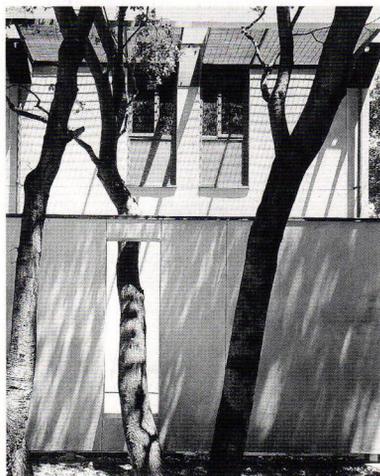
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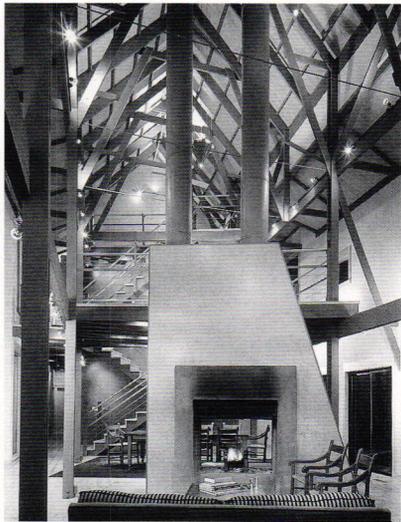
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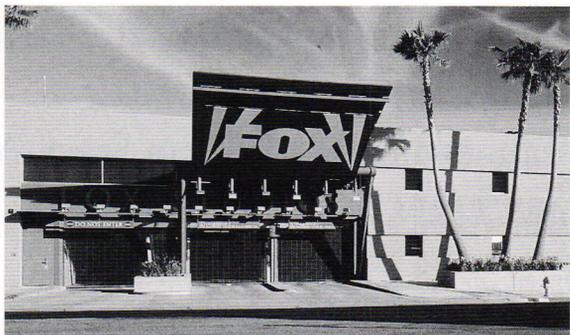
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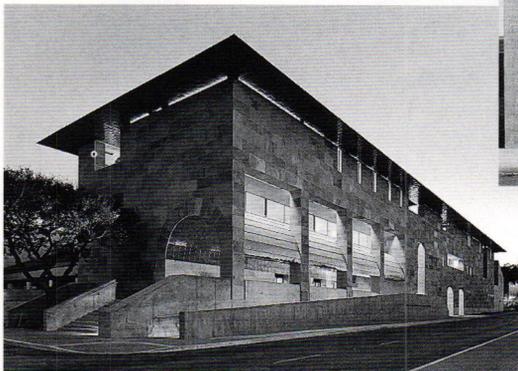
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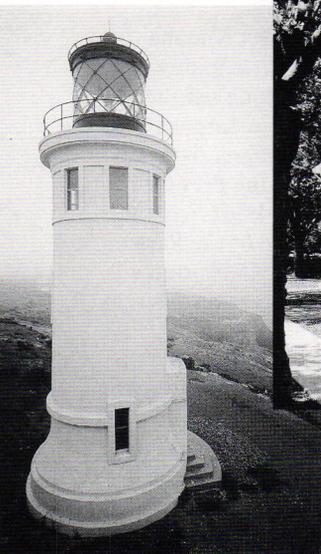
I.



H.



K.



J.

- A. Mount Tamalpais School, William Turnbull Associates Architects & Planners, Merit.
- B. San Jose Job Corps Training Center, The Steinberg Group, Merit.
- C. Boyd Lighting, Brayton & Hughes, Honor.
- D. The Blades Residence, Santa Barbara, Morphosis, Merit.
- E. Charles B. Thorton Center for Engineering Management, Stanford University, Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, Merit.
- F. 507 Sausalito Boulevard, Robert Luchetti Associates, Inc./ Robert Luchetti, AIA, Honor.
- G. FOX Studios Galaxy Way Garage, HLW International, Merit.
- H. Center for Integrated Systems, Antoine Predock, Architect, Merit.
- I. U.S. Port of Entry, Region 9, Dworsky Associates, Honor.
- J. Anacapa Island Lighthouse Rehabilitation, U.S. Coast Guard, Civil Engineering Unit, Oakland, Merit.
- K. Vest Pocket Community, Solomon Architecture & Urban Design, Merit.

Note: Additional honor and merit awards on pages 26-41.

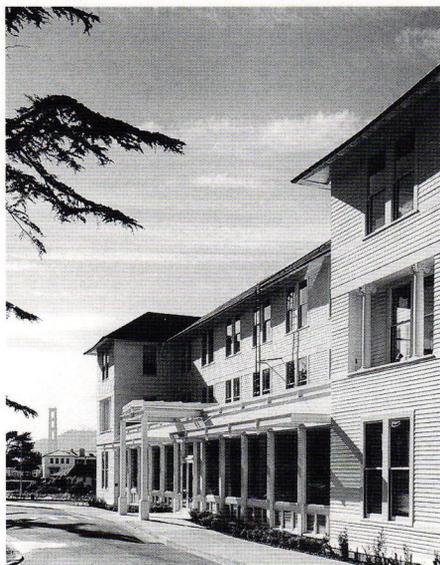
# Building a Western Walden: The Thoreau Center

Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects:  
San Francisco, Honor Award

*Daniel Gregory, PhD*

The Thoreau Center, located in the historic 1899-1933 wards of Letterman Hospital in San Francisco's Presidio National Park, is aptly named. Not only does it house a collection of philanthropic foundations interested in the betterment of society and the environment, but also its architecture exemplifies a strong, sure, even elegant environmental conscience. And it is the first public/private partnership project completed in the park. Indeed, it won an Honor Award from AIACC for seizing "an unprecedented opportunity to showcase sustainable design principles and sound environmental practices within the context of historic preservation." So how did such a project, nestled as it is both literally and figuratively within a forest of governmental rules and regulations, achieve such success?

The answer lies in the way the participants balanced high-minded idealism with everyday practicality, in their communication skills, and in the way they all believed in the importance of the project. The design process was conscious, careful, and controlled, with a clear plan for decision-making so that each meeting generated a list of tasks to be accomplished, by whom, and by what date. Or, to couch it in Henry David Thoreau's own terms, they managed to build the cabin without losing sight of the bean field.



Arrival at the center.

According to architect Marsha Maytum, AIA, all the participants in the project—and it is a long list, including owner-developer Tom Sargent and his Thoreau Center Partners, the leading foundation tenants, the Presidio Project Office of the Park Service, the Western Regional Office of the Park Service, and the State of California's Office of Historic Preservation—acted as a team from the very beginning. They shared a common sense of excitement at the unprecedented, experimental nature of the project. "We were all focused on the task of renovating historic buildings in a way that would



View of the interior.

make a model for sustainable development,” says Maytum.

Moreover, because the project was a public/private partnership, there was no need to go through a government bid process so a compatible builder—in this case, Plant Construction—could be hired at the beginning of the schematic design phase. That meant the builder could function as a true partner in the development of a budgetary strategy for achieving project goals. Here is where a little architectural Transcendental Meditation must have occurred because the budget on the job worked out to a remarkably economical \$57 per square foot. And that’s for the complete renovation of 73,000 square feet, including new infrastructure and building systems.

Here’s a brief timeline which illustrates just how fast this project progressed.

**May 1994:** The Thoreau Center Partners respond to the open public request for proposals from the

Park Service. Shortly thereafter, the Park Service selects Thoreau Center Partners and Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects to develop the project.

**Summer 1994:** Feasibility study begins.

**Late Fall 1994:** Schematic design phase.

**Early 1995:** DDs and CDs phase.

**June 1995:** Out to bid.

**September 1995:** Construction begins.

**April 1996:** Doors open.

Speed is often, but not always, a function of streamlined design, and that was true in this case. Architect and client came up with a design that responded imaginatively to the Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines for historic preservation. The architects’ serene, white, steel and glass canopy floating over the entrance—replacing an earlier over which no accurate drawings existed—is a case in point. One might

well ask how such a contemporary element got approved for a historic turn-of-the-century structure. It won approval precisely because it did not attempt to mimic an earlier element. In Maytum's words, "The guidelines promote the addition of something that's compatible but not fake. The new canopy is in keeping with the old structure in proportion and rhythm." Here, the south-facing glass awning could also incorporate a photovoltaic system. Thus, an element inspired by history embodies the technology of its own time. In this case, historic preservation and adaptive reuse are all about telling the dancer from the dance, to borrow Yeats' famous line.

Public enthusiasm for the project remained strong throughout; so much so, that the structure was 100 percent leased half way through construction. Maytum speculates that tenants wanted to participate in this development not just because it was a building with a lot of character in a unique national park setting, but because of its use of health-conscious materials and its demonstration of sustainability in design. Like a Chez Panisse meal emphasizing only the freshest ingredients (from Thoreau's own vegetable garden), the building set prospective tenants a-craving.

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*Daniel Gregory, PhD, is Senior Editor (Special Projects/Home) for Sunset Magazine, where he also directs the AIA-Sunset Western House Awards Program.*

# U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit Federal Courts Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP: San Francisco, Honor Award

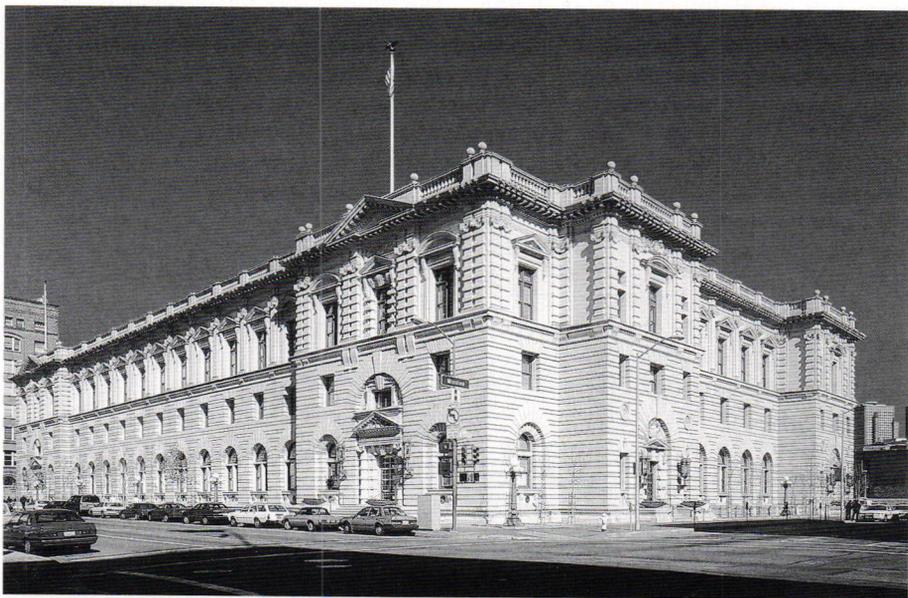
*Allison Williams, FAIA*

The two notable ingredients which enabled the extraordinary level of design excellence to be reached in the Renovation of the U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit Federal Courts were the relationship between the client and the design team and the collective aspirations for excellence among all parties.

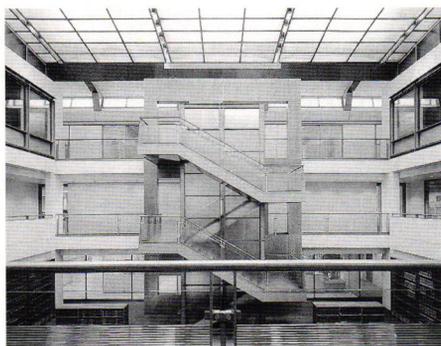
There were two parts to the client group: (1) the 9th Circuit U.S. Courts, represented, from the programming perspective, by a Space Committee of three judges (Hug, Sneed and Schroeder) and two representatives from the Circuit Executive's office (Mancini, Peirotos and Walters) and (2) the GSA with

three representatives (Petkewich, Delgato and Tortorich).

Organizationally, it was very wise that the bench appointed the Space Committee to represent the 29 judges along with a huge support staff who occupy and use the building. It facilitated a consensus among judges who were appointed during different political eras with varied philosophical backgrounds. There was no second guessing among the judges, and the Space Committee's decisions were final. The GSA was nimble in responding to design issues, making decisions quickly with very little "up and down the flagpole."



From the street.



The Courtyard Parti.

SOM was selected for this project when the GSA's Design Excellence Program was in its infancy. Though there was no formal design quality mission statement for the project, there were very specific functional, technical and security guidelines issued by the GSA and the courts. Additionally, the guidelines and standards set forth by the Secretary of Interiors for renovation projects were philosophically very strong. They dictated that insertions into historic buildings should be a functional response to new criteria or new use of the structure, and that they should be based upon this point in time and contemporary standards rather than a faux construction of history. This set the tone for the modern use of materials sympathetic with the original building and appropriate to the cultural importance of the place. The entire team collectively understood and embraced these values from the beginning which made a huge difference.

The agenda for this project was initially articulated by the client and was adopted by the design team for its approach: preservation of the building as a court facility and to transform the building from a multiple-use complex to a singular use as an irreplaceable asset of the U.S. Court's system. Despite the marginal neighborhood, security issues and the lack of amenity in the immediate area, the architects took the appropriate stance in recognizing the

innate qualities of the context of the building.

The Courtyard Parti was the conceptual heart of the project's success, but was not arrived at directly or in the early stages of the design effort. It resulted from a notable opportunity that developed in the process and pushed the project in a critical direction. The early architectural programming produced a requirement for a full mezzanine in the courtyard that would extend into the very tall and highly finished first floor of the historic "perimeter" of the building, taking functional advantage of its volume, but irreparably harming the architecture of the space. This was in direct contradiction to the desire to take full advantage of the removal of the old postal sorting facility by creating a light-filled margin between the historic "perimeter" building and the new courtyard structure.

The structural engineering group, who was simultaneously investigating alternatives for seismic isolation systems in the basement of the building, was largely responsible for establishing the feasibility of the daylighted courtyard scheme. The group developed three separate structural systems which were bid in an early structural package. The least costly, a friction pendulum system, also conveniently used the least space, freeing up about 80,000 square feet in the basement where the program area from the unwanted mezzanine could be relocated. The courtyard scheme could, therefore, be developed without compromise. As a result, glass covered "seams" between the new structure and the historic inner courtyard were created, bringing natural daylight into both the old and new space. For the first time, this allowed a visual connection between the historic first floor public spaces and the original courtyard facades.

The project was delivered and bid in two phases: base isolation and resto-

ration/addition. The traditional competitive low-bid process was used. This proved to be critical because the base isolation system had a major influence on the architectural design. The design saved a large component of the budget allowing the team to fully use these resources for the renovation. The project was not penalized by the base isolation requirement, but instead benefited from the inventiveness and thoughtful analysis of the engineers and early bid process. The building benefited from more efficient stacking and the ability to create a seam of usable space between the existing and new fabric of the building. Those spaces are bathed in daylight: the reference reading room, the employee exercise room, the cafeteria, and staff circulation and service areas.

The budget for the project was not overly luxurious, but it was reasonable for the client's expectations. There was never the feeling that the project was penalized by the budget, but like any project, there was a fine line between achieving excellence and maintaining an economy of means.

The design, led by Craig Hartman, FAIA, was interdisciplinary with key players from all in-house SOM disciplines: Sharon Cox and Steve Weindel (Architectural Design), Tamara Dinsmore (Interior Design), Lonny Israel (Graphic Design), Fred Powell (Project Architect) and Navin Amin and his structural engineering team, Hamid Fatehi, Anoop Mokha and Peter Lee.

The SOM design team pushed, within the philosophical boundaries, beyond good design by identifying the qualities or nuances between the program or the physical context to inspire a high level of excellence. Attention to the details was among SOM's primary objectives. Fred Powell, AIA, the project architect, was the technical coordinator for all aspects of the project from conceptual design through CDs. (He virtually lived in the building for three

years.) He was tenacious with the team about attending to the details and is credited with insuring a quality of design intent, both in the documents and on site.

Several outside design consultants were key collaborators on this project. Building system engineers Flack & Kurtz (led by Clark Bisel and Randy Meyers), devised means of inserting new HVAC systems into the old gravity air systems, converted abandoned fireplace chimneys into risers, and provided optional natural ventilation via operable windows (technically not allowed in the GSA standards but embraced by the design team and the owners).

Historic Preservation Architects, Page & Turnbull (Jay Turnbull, AIA, and Tom Hardy, AIA), provided research and guidance throughout the design and construction process for appropriate treatment of historic spaces.

Lighting designer Claude Engle, whose design philosophy was directly aligned with the architects, worked closely from the early conceptual phase to preserve and enhance historic fixtures and, in some cases, recreate them from photos. New fixtures were carefully introduced, where appropriate, to the workplace or to reinforce the architecture of new spaces.

In a time where multi-headed and complex client structures, multiple agendas driven by aesthetics, functional requirements and engineering realities are the norm, the design process can frequently result in a dilution of intent, compromised goals and marginal product. This project possessed all of these challenges, yet it stands as an extraordinary exception to these conditions.

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# University of California, Berkeley Tang Center

## Anshen + Allen: San Francisco, Honor Award

*Carol Shen, FAIA*

The Tang Center posed a complex design challenge: how to create an efficient, contemporary healthcare facility that fits comfortably in the context of its community along the south edge of the University of California, Berkeley campus. Design constraints were many: a small, historic structure was to be preserved and integrated; nearby residents were concerned about the character of their neighborhood; pedestrian connections to campus and emergency vehicle access had to be accommodated. The healthcare program included 32 departments; and as the campus "preparedness communication emergency center," the building required a hospital seismic structural rating.

Leroy Bean, FAIA, associate vice chancellor and building owner representative, strongly supported the design team throughout the design process and established a client team committed to quality. Bill Weber, AIA, Anshen + Allen's project designer, noted that this team included an "ideal" user. University Health Services representatives had a good sense of public service and communicated their aspirations clearly to the design team.

The discipline of a fast-track project kept the client and design team on schedule, limiting over-elaboration of design alternatives and studies and pushing the approvals process forward. Planning and programming were completed in two months, beginning in January 1990. Total design time was 18



Building tectonics.

months for four bid packages (early steel, foundations and elevators) and total construction required 20 months. The project was completed in December 1992, three years to the month of the initial interview.

Al Lee, AIA, senior associate at Anshen + Allen and project manager, says initial design concepts survived two value engineering cycles, resulting in minor changes. The first floor along the east perimeter was simplified and plan adjustments incorporated, concrete shear walls were integrated into the moment frame structural scheme, an atrium skylight was deleted, and a few material substitutions were made.



The south courtyard.

Siting, massing, and major building finishes remained as originally conceived.

A University of California, Berkeley graduate, Bill Weber, who was sympathetic to the Bay Area architectural traditions of Maybeck, Esherick, Wurster, and DeMars, felt the Tang Center should be a "Berkeley building" with strong "place quality." In the selection interview, he advocated a "California aesthetic" – one which would take advantage of Berkeley's mild climate and would allow free movement between inside and outside. The cantilevered roof overhangs create shade and shadows; sloping rain water leaders recall brackets from the past; and corner balconies provide upper level outdoor space. The terra cotta stucco and blue curtainwall follow the Bay Region tradition of using strong color.

The building and landscape design were based on a desire to reduce the presence of the building along Bancroft Avenue, the campus edge. The bulk of

the project was located to the east, keeping the longest facade mid-block and leaving the west side of the site for the atrium and open space. This scheme also allowed for future development to the west to overlook and share these open spaces. Patricia O'Brien, landscape architect, had worked with Bill Weber on other projects. Their successful collaboration is evident in the design of "outdoor rooms" which are seamlessly integrated with the "T" shaped building footprint. The courtyard garden spaces, defined by trellises, trees, sitting areas and pedestrian paths, provide sunny, intimately scaled urban places at the building's north and south edges and define entry and north-south circulation routes to campus. Leroy Bean feels a key decision was to retain the one-story historic building to house counseling and library uses and reinforce the existing building scale along Bancroft Avenue.

Overall, the building skillfully bridges the gap between its institutional use and the campus/residential context. As the intensity of the colors fades and the vines, plantings and trees continue to grow and enrich the courtyards, the Tang Center will mature and blend into its neighborhood and campus environs.

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# Linn House—AIDS Healthcare Foundation

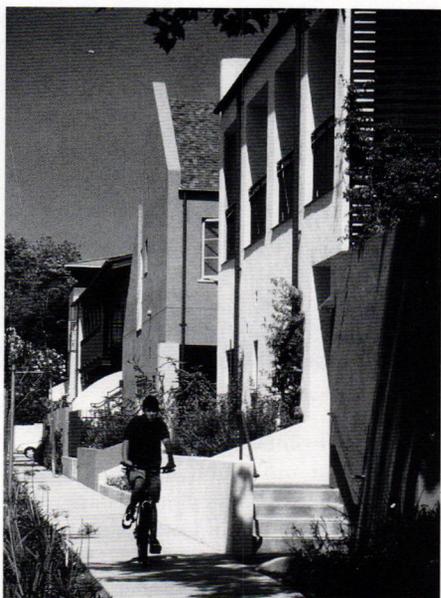
## Cavaedium Architects: Los Angeles, Merit Award

*Allyne Winderman, AIA*

As architects, we wish that residential care facilities would exhibit design qualities that uplift the human spirit and offer dignity to their inhabitants. Residents of the neighborhoods that play host to special needs housing, however, fear they disrupt tranquility and lower property values. Cavaedium Architects believes its response to the challenge of neighbors' concerns pushed Linn House, a 25-bed AIDS hospice, toward design excellence.

Linn House was initiated by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) in 1993 and was to be built on two residential properties bequeathed by Dr. Larry Linn. Cavaedium was chosen to design the building after the Foundation's president, Michael Weinstein, and Cavaedium principal James Bonar, FAIA, got to know one another through work on Weinstein's bid for election to the Los Angeles City Council. Initially AHF and Cavaedium worked quietly sorting out a program that would enable the facility to overcome hospital requirements and create a supportive, comfortable environment for its residents in this pleasant Melrose neighborhood on the border of West Hollywood.

But soon neighbors' fears about the project arose and threatened to galvanize the community into NIMBY ("not in my back yard") opposition. To many, it mattered little that the hospice site was the center of the greatest concentration of AIDS cases in Los Angeles



From the sidewalk.

County. Residents felt existing care facilities were already eroding neighborhood stability, and one more "institutional" building would overwhelm them, destroying the quality of life and depreciating property values. Some voiced fears about the disease itself.

The architects found themselves leading community outreach for the project. Together with AHF's director of Hospice Facilities, Mary Nalick, the architects walked door to door, listened to residents' concerns, held community meetings and sought support of political officials for the project. AHF told the architects, "Give them what they



A place to inhabit.

want,” but remained concerned for project cost and rapid delivery. Meanwhile, project designer Brian Lane, began fashioning a building design that balanced neighborhood issues, housing program and limited financial resources.

The area surrounding Linn House consists of older single family residences and small apartment complexes, some in the courtyard tradition. The architectural objective was to create a hospice with the character of a two-story home. Situated on a 50' wide by 260' long site, the building's massing breaks into three “home-like” forms, characteristic of the scale, fabric and rhythm of the neighborhood. The center of the building, the heart of the home, contains the community spaces, its double-height volume is skylit and opens onto an exterior court. Two flanking wings house 25 residents' rooms, with most of these opening to a private patio or deck.

Linn House's domestic character belies the underlying steel structure and institutional requirements. Forms and details are designed to be compatible with neighboring 1920s and '30s Spanish style homes. Stucco faces are punctuated with recessed wood windows and French doors; guardrails and trellises take clues from traditional wood and ornamental metal work. A long steel balcony, hung from the second floor, is reminiscent of early California architecture. Varying roof pitches and a corner tower create a picturesque composition that integrates into the neighborhood. Mindful of the neighbors, all parking was located underground and tree-lined parkways and lush planting were provided to soften the impact of a building that spans two lots.

Cavaedium presented these design concepts at the conditional use public hearing. The Melrose Neighborhood

Association showed their support for the project by not opposing it. The importance with which they viewed the design was evident when their president, Dick Bernstein, stated, "If not for the architects, we would oppose this project." In the end, when a few neighbors held back support, County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, then councilmember for the district, put his reputation on the line telling them, "We need this facility. You can ask anything that is reasonable of these architects, but it will happen." Mitigated by a responsive design and AHF's operational strategies, the City of Los Angeles granted a Conditional Use Permit to allow the hospice to proceed.

Both to meet community design criteria and building code requirements for a facility housing non-ambulatory people, the costs for the project rose above AHF's initial budget. Ken Kurose, AIA, Cavaedium's principal in charge of construction, oversaw the successful execution of the design in a highly pressured 12-month construction process. The contribution of volunteers, like interior designer Ron Meyer, stretched dollars and contributed to the quality of the building.

In 1993 neighborhood opposition to the project was fierce. Two and one half years later, at the project's opening, over 600 well-wishers, including neighbors, cheered as U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein cut the red ribbon.

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# Martin Luther King, Jr. Promenade- Children's Park and Pond

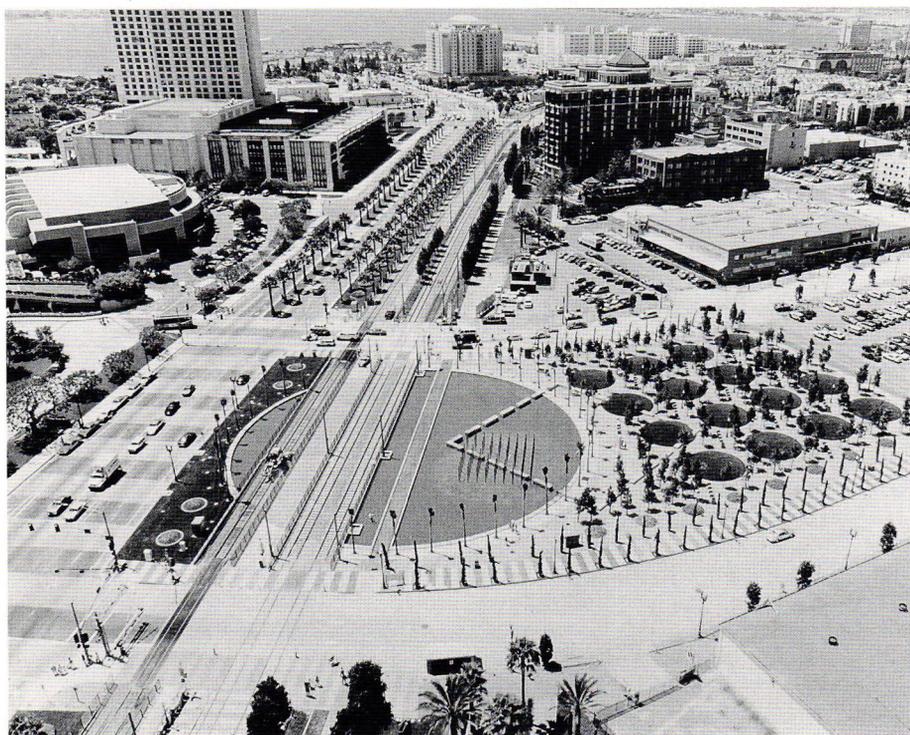
## Austin Design Group: San Diego, Merit Award

*Stephan Castellanos, AIA*

City Center Development Corporation (CCDC) initiated the Martin Luther King, Jr. Promenade as an international design competition nearly ten years ago. The Austin Design Group, in collaboration with Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz, was invited to submit a proposal and was eventually selected as the successful team. The CCDC had planned to develop the initial phase of the project with future

phases of the Promenade to be completed by other private developers of projects in the area. Then the California recession hit San Diego developers particularly hard, requiring that CCDC complete the project under its own leadership and funding.

Doug Austin, FAIA, was the principal in charge, and Gary Lipska served as project manager for the Austin Design Group. Catherine Stangell, a land-



View from the air.

scape architect employed by the Austin Design Group as a consultant, provided coordination with the Walker/Schwartz collaborators. In the intervening months, between winning the competition and the development of the project, Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz established individual practices. Peter Walker remained with the project along with Austin. Doug Findlay served as project manager for Walker. David Walker, Peter Walker's son, strongly influenced the detail development of the project.

Gary Lipska, a civil engineer, was responsible for resolving the numerous issues raised by multiple stakeholders in the project. These included the Santa Fe Railroad, the Metropolitan Transit Board, the Port Authority, the City of San Diego, the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Regional Risk Management Agency. The management of risk was a central issue because of the confluence of rail, auto, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle circulation on the site. In addition, the project was to unite the surrounding districts—the Embarcadero, the marina neighborhood, and the Gas Lamp Quarter—while integrating their various uses: the convention center, hotels, shopping, residential historic sites, and multi-modal transportation systems.

After many months of delay, the project was finally set in motion when San Diego Mayor Susan Golding insisted that the project be completed in anticipation of the 1996 Republican National Convention. The site was purchased by the City of San Diego, and the design team was instructed to move ahead on a fast-track schedule.

The original concept presented by the Austin Design Group collaboration was to construct an "urban settlement." The intersection of First and Front Streets was considered the hinge component of the park project. Thus, the Children's Museum, because of its

proximity to the project and the political wish to create a major functional urban showplace, was renamed "Children's Park." This rename, however, confused the intention of the pools and other water elements on the site. Children began using the water elements as splashing pools, raising concerns on the part of the City of safety and liability. The City wanted to construct barriers which would restrict access, but the barriers diffused the organizational strength of the concept. The designer, therefore, offered options which included bollards, additional landscaping elements, and a strong, but discreet, signage system which restored the original "urban settlement" concept.

Marked by strong geometric forms providing artistic expression and cultural symbology, the results are evident in a grand civic plaza.

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# The Crown Zellerbach Building

## Hertzka and Knowles and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: San Francisco Twenty-Five Year Award

*John Parman, PhD*

Designed in the mid-fifties and completed in 1959, Crown Zellerbach is one of three office buildings designed by SOM that signalled corporate America's acceptance of the international style. The other two of this trio are Bruce Graham and Walter Netsch's Inland Steel Building in Chicago and Gordon Bunshaft's Lever House in New York. Until the 101-story Hancock Center was built in Chicago in the late sixties, these three also epitomized the work of SOM as American corporate modernists.

Although attributed to Chuck Bassett, FAIA, Crown Zellerbach was, in fact, the product of several hands. (It was also a collaboration between SOM and the San Francisco firm of Hertzka & Knowles, the architect of record.) In a 1989 oral history interview with Betty Blum<sup>1</sup>, Bassett notes that he took up the design of Crown Zellerbach at a point when the major decisions—for example, the decision to orient the building towards Bush Street, turning its back on Market Street—had been made. “The only thing that had not been done was that it had not been architecturalized, if there's such a word.”<sup>2</sup> Bassett's involvement was limited to completing and elaborating an approved schematic design.

In relation to Bassett's work in San Francisco, Crown Zellerbach is an anomaly. He contrasts it with the John Hancock (now Industrial Indemnity) Building which followed in 1960.



Hancock, he says,

had a characteristic that wasn't in any of the SOM work. You can see an obvious effort to pull the building into the surrounding fabric, and a building with an individual quality that was outside contemporary mainstream. The architecture the firm was doing was mainstream at that time.<sup>3</sup>

Bunshaft hated the Hancock Building, Bassett reports, while Nat Owings was “extremely enthusiastic.”<sup>4</sup> Unlike Crown Zellerbach, Hancock was a continuation of Bassett's work with Eero

Saarinen, and in the spirit of Saarinen's more expressive, less didactic modernism. "There's nothing phony there," Bassett says of it, and his comment also places him in the Bay Regional tradition of Wurster and Esherick, with their interest in "ordinary" buildings whose authenticity reflects their "honest" use of materials and their innate sense of place.<sup>5</sup>

Bassett made his mark on Crown Zellerbach in several ways. He designed the remarkable curtain wall of the tower. "In all modesty, it is the best wall in the country, with 5-1/2 foot by eleven foot sheets of glass and with the mechanical system floating above the floor and free of the glass."<sup>6</sup> He also designed "the deck, the railings, and the lobby,"<sup>7</sup> and the sunken garden.

Bassett took on the design of the garden in direct opposition to Nat Owings, who had commissioned Isamu Noguchi for the project. While admiring Noguchi as a sculptor, Bassett felt that he had little talent as a garden designer. He was "horrified" by Noguchi's scheme for Crown Zellerbach. To combat it, he and his staff designed a second scheme which they showed to the assembled SOM partners. "The upshot was that the partners sided completely with what I wanted to do." Owings was not pleased by this development, but he agreed that Bassett could design the garden.<sup>8</sup>

Nat was very upset, but to my great surprise he didn't fire me. We agreed to a deal, which was apparently a temporary truce, and I started designing the garden. Nat would not talk directly to me. I would work on the garden and then I would take my sketches to Elliot Brown, and Elliot would take them to Nat. This went on, I would guess, for about three months. He started to like what he saw and came to the conclusion that I was

trying very hard to keep my end of the bargain.<sup>9</sup>

Crown Zellerbach had an influence, both in America and overseas. It is an early example of a high-rise tower in which the core is offset as a separate element. This idea reappears in Kahn's Richards Medical Research Building and in the early work of Kenzo Tange and other Japanese "Metabolists"—so called because their buildings were intended to grow and change. Although Crown Zellerbach provides a similar flexibility, its real achievement is a remarkable transparency—the result of Bassett's attention to the curtain wall.

Crown Zellerbach is also a good example of SOM's integration of architecture and structure. The transparency of the 20-story, 320-foot high office tower is achieved by cantilevering the floor slabs of the tower so that the exterior curtain wall is entirely column-free and by leaving the corners free even of mullions. Long-span beams eliminate the need for fixed interior load-bearing walls, creating an unobstructed space 200-feet long by 70-feet wide on each floor. The technical soundness of this approach was borne out in the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989.

#### NOTES

1. Betty J. Blum: *Oral History of Charles Edward Bassett, F.A.I.A.*, Chicago Architects Oral History Project, Art Institute of Chicago, 1992, pp. 80-89.

2. Blum, p. 82.

3. Blum, p. 92.

4. Blum, p. 92.

5. Blum, pp. 92-93.

6. Blum, p. 88.

7. Blum, p. 89.

8. Blum, pp. 84-87.

9. Blum, p. 87.

10. Blum, p. 89.

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*John Parman, PhD, is the San Francisco-based research director of SOM and co-publisher of the magazine Design Book Review.*

# If You Don't Like the Code, Go Out and Write One of Your Own

*Steven R. Winkel, FAIA*

For many architects, one of the most frustrating and time-consuming parts of project design and document production involves interpreting and implementing building codes. Lack of early attention to fundamental code criteria can lead to costly surprises when the project is submitted for a permit. Lack of understanding of code criteria can also lead to the similar problems in the field during construction or after occupancy.

Architects typically receive little or no instruction in school regarding the origins, background or practical application of building codes. This is one of the portions of knowledge that is supposed to come from on-the-job experience. However, in the heat of trying to finish a job and obtain a permit there is usually no time for contemplating the code's intent or making the subtle interpretations that the code sometimes requires. Because of the way architects use codes, they too often treat them as some sort of mystical revealed knowledge. They feel that the interpretations given to them by building officials are either inviolate or incomprehensible. The mentality that "you can't fight city hall" coupled to the pressures of time and budget, often leads architects to agree to questionable interpretations. Architects often do not have the skills, interest, or background to challenge interpretations made by code authorities.

Architects familiar with the code development process are not very tolerant of other architects' complaints about problems with the technical provisions of building codes. Experience

with the code development process leads to the realization that the codes are written by ordinary mortals, often with limited grammatical skills and too often with an agenda in mind. These documents come out of long hours of sometimes heated debate and often with last-minute compromises which can leave good grammar and ready comprehension on the cutting room floor. The key word to remember in dealing with the development of various code sections is "intent." It is essential in understanding the code to realize that the person who wrote a code section had some need in mind when the section was created. This intent and the intended result of the provision are intertwined. Before one becomes tangled in the precise wording, one must first try to ascertain what goals the section's framer had in mind. This will make it possible to have a rational discussion with the code authority regarding a code interpretation. Interpretation and dialogue are the opposite pole from the contractor mentality of "Where does it say I have to do that?" This mentality is a sure way to aggravate a building official and can lead to entrenched positions and acrimonious debate. The path dealing with discussion of intent is a much more constructive approach. Architects, by the nature of creating a project from a blank sheet of paper, are well equipped for such intent-based discussions if they understand the genesis of the code.

Two fundamental problems contribute to differing interpretations of code by architects versus building offi-

cials. The first is the differing approaches to problem solving by those on each side of the plan check counter. The architect takes primarily a graphic approach to the problem, yet the code is a verbal document. The differences between right-brain versus left-brain interpretation of information, along with graphic versus verbal media, create a language problem for the parties trying to communicate with each other. The second factor that contributes to a lack of communication is the differing directions of specificity between the code and a project. The code is attempting to set a common standard. It is establishing legal minima or maxima for a range of criteria. The answer must fit into the prescribed box, or it is not acceptable. The designer, on the other hand, is trying to solve a complex set of equations of function, form, utility and similar Vitruvian criteria, while at the same time satisfying the code. The design goes from the general to the specific while code development goes in exactly the opposite direction. Codes have a tendency to be like other legal responses to problems. The drafter will often have some very specific issue in mind and the code language will respond to that, but in ways which stifle other responses or preclude options. The tendency to generalize code provisions from specific experiences can be a built-in recipe for misinterpretations. Code writers often tend to be like military generals in that they are often fighting the last war. Any innovation which does not fit into a predetermined slot will cause difficulty in interpretation.

There are marked differences of opinion between architects and building officials about how architects should relate to building codes. Many architects repeatedly ask why their plans should be subject to scrutiny by building officials who often have less formal training than do architects and who often make seemingly arbitrary interpreta-

tions of code provisions. Some architects feel that they should be allowed to interpret and implement codes based on their training, without further code review. On the other hand, according to building officials, many architects demonstrate a lack of understanding of the origins and implications of codes. In their opinion, the low level of architects' code knowledge all too often results in poor quality documents submitted for plan review. Code officials feel that they are a necessary quality assurance check on the work of architects. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes of opinion. There is undeniably a communication gap between architects and building officials based on each group's day-to-day experience with code interpretation. This is compounded by the general lack of knowledge on the part of architects about the code development process.

As practitioners, architects must take a larger part in drafting code provisions. Over the course of the last few decades, we have ceded the code development field to engineers, product representatives and building officials. Code development takes place in public forums operated by one of the three model code developers: The International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) and the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). [This is soon to be condensed into a single model code development process beginning with the 1999 "International Building Code"]. Building officials are public servants who preside over the voting on proposed code changes. In most cases only public servants can vote on proposed changes. It is essential to recognize, however, that any individual or group can propose a code change. Each section of the code is subject to revision based on proposals reviewed through

an open code change process. These processes are attended by numerous professionals representing a multiplicity of interests. Debates are open, and testimony on the proposals is open to all attendees. AIA is an active participant in this part of the process. Representatives of AIA attend code committee hearings and offer testimony on behalf of the organization. A majority of non-voting attendees, however, are representatives of various other industry trade groups. These are the logical people to discuss the merits and criteria for design using their products. For instance, the American Concrete Institute is a well recognized group with expertise in concrete design criteria while the American Iron and Steel Institute serve the same function for the steel industry. At the same time, it must be recognized that each of the materials interests also wishes to promote their products, sometimes at the expense of alternative products. These commercial interests enter into debate as well.

The largest group of design professionals represented are structural engineers. The engineers, working in concert with materials industry representatives, have been notably successful in drafting and getting enacted entire chapters of the codes related to structural design. At the same time architects are grossly underrepresented. Because of this lack of participation, the voice of the initial interpreters of codes, architects as they read the code in relation to a specific project, is absent from the debate. Code officials often come out of the construction trades and the contracting side of construction. This perspective is coupled to the agendas of materials representatives, testing agencies, fire fighters and engineers. These groups have a far different perspective than architects regarding options for product usage or performance-based options for code compliance. The current code development

process is directed almost entirely at prescriptive based codes. This serves product manufacturers because they can gain competitive advantages over competing products by the use of onerous code provisions giving one material an advantage over another. Prescriptive codes also make it easier to streamline plan check and inspection procedures. It is much easier to use checklist compliance verification tools for prescriptive codes than for performance based codes.

The future of code development seems headed toward some type of hybrid of performance- and prescriptive-based codes. There has been much discussion of late regarding so called "performance-based codes." These codes would be an alternative to the current prescriptive-based codes now in use. Prescriptive codes are a "cook book" approach. They represent a collective opinion about minimum standards and establish one set of sure ways to satisfy those requirements. They are empirically derived using accumulated knowledge and are validated based on observed test and field performance. Prescriptive codes can limit creative solutions and tend to be reactive rather than proactive in nature.

New design and program ideas often run up against prescriptive standards because they do not fit the models from which the prescriptive codes were developed. Two prime examples of this are atria and covered malls. These two uses, which are now prevalent around the world, did not fit neatly into any slots in the codes existing at the time of their initial development. Each mall or atrium building done in the sixties and seventies involved long, drawn out negotiations with code officials and extensive innovative interpretations of existing regulations in order for them to be built. As the number of such buildings actually

built increased, empirical knowledge increased and there are now fully developed code sections dealing with these building types. It is interesting to note that these newer code provisions are a mixture of prescriptive and performance criteria recognizing the continued evolution of these types of designs.

The alternative to prescriptive codes are performance-based codes. These codes tend to be much less verbose and vest much more freedom, along with the accompanying responsibility, in the design team. The code states the intended functional result along with the standards for verifying compliance and leave the means of reaching that end up to the designer. This sounds like a very attractive way of doing business for architects. It must be kept in mind, however, that there is not a set list of easy criteria to follow. For example, if there are no predetermined widths for corridors, the designer must validate the performance requirement that all occupants exit the building safely in a given amount of time. The validation of that concept may take a sophisticated computer program dealing with crowd movement or a real life demonstration after construction. The thought of failing such an exiting test in a completed building may send people running back to a prescriptive code where the 44-inch corridor is dictated to the designer with no further thought, or liability involved. In practice, most projects will simply not have enough time or fee to support the effort required to validate performance. Thus, the future of codes will be mixture of performance and prescriptive-based codes. It is estimated that up to 90 percent of all buildings will use prescriptive codes with performance codes being used for the largest, most complex, or most innovative buildings comprising the remaining ten percent.

Architects often complain about their treatment at the hands of building

officials and wish the code would either go away or that architects be made responsible for compliance based on our licensure. One must be careful of one's wishes. Most architects are not educated enough regarding either the performance or the prescriptive bases of code criteria to meet them without extensive second-party plan review. The lack of education regarding codes, both in the academy and in practice, have left many architects very weak in code knowledge. A true performance-based code would leave most architects unable to adequately design or validate their premises. The practical reality is that most buildings will continue to use prescriptive codes as a matter of expedience. Most projects will not economically support the research necessary to perform a true performance-based analysis. This is not necessarily a shortcoming of the process, but a recognition of economic and scheduling practicalities.

Architects must become more involved in the code development process if codes are ever to be better related to the actual process of design. Architects are engaged in a creative process that is often not well served by the current codes. Codes with some basis in the design decision process are necessary. For this to happen, architects must actively and constructively engage building officials in dialogue at other times than the critical period when trying to obtain a permit. Architects should be active members of the code development organizations such as ICBO. It is very constructive to be able to meet with building officials in a low-stress environment and get to know them personally. As code enforcement gets increasingly professional, the number of architects and engineers in the ranks of building officials has been growing and will continue to increase. This dialogue, along with increased architectural participation in this process, will

lead to better codes and more “architect friendly” documents.

With education and increased experience in code development, application and interpretation, architects should be able to regain their proper place in the balanced development of codes. Currently we have relinquished too much of all aspects of code promulgation, implementation and interpretation to other parts of the building industry. While materials manufacturers, testing agencies and code officials all have a proper place at the table in code development, architects should try to gain a greater role. This role should be based on our traditional strengths of problem identification, problem solving, synthesis of ideas and integration of solutions. We can only attain our proper place in the code development process by increasing our basic knowledge of this process and by demonstrating our commitment to it. We are minor players due as much to our own self exclusion as to any effort to exclude us. This is a self perpetuating downward spiral. As we have demonstrated, with less knowledge and involvement in codes, others have risen to take our place, and our distance from the process has increased. We must stop wringing our hands and complaining about the codes as some mysterious external force. Codes are human created documents, not scripture. Paraphrasing my favorite alternative journalist, Scoop Nisker, “If you don’t like the code, go out and write one of your own.”

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# Acoustical Privacy of Condominium Dwellers Impacted by Government Regulations

*Dennis A. Paoletti, AIA*

## INTRODUCTION

Since 1974, the State of California has had standards for controlling noise in multi-family dwellings. Specifically, these California Noise Insulation Standards are described as the State Building Code (Part 2, Title 24, CCR) Appendix Chapter 35 Sound Transmission Class. Its purpose is to establish uniform, minimum noise insulation performance standards to protect persons within new hotels, motels, dormitories, long-term care facilities, apartment houses, condominiums, and dwellings, other than detached single-family dwellings, from the effects of excessive noise including, but not limited to, hearing loss or impairment and interference with speech and sleep. The regulations are enforced by the State through local building departments.

## IMPACT ON ARCHITECTS

As applied to a rash of condominium building projects during the past 10 to 20 years, many architects have been litigated out of business due to the inherent conflict between the "minimum" stated acoustical standards: Sound Transmission Class (STC) for airborne sound isolation, Impact Insulation Class (IIC) for impact sound isolation, and the personal satisfaction expected by the buildings' occupants. Home-owners associations and individuals have used attorneys to push the courts to extremes to continue to demand reparation for excessive "noise" (by their subjective definition) even when their units have

met the State standards. Note: There are *no* standards for structure borne noise, and/or vibration transfer, or excessive plumbing noise.

Conformance with building code requirements for sound isolation does not always ensure that the expectations of occupants of a building will be met. Even when these limits are considered in the acoustical design of buildings, they may not adequately serve the needs or meet the expectations of the occupants. In fact, for probably any "luxury" grade condominium complex, the specified State standards are undoubtedly insufficient to avoid complaints. These occupants often expect minimal to no audible airborne and/or impact sound transmission from adjacent units (horizontally or vertically).

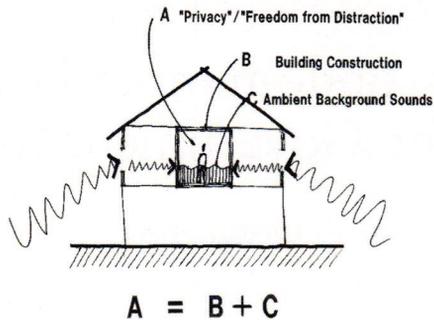
## WHY CALIFORNIA LEADS THE COUNTRY IN CONDOMINIUM LITIGATION

California leads the country in condominium litigation. While it is not uncommon in other parts of the country to construct condominium units with steel and/or concrete floor slabs and masonry walls, the typical construction for walls and floors in California has always been and continues to be wood frame. Pursuant to many years of acoustical testing in the laboratory and, more importantly, in the field, it has been determined that frequently it is virtually impossible to achieve the relatively high levels of acoustical privacy that owners of higher-priced condo-

minium units desire utilizing wood-frame construction. Though wood-framed structures are well suited to seismic activity because they have the ability to move, creep, or “rack,” it makes them unsuitable for high levels of acoustical privacy, where stiffness and heavy mass is required. In fact, the most common complaint from condominium occupants living below other occupied units is the “awareness” that someone is above them. This is described not so much as being able to actually hear speech and music sounds, but as hearing and feeling slight creaking sounds in the structure and via light fixtures mounted therein.

In a now classic technical paper<sup>1</sup> dealing with low frequency footfall noise in a wood-frame, multi-family building construction resulting in a major class action lawsuit of “luxury” homeowners against the developers in California, the authors state, “...there is no economically practical method of avoiding the perception of ‘thuds’ and ‘thumps’ in rooms beneath the walking surface,” and that, furthermore, “the IIC (Impact Insulation Class) rating of a floor system is meaningless with respect to the perception of (low frequency) footfall noise, because the methodology ignores the frequency spectrum below 100 Hz. The peak energy in a footfall spectrum typically occurs between 15 Hz and 30 Hz, the fundamental natural frequency of the floor/ceiling system for lightweight structural wood framing.” (See diagram.)

Because of much higher stiffness factors, the low frequency perception problem does not exist when concrete structural floor systems are used. Carpeting of wood floors is ineffectual against this low frequency noise problem because the problem resides in the 15 Hz to 30 Hz region. The relatively thin fuzzy nature of carpet is only effective at high frequencies (i.e., above 1,000 Hz).



People’s perception of acoustical privacy is a combination of the building constructions that enclose them and the level of background sound that surrounds them.

#### BASE BUILDING NOISE CONTROL: A SYNOPSIS

This is not a paper about solving acoustical problems in condominium structures although the solutions are well documented:

- double stud party wall construction;
- multiple layers of well sealed gypsum board walls and ceilings supported on resilient channels;
- use of lightweight concrete or poured gypsum floor topping; and
- resilient isolation of plumbing pipes, mechanical equipment and kitchen appliances

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

California was a national pace setter when its legislature mandated that every city have a Noise Element, along with air, water, transportation, etc., as part of its General Plan. Even prior to that, the State had already developed a Model Noise Ordinance for any and all to use as a general guideline for developing their own community noise ordinance. As trend setting as this was, there was historical precedence for such concerns and standards dealing with noise. As early as the 1960s, sponsored by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) which later became the Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD), basic acoustical criteria and standards were developed in an attempt to protect apartment dwellers from below standard construction and excessive noise. These standards set the minimum airborne sound transmission between adjacent units (vertically as well as horizontally) at Sound Transmission Class, STC 50 (and FSTC 45 if tested in the field).

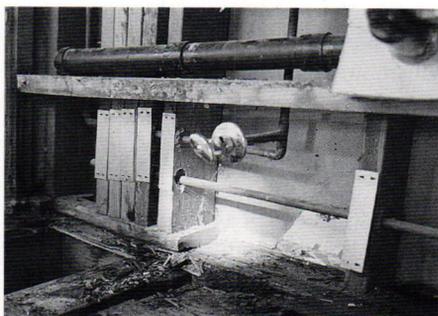
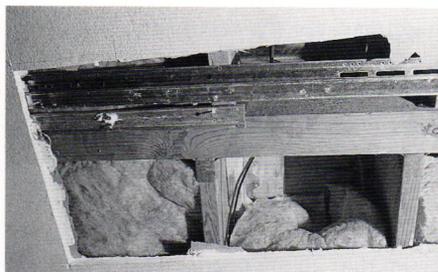
Airborne sound includes such sources as talking and laughter from children and adults, music from stereos, and televisions. Additionally, there was a similar concern for impact sound isolation, vertically, especially for occupants living in units below other units.

Sources of impact sound include walking, jumping and footfalls, chair scraping, and dropping objects.

These same standards are the ones used today throughout California for all multi-family building occupancies. And it doesn't matter if a condominium is in the price range of \$200-300,000, or \$800,000 or more. The same minimum standards apply.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE CRITERIA PROBLEM

There are a number of problems with the criteria. They are old and outdated. In the early 1960s when the criteria were developed, they pertained to apartment units. Condominiums were not very prevalent. Apartment dwellers are typically more transient and more tolerant of construction defects, flaws and performance deficiencies than condominium owners, especially since they don't have personal ownership at stake. Technology has also changed quite a bit since the 1960s. What used to be a "high-fidelity" sound system has now become equivalent to a full fledged, multi-media sound and audio-visual system with "subwoofers" and extended frequency response of loudspeakers that can literally power sound through typical wall and floor construction systems quite efficiently. Even



Destructive analysis of completed condominium units often reveals numerous acoustical deficiencies: a) improperly installed, short-circuited resilient channels b) multiple wood studs with unisolated water pipe.

when constructions are "upgraded," they do not compensate for the additional sound levels introduced by the newer sound systems. Unfortunately, progress in the building industry has not advanced as rapidly or as far as in the sound system industry. Meanwhile, the sound levels and quality expected today is far greater than in the past. People have, in general, come to expect a much higher level of privacy in their condominium dwelling than in an apartment.

Even more indicative of the change in society is the quickness of condominium owners to engage in litigation when confronted with poor acoustical privacy, even if the minimum standards are achieved! In the judicial sparring contests that ensue before a full-scale lawsuit, this issue of criteria can be a major technical challenge (from the standpoint of the acoustical consultant and the attorneys) and an emotional

nightmare for the occupants. Those who are impacted claim they are not satisfied with the criteria even if their units pass the minimum standards. They often reference the large sums of money they've paid for their condominium unit. The attorneys representing the design team and the builders claim that all anyone is entitled to are the minimum State standards. Of course, there are some other complicating issues. One of them is the degree to which anyone marketing the units may have made any remarks or advertising claims that the units were "sound-proof" or such similar comments. Even the terms used to describe the units or the complex, such as "exclusive" or "luxury grade," can lead to detailed lines of questioning relating the degree of sound isolation that may be expected from the level of quality described in general sales literature.

Another issue is whether there are any actual construction defects which might be responsible for poorer acoustical performance than what had been designed. Finding potential construction defects in the field during construction or after the units are occupied (via destructive analysis and testing) has become quite common. Some examples include: important structural clearances which maintain the acoustical integrity of separate wall constructions are either non-existent or short-circuited with debris that fills the space, special installing instructions for resilient channels and other acoustical components not properly carried out, unisolated plumbing pipes, etc.

#### CONCLUSION

The challenge for architects, developers, builders, and acoustical consultants is to see that the proposed documented details and drawings are properly implemented. However, with wood-frame construction, even with the most careful construction and installation

techniques, it is still the inherent structural nature of the wood-framing system to respond, in the form of slight perceptible movements (and noise), to a person imparting a dynamic load to the structure as they walk.

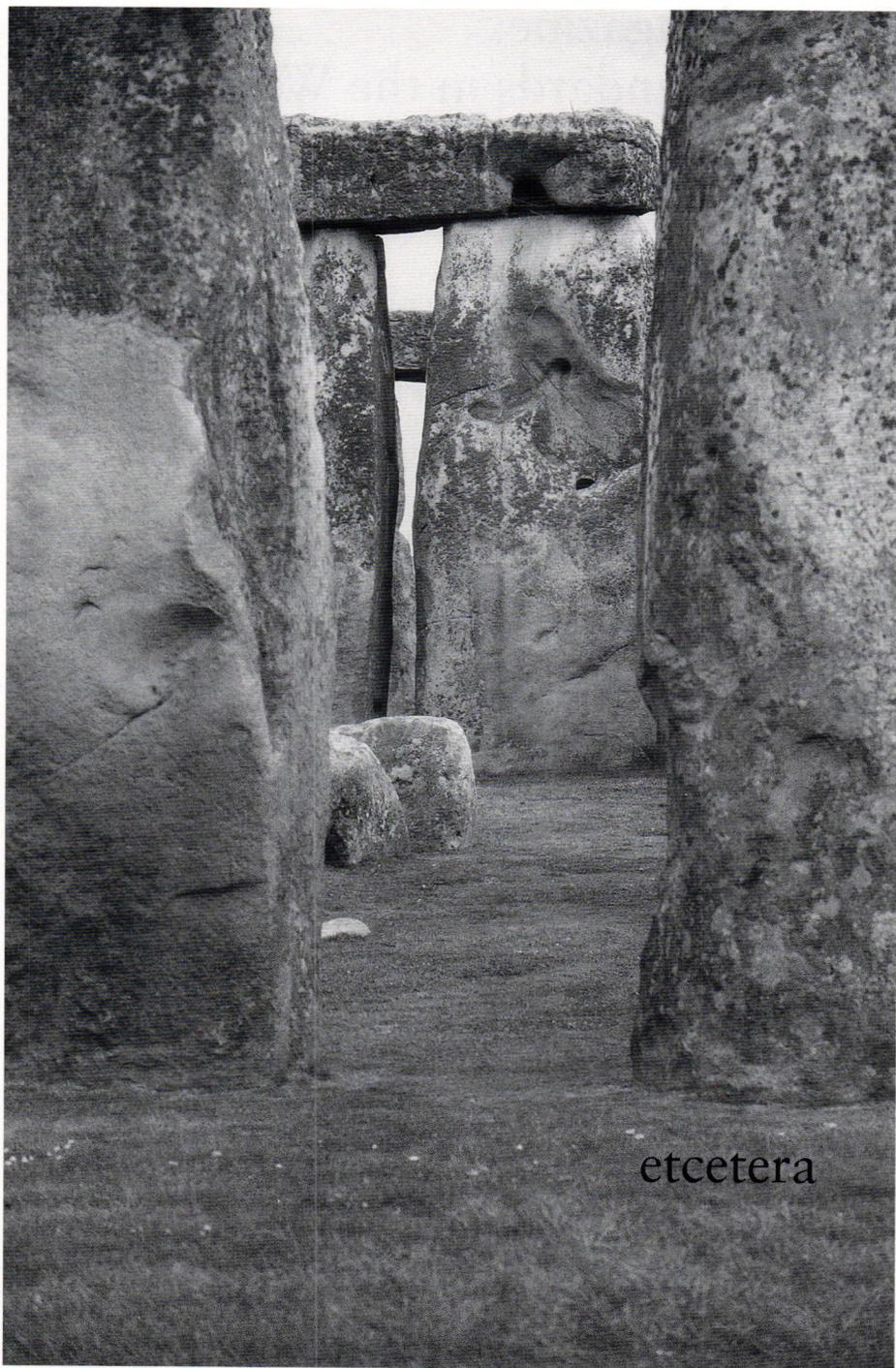
There have been very few official proposals to raise the minimum sound insulation requirements. Industry and governments have resisted any attempts to bring these standards up to the needs required by modern social and economic conditions. One argument against higher standards is potential increased cost. Neither the building industry nor the government believe that consumers would pay for improved sound insulation. One of my colleagues has long suggested that developers offer a tiered category of noise control options in condominiums where potential owners are offered the option of paying some nominal additional amount for an improved level of acoustical performance—an interesting proposal. Market forces have been inadequate; however, this may be due to naivete and/or a misunderstanding most people have of the acoustical performance of wood-frame construction. Inadequate research exists that might support possible beneficial health effects resulting from reduced stress, improved sleeping at night, and a general feeling of well being, if excessive noise in dwellings was reduced.

#### NOTE

1. Investigation of low-frequency footfall noise in wood frame, multifamily building construction, Warren E. Blazier and Russell B. Dupree, *Journal of Acoustical Society of America* Vol. 96 No. 3 September 1994.

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# Sunset Magazine: Setting Standards in the West

Robert Alexander González

Throughout the Great Depression and World War II, the editors of *Sunset: The Magazine of Western Living* vigorously asked their readers to challenge “national” standards of living. They did so in two ways: by creating a unique platform of public discourse which was referred to as *reader intimacy*, and by intensifying activity in the magazine’s home department. A look at this period demonstrates the extent to which shelter magazines can cover and question government practices—in particular, national building codes—and how, in the process, they encourage reader participation. *Sunset*’s editorials, articles, and standard features also reveal that the West was consistently presented as a *tabula rasa* that could be reshaped to fit the cultural and physical needs of an emerging class of land-owning suburbanites. Although all shelter magazines focus on the problems and possibilities of the individual house and garden, *Sunset* was unique because of its intimate tie to westward expansionism. Consequently, *Sunset* emphasized the informal and pioneering qualities of the West, rather than the traditional ethics of the East.

*Sunset* was driven by a “Western Living” concept which the editors identified as a regionally specific lifestyle that was different from Eastern, Mid-Western, and Southern lifestyles. This construct, in fact, evolved with each new role the owners and editors gave to the magazine. For example, as a traveling brochure and real estate marketing tool for Southern Pacific Railroad

(1898-1912), *Sunset* enticed prospective land buyers by showcasing the “attractions and advantages of the Western Empire”;<sup>1</sup> this emphasized climate and views. Later, as a literary magazine (1912-1929), it perpetuated the myths of the American West—the cowboy and Indian, and living on the range. Finally, when it developed into a home magazine (1929-present), it set out to define domesticity for a burgeoning “western” population. In each phase, *Western Living* was given a unique spin, of course, by the key players in the magazine’s production and development—owners, scholars, contributor-editors, staff-writers, professionals, and as *Sunset* liked to emphasize, readers.

## READER INTIMACY

From its earliest days, the editors relied on a cooperation between readers and authors, rather than on the authoritative voice of the magazine’s editors. *Sunset*’s editorial strategy included an unprecedented high level of reader participation. In addition, an emphasis on service to the reader, empathy with the reader, and a “reader knows best” attitude produced a distinct formula. Later, this played an enormous role when a search for a Western house became the focus of the magazine, and the editors initiated the reader into their design process. The following 1929 statement which harkens back to *Sunset*’s involvement with the “settling” of the West captures the “voice” that embodies this editorial formula:

It's your Southern Pacific Railroad's transcontinental 'Sunset Route' editorial policy—as asked for in thousands of letters from readers over the past year. *Sunset* heartily endorses these wants. They are intelligent. They are progressive. They are intensely human.<sup>2</sup>

The editors continually emphasized the magazine's familial and western commitment as well; for example, they asked readers to compare *Sunset* with eastern magazines. "Check them over carefully to see how few of the home and garden articles appear to have been written for western families," they prompted.<sup>3</sup> While other western journals sought national identification (*California Arts & Architecture* dropped reference in 1944 to California from its title under editor John Etenza), *Sunset* remained true to the West. In fact, the states that represented *Sunset* readers—which continuously changed—were clearly defined several times on the cover of the magazine. Furthermore, when the cover and selected articles took on a nationalistic tone, as it did during both world wars and the Depression, queries from concerned readers—immediately published—expressed concern that the tone was too northeastern or "Bostonese."

Commitment to the West surely paid off; by the 1930s, 93 percent of *Sunset*'s readers lived in Washington, Oregon, and California. Thus, while magazines like *Arts & Architecture* hosted a high-level discussion for an elite national readership, *Sunset* disseminated its own version to a much larger, although concentrated audience. At times, as in 1933, the editors exaggerated their readership:

In the Pacific West—SUNSET has more subscribers than all national home and garden magazines combined...SUNSET has more

subscribers than any other non-fiction magazine in existence.<sup>4</sup>

But by 1940, the magazine accurately claimed on the cover: "The Magazine of Western Living Read In More Than a Quarter of a Million Western Homes."<sup>5</sup> *Sunset*'s continuing commitment to the West was seen during World War II when the editors announced that *Sunset*, like other magazines, was restricted in the amount of paper it could use for printing. To meet paper rations, the owners dropped subscribers who lived outside of the Western states they identified.<sup>6</sup>

Another editorial technique on which *Sunset* relied, good-natured service, began with the 1916 department called *Sunset Service Bureau* and later it evolved into the 1930 department of *New Home Building Service of Western Families*.<sup>B</sup> To better serve the reader, *Sunset* created the department "¿*Quien Sabe?*" (who knows), where questions that the editors could not answer were published, and answers from readers were forwarded to the original inquirers; however, this department was short-lived. *Sunset* also emphasized reader participation, and often, the editors would attribute to the readers major developments in the magazine's format, as seen in 1929:

Together, we can make SUNSET truly the western magazine of good ideas—we the editors cannot do it without your help. Your letters to SUNSET for the past few months have been saying that you are especially interested in home, garden, outdoor, and travel articles.<sup>7</sup>

With this statement of policy, *Sunset*'s editors focused all their editorial energies into these four areas—home, garden, outdoor, and travel. This commitment to the reader continued. In 1942, the editors presented on the cover: "Ideas from 250,000 West-

ern Families on How to Bring More Living into the Home.”<sup>8</sup> On several occasions the editors also boasted that “nearly half of the material in every issue came directly from reader-contributors,” which they described as reader intimacy. Reader participation later evolved into the Sunset Hustler Club for young boys which offered spending money in exchange for solicited subscriptions acquired at the community level.<sup>9</sup> The editors also presented themselves as a small community that sided and identified with the reader. During times of national crisis, *Sunset* was painted in even more distinctly humanistic terms; for example, in 1933, they claimed that “the Depression [was] making *Sunset* a better magazine, a more human one” and that it strove for “a spirit of optimistic helpfulness—qualities needed by both men and magazines in strenuous times.”<sup>10</sup>

#### A HOUSE FOR WESTERN LIVING

In 1948, in the 50th Anniversary issue, the editors recalled how each of the four departments they had created served a distinct purpose. They wrote:

Western climate called for changes in *gardening methods*. The possibilities in outdoor living, the many scenic views forced changes in *architectural thinking*. Western travel and recreation were as much a part of everyday living as the garden. Many Western *foods* and many dishes peculiar to the West were not discussed in any published material (my emphasis).<sup>11</sup>

The home department, however, promoted the highest level of reader participation with a plethora of instructional articles and various design inquiries that relied heavily on the reader. Since the 1910s, the true Western home had been explored with a definite trajectory—how to live in unison with the land. Initiated by the 1916

magazine department called *The Home in the West*, the first article to explore this issue, “My Little House by the Road,”<sup>12</sup> emphasized land as a source of contemplative pleasure that could enliven even the most meager home arrangement. Articles in this department centered around themes found in *The Simple House*, by Berkeley writer Thomas Keeler and Bernard Maybeck’s article “The One-Room House,” published in *Sunset*, which emphasized living half-inside and half-outside the home. This was an early version of “outdoor living,” a theme *Sunset* would later explore in greater depth. *Sunset* also favored informality of living spaces, unity of living patterns and house form, and the advantages of piece-meal construction, qualities later reified in the *Sunset* ranch style house.

*Sunset* was prompted to explore the Western house with greater seriousness in the 1920s, when a national housing shortage occurred. In 1921, the federal government published the *Guidebook for Better Homes Campaign*, and President Hoover backed the California Veteran’s Farm and Home Purchase Act.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the Small House Service Bureau, backed by the AIA and the Department of Commerce, began to sell mail-order house plans throughout the U.S. In 1927, two years before *Sunset* became a full-fledged shelter magazine, the editors decided to join in with the “Western Home Design Contest.” *Sunset* had hosted a number of essay competitions for its readers, as it was a literary magazine, and it held this competition in that spirit. The following competition directive immediately demonstrated that they favored the ideas of the reader over those of the professional:

The contest rules allow no professional architects to enter and contestants need only submit floor plans. No elaborate drawing is

# ACROSS THE EDITOR'S DESK

IF I were China I hold the center of the world stage. So intensely does the situation there affect other nations that what would otherwise be news or bits of an academic matter for the rest of the world is concerned here as a subject of vital interest to the rest of the world.

China is the dictatorship of the future. It is the only nation in the world that has not been touched by the spirit of the West. It is the only nation in the world that has not been touched by the spirit of the East.

FOR the magazine that reached Professor T. J. Williams, a copy of the magazine was sent to him as a token of appreciation for his article on China and her "treacherous Professor Williams has been a frequent contributor to the magazine and the University of California. He is a native of California and has spent a large part of his life in this country. He is a native of California and has spent a large part of his life in this country. He is a native of California and has spent a large part of his life in this country.

on page twelve of this issue, you will find that answers to the questions we may have regarding the situation in China.

A 3-year-old model, the picture of the first prize winner in Sunset's

possible to conduct an successful a contest in this area. At the same time, it should be in conjunction with the winners and to coincide with those who plan to visit our award prizes. Better luck next year!

YOU will remember our advance notice, by way of last month's *Desk*, that the new model of "The Small Story" was to be published in this issue. We had to repeat ourselves somewhat, and so we shall make just one impression and have it that. Read the first installment, we're willing to let the story stand or fall on its merits. And as an enclosed that it will appear.

WEETAIL is a four-page newspaper section from the Great West—containing news, features, and a variety of other material. It is published weekly, and is one of the most interesting and up-to-date of its kind. It is published weekly, and is one of the most interesting and up-to-date of its kind.

Just the same, it is a very good idea to get a copy of it. It is published weekly, and is one of the most interesting and up-to-date of its kind. It is published weekly, and is one of the most interesting and up-to-date of its kind.

## Prize Winners in Sunset's Home Design Contest



First Prize Adult Classification  
**MARGARET W. DOERKLER**  
R. J. Sherman, Oregon



Second Prize  
**EDWARD W. ALMSLEY**  
North Central High School, Spokane, Wash.

Second Prize  
**RUSSELL B. SHANTON**  
Pawnee, Calif.

Third Prize  
**EVAN M. HEID**  
928 Lafayette St., Alameda, Calif.

Honorable Mention  
**ZELMAN M. PENNY**  
135 Knave St., San Francisco, Calif.

Second Prize  
**EDWARD W. ALMSLEY**  
North Central High School, Spokane, Wash.

Third Prize  
**GORDON VENSEL**  
North Central High School, Spokane, Wash.

Honorable Mention  
**CURT W. BELL**  
R. A. Bow St., Redlands, Calif.

Full announcement, with reproductions of the paper winning plans and a short article by the judges, begins the contest for this summer in *SUNSET* for July, out June 15th.

For more dramatic ideas and writer of California articles, visit us over the next few weeks. We will be glad to have you work a home design on page 48. As such, we have no other plans for the future. We will be glad to have you work a home design on page 48. As such, we have no other plans for the future.

### Sunset's Home Design Contest winners.

necessary... You have at the back of your mind somewhere your ideal house—almost everyone has. This contest is held to get those ideas out of people's minds and down on paper, to the end that interest in improving the design of the typically Western small house may be stimulated.<sup>14</sup>

Besides encouraging the reader to seriously think about house designs, *Sunset's* interest in maintaining democracy in the design process was clear. This contest, however, was just the beginning; it prefaced a more ambitious exploration of the home that the editors would explore with the reader a decade later.

In the meantime, the magazine hosted for a short period an in-depth exploration of the simple cabin, a building type that conveniently intersected the *Sunset* subjects of food, travel, and climate. In 1930, the editor's published "Summer Homes for All," written by mining and civil engi-

neer Louis A. Sanchez. It advertised that the National Forest Service had set aside land for subdivisions of one-acre lots and less, and that these lots could be leased indefinitely with the "proviso that permanent improvements costing at least \$250.00 be constructed."

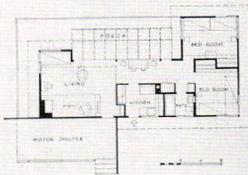
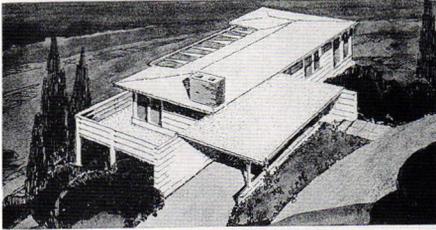
Sanchez proclaimed that "the government has made it possible for all...to own just the particularly lovely spot that [our] heart's desire at a cost that any of us may afford."<sup>15</sup> By promoting home building on federal land, the government wanted to simultaneously reduce the housing shortage of the Great Depression and develop an interest in visiting the National Forests. In their usual way, the editors included a map showing the states where "Sunset readers" lived in relation to the National Forests. Five years later, *Sunset* published its first pattern book *The Sunset Camp and Cabin Book*, a compilation of this and other articles. In addition to 20 cabin plans, this extraordinary book featured rustic furniture, recipes, camping equipment, and a "grub list." Because the pattern book was simply designed to teach the reader how to "build and possess" the vacation dream house, the *Sunset* departments of home, outdoors, and travel came together harmoniously to describe one single lifestyle.<sup>16</sup>

By the late 1930s, *Sunset* was ready to tackle a more pressing issue—the appropriateness of the modern house in the West. To explore this question—or perhaps to settle it in its usual manner—the editors decided to conduct a reader survey. In 1938, they presented the article "Here's Your Chance to Talk Back." While the article featured a double-page spread of a modern house, it was described as having "no particular style." The readers were told: "Cast your vote on the ballot below. *Sunset* wants to know exactly what you think of it—and why." A few issues later, the editors reported:

Here's your chance to talk back—

Two stories are in three buildings—on one phone. But any way, cut your wife out of the hall before. The house shown on these 3 pages was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright at San Francisco, Mr. J. C. Carlin and Mrs. Stewart to have exactly what you think of as the best of the best. To enjoy the house fully, consider the following: It's a block-size, but has in it a small entrance hall area. A brick walk leads off the top from the fireplace to the kitchen. Here and there are small rooms for other in a row on the first floor in a small basement.

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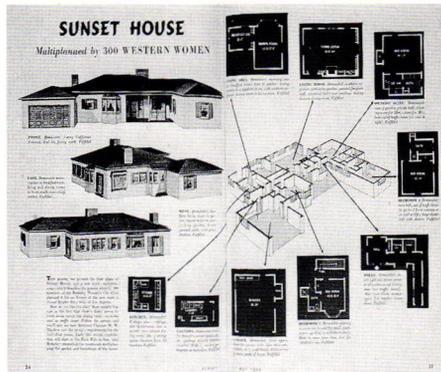


fill out and mail

#### Solicitation for comments.

“How Sunset Readers Voted on this House,” but the modern question was never addressed completely, the editors simply published a list of “likes” and “dislikes.”<sup>17</sup> Because this did not produce a final design solution, Sunset attempted once again with the article, “Here’s a New Way to Plan a Home,” which introduced a project initiated by the Berkeley Women’s City Club. This was supposed to produce what was called the Sunset House, and the criteria consisted of a list of “must haves” and “don’t wants” that were supplied by “300 home-minded Western women.”<sup>18</sup> Although Sunset enlisted architect Clarence W. W. Mayhew to design the plans, the editors demonstrated their interest in mass opinion quite overtly. They published: “The architect suggested Plan No. 1,” but “300 women requested Plan No. 2.” With that, the issue was settled—but only temporarily. The question of the modern house still remained unanswered.

After the design of the *Sunset House*, the editors never again solicited



Sunset House room arrangements.

design ideas from readers; instead, in the early 1940s, professional advice was offered in a new section called *Blueprints of Tomorrow*. Emphasis on the reader’s participation, however, was still an important part of the rhetoric even though a condescending tone was often used to do this, either with strong gender references or by overly simplifying information for the reader. These were tactics found in all shelter magazines at that time. In *Sunset*, the art of “re-doing” had been cast in familiar domestic tasks since 1917 as the article, “Their ‘Very Own’ House” demonstrated when the author proclaimed: “To Mary, housebuilding proved to be only dressmaking on a larger scale.”<sup>19</sup>

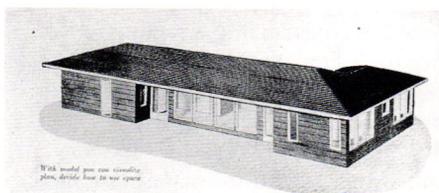
TELESIS, an organization comprised of professionals in related fields of architecture, and organized to deal with the communities of the San Francisco Bay Region, was the first to be published in this new section.<sup>20</sup> The editors explained that “Telesis [was] studying Western people and their environments...and practical ways in which poor conditions [could] be improved.”<sup>21</sup> These articles, however, focused on “modernism” more than the West. Similarly, significant architects who also published in this series did the same. For example, Pietro Belluschi stressed the education of the mass populace. He suggested that a “coop-

erative effort” was urgently needed to circumvent the increasing “overcrowding and deprivation of living space.” He presented a set of four cartoons to elucidate his point to the reader and to critique local planning boards.<sup>22</sup>

Harwell Hamilton Harris addressed an entirely different issue; he proposed a postwar house characterized by a “segmentation” feature. The house would grow over time and function “as an element of flexibility,” he explained.<sup>23</sup>

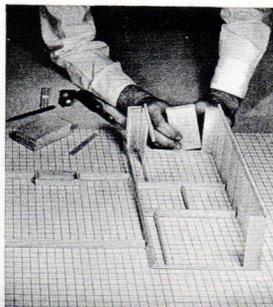
The rhetoric of “add-ons” was presented as ingenious, clever, and an indication of a promising future—basically, class mobility. Richard Neutra’s article presented yet another concern which he called “Index of Livability.”<sup>24</sup> Penned as a housewife writing to another housewife, the first clarified Neutra’s innovative theory of livability to the second, which stressed “getting every inch out of your living space.” Phrases like “hours of living,” “illusion of space,” and “balance of nerves” struck the tone of modernism. The last articles of this series represented the most daring of *Sunset*’s attempts to instruct the reader; the condescending tone was finally dropped. Readers were now guided through complex tasks, from surveying and making contour maps, to groundbreaking, to making models of their homes to test sun angles. Gwendolyn Wright has pointed out that the home economics movement in the early 20th century strongly encouraged women to be more “scientific”—to read floor plans, to read complex drainage diagrams, etc.; now, taking this one step further, *Sunset* invoked in its rhetoric that readers should become the architects of their own environments.

The modern question, however, was never the sole focus of the magazine; *Blueprints of Tomorrow* was cleverly balanced with *Sources of Western Living*, a section that explored the “indigenous” architecture of the West. In



With model you can visualize plan, decide how to use space

### Models help solve your planning problems



How is simplified model in half-inch squares. Floor plan marked off and being used will go into plan. Grounded and simple detail areas transfer of all to form walls of house

MOST OF US, when we try to think what we want in a house, have difficulty visualizing it. Hence, floor plans and architectural renderings that can't be moved about are very hard to read. They all make sense the most difficult thing may have trouble picturing traffic flow, door openings, window sizes, or furniture arrangements for individual rooms.

But with scale models you can not only visualize them, you can see the full scope of all the possibilities. There are two types of all-portion models that can be used in the design of a house. One is a model that can be added to or removed from the existing structure in a self-contained manner.

That's why we have been interested in the new model developed by a certain San Diego model builder, Fred A. Becker. The new one is known as the "Mini Model" and is made of plastic, which is sold under the name "Mini Model".

Building a scale model from such this requires only a little more skill than fitting a child's construction toy together.

Little picture showing the joining of the pieces is required. The small house shown here was put together in a few hours by the author.

### Instructions for model building.

this way, the magazine’s home department simultaneously explored with great intensity the traditional and the modern. *Sunset* later deemed the ranch house the appropriate Western home, and a series of 1940s pattern books published by the editors and architect Cliff May, a builder of ranch houses since 1931, encouraged this direction. These books not only challenged the ubiquitous bungalow and the post-war modern house as appropriate for the West, they also differed from the traditional East Coast pattern books. The first book began with a historical account of the ranch house, and it was organized by principles of Western Living, rather than strictly by style or size.<sup>A</sup>

Although May’s ranch houses, which were featured throughout the pattern book, were not replicas of the Mexican building types *Sunset* featured in *Sources of Western Living*, they exemplified “outdoor living.” The historic *corredores* and *patios* meshed with this concept. It is important to note as well that while *Sunset* partici-

pated in constructing a regional identity for a new population vis-à-vis a national identity—a form of cultural appropriation that represented a dominant class of citizens—this resulted in a “stand-in” style of architecture that incorrectly and by default came to represent the Hispanic cultures of the West. Henceforth, the by-product of this short period of boosterism resulted in a romanticism that was largely market-driven.

The picturesque ramble of the ranch house was in jeopardy, as well, in the context of the confining suburban lot—Western Living and national patterns proved to be mutually exclusive in this case. In the mid-1940s, the editors printed a series of articles questioning the dimensions required by setback ordinances. In the 1945 article, “How Much of Your Lot Belongs to the Public?” an attempt to re-interpret the conventional relationship between home and land within the Western framework was put forth.<sup>25</sup> The author suggested pushing the house to the very front of the lot, leaving a small front yard and a bigger backyard—a popular *Sunset* topic. This was illustrated with a sketch of the preferred setback law which showed the ideal proportional relationship between “public” and “outdoor living”—which curiously replaced the word “private.” More important, *Sunset* readers were strongly encouraged to take this suggestion to the zoning officials. But this was not enough; how can a house sprawl in a box? To achieve this, the suburban house was proposed in a subsequent article as separate parts pushed to the perimeter of a lot forming an ambiguously shaped courtyard in the middle for viewing and “outdoor living.” This solution would not only be stymied by the reality of planned suburbs and unchanging building codes, but by higher costs as well. Nevertheless, the editors had once again planted an alternative

design solution in the mind of the reader.

By the 1950s, activity in *Sunset*'s home department decreased in intensity—the magazine would never again investigate a house type as it had during the 1930s-40s, when it so genuinely provided the tools to turn despair into design with its instructional articles, and when its mission to identify the appropriate Western home came to a close. *Sunset*'s exploration of a new regional language was influential beyond the borders of the Western states it had once targeted; the ranch house became a highly popular post-war suburban dwelling throughout the U.S. Furthermore, besides promoting a house style that was frequently interpreted as a facade treatment, *Sunset*'s consistent challenge of national standards did indeed leave a distinct Western inflection on national patterns of backyard culture and on “do-it-yourself” domesticity. In light of all this, a more serious consideration of the role shelter magazines play today in the realm of public discourse seems rightfully due.

## NOTES

1. *Sunset* 4 (November 1899): 26.
2. *Sunset* 62 (January 1929), advertisement.
3. *Sunset* (December 1932).
4. *Sunset* (May 1933).
5. *Sunset*'s success as a popular magazine during the 1940s has been documented in *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends: 1940-1965* produced by the *Association of National Advertisers Magazine Committee*. This study focused on five home magazines: *American Home*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, *House & Garden*, and *Sunset*, the only regional magazine in the group. It is evident that between 1940-60, *Sunset* retained a higher net paid circulation than *House & Garden*, and followed closely behind *House Beautiful*. *Sunset* also represented a smaller number of states, therefore, its readership was denser than that of the national magazines during the 1940s. A high subscription rate within a smaller regional population meant a greater penetration of the market. Also, during the 1940s, 80 percent of *Sunset*'s net sales were by subscription, as opposed to news stand. *Sunset*'s

news stand sales were consistently below 20 percent, the lowest of all the home magazines in this study. This indicates that *Sunset* was received consistently in the home.

6. *Sunset* 90 (April 1943): 1.

B. See Lisa D. Schrenk's introduction: "The Work of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau" in *Your Future Home*, Washington: AIA Press, 1992.

7. *Sunset* 62 (March 1929): 70.

8. *Sunset* 80 (February 1938): 27.

9. *Sunset* (April 1936), advertisement.

10. *Sunset* 69 (July 1932): 34.

11. *Sunset* 100 (May 1948): 24.

A. See Dell Upton's "Pattern Books and Professionalism," in *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 19, 1984 and Gwendolyn Wright's *Building the Dream* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 80-89.

12. *Sunset* (January 1916): 28.

13. Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 196.

14. *Sunset* 58 (February 1927): 52-3.

15. *Sunset* 64 (February 1930): 9.

16. *Sunset Magazine, The Sunset Camp and Cabin Plan Book* (San Francisco: Land Publishing Co., 1935): 4.

17. *Sunset* 81 (October 1938): 20.

18. *Sunset* 82 (February 1939): 20.

19. *Sunset* 37 (May 1917): 43.

20. TELESIS has been described as an American counterpart of CIAM, CIRPAC (Comite International pour la Realisation des Problemes Architecturaux Contemporains), and MARS (Modern Architectural Research Group) in England. For further research read *The New Pencil Points* 32 (July 1942): 45-8, and *California Arts & Architecture* 57 (September 1940): 20-1.

21. *Sunset* 85 (July 1940): 11.

22. *Sunset* 90 (April 1943): 10.

23. *Sunset* 90 (May 1943): 12.

24. *Sunset* (November 1943).

25. *Sunset* 94 (January 1945): 10.

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# Don't Fence Me In

Anne Taylor Fleming

I am Western through and through. That's what I tell my East Coast friends; that I am a child of the wide open spaces, conjuring up for them those vast vistas of open plains and Rocky Mountains, of beaches that go on forever, and lakes so cold and deep you shiver just to look at them. Other places in the country, I say, with sweeping hyperbole, feel small by comparison, sooty, urban, claustrophobic. I say all this absolutely believing it even though my home turf is none other than Los Angeles, as sooty, urban and densely-packed city as any in the country. But I hide this truth, even from myself, remembering it as it was 40 years ago, just a palm-lined playground of small towns that called themselves a city and a place of beauty. I look at it now, I realize, through a nostalgic haze as thick as smog, refusing to focus on the mini-malls, endless tract houses and clogged freeways. I live in denial because I cannot bear what happened here—what we let happen.

And the others who can't accept the reality, plenty of them have absconded for other less damaged turf. They've gone north to Seattle and Portland and east to Las Vegas and Phoenix, Salt Lake, and Denver, carrying their dreams of what was, of cities without crime and gridlock, where you can raise your kids, teach them to hike and ski and have a little reverence for nature. That's the dream. Along with the dream, the immigrants have taken with them the seeds of destruction which are being sewn all through the increasingly citified West. The joke's on us Westerners.

Forget the wide open spaces, the horses cantering through unsettled sunsets; the 13 Western states are now "the" most urban regions of the coun-

try. Utah, Mecca to the Mormons and skiers and people looking for high-tech jobs, now has more city dwellers per capita than New York City, and the air quality of the Salt Lake City region is worse than that of the metropolitan New York-New Jersey area. Las Vegas, meanwhile, reads like LA boiled down to a glitzy, greedy essence.

Las Vegas now has some of the worst air in the country and will be out of water in 10 years. Didn't anybody listen? Didn't they see what we had become, and what pains they'd have to take not to become one of LA's sprawling offspring, or did greed just get the best of them, as it did us? Las Vegas did make a temporary try, putting a moratorium on building in the early 90's. But the builders squawked and the ban went away...the wide open spaces belong to the entrepreneurial cowboys. Only relatively small Portland, Oregon, is trying to do it differently, drafting a really tough anti-sprawl law and making everyone live and work in a contained area so the great outdoors can be preserved for all. Portland is not talking about keeping people out, but rather, keeping them in. Is anyone listening out there? I think people are starting to listen, but they don't know how to slow the juggernaut. But what you do pick up now, sometimes faintly, all through the West is a sense of chagrin and shame, a quiet but unmistakable refrain under all the banging and booming sounds of construction.

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*Anne Taylor Fleming grew up and still lives in Los Angeles. The essay reprinted here was written for The Jim Leher Hour on PBS.*

# Architecture and the City: The Forgotten Background

*Edmund M. Einy, AIA, and Craig Allen Jameson*

Imagine a new building unveiled in the city. It is a building of exceptional serenity, balance and harmony. So seamlessly is this building woven into the city's social and tectonic patterns that it is scarcely noticed. It offers no shock, challenge or offense. No one writes an article about it. No one takes its picture. It is the kind of building the city needs more of than any other. It is a background building.

Though it is wonderful to imagine that such subtle buildings comprise a major portion of today's cities, that is clearly not the case. Buildings today are not designed to provide a quiet support for people and their activities. They are designed to entertain. They are meant to confront our traditional expectations, to broadcast commercial messages or to transport us to fictionalized "theme" worlds. They are not conceived as background; they are conceived as foreground.

One might argue that such a trend should be welcomed. That this competition to create more stimulating buildings is making our cities more imaginative colorful places. Is this true? Or are cities becoming a bewildering shouting match of architectural showmanship? Would our cities be improved if architects were equally concerned with making more quiet restrained buildings in between those that deserve special significance? Since the answer to this last question is clearly yes, then why don't more architects solicit, create and promote these background buildings?

Before considering this question, let's clarify what is meant by a "back-

ground building." The concept of background is used here in the conventional sense of "a setting." The background is an inconspicuous field that promotes the legibility of figures in the foreground. It is the page on which the message is read. Buildings operate as background in two important ways. At the scale of the city, they act collectively to frame important community architecture, reinforce streets and define public spaces. At the scale of the pedestrian, background buildings provide a specific setting for people and their particular activities.

In his 1924 book, *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture*, English architectural scholar A. Trystan Edwards provides eloquent illustrations of the relationship between buildings and the city. He demonstrates how a city conveys a sense of order, identity and community when each building understands its appropriate relation to the others. The new theater acknowledges the pre-eminence of the city hall. The new shopping center defers to the old church building. Exercising "good manners" in architecture means knowing when to walk and when to dance, when to whisper and when to shout. It means realizing that background and foreground need each other; that there is an ideal proportion of one to the other and that only specific types of buildings deserve foreground status.

In short, the more consistent background architecture there is in a city, the more pronounced her foreground buildings will be. Conversely, the more numerous the foreground buildings, the

less any one of them will attract notice. The first case leads to an ordered environment in which people are easily oriented and important community buildings are emphasized, the second leads to a confusing environment in which buildings seem to be of equal importance and truly significant places are diminished.

The role of a background building at the more intimate scale of the pedestrian is to promote the appearance and activities of the people for whom it was built. Background buildings provide a setting in which people are the most important visual elements. To the extent a building draws attention to itself, it ceases to perform as a setting and becomes "foreground"—a principle that has nothing to do with what "style" the building has been rendered in. Though these points may seem painfully self-evident, it is clear from the visual clamor of our metropolitan areas and the bewildering visual complexity of many new buildings, that they have been largely forgotten. And sadly, they seem to have been forgotten on purpose. Background buildings are not accorded the respect they deserve in schools of architecture or in architectural journals. They do not stimulate architectural juries or magazine sales. Why should an architect waste time creating one?

Before architects are going to design more background buildings, there have to be incentives for them to do so, and in today's competitive economy there are few, if any. Instead, architects have compelling motives to create visually aggressive buildings. A successful career depends upon recognition and recognition depends upon being seen. Buildings that are controversial, eccentric, exciting or otherwise novel are much more likely to be published and talked about than works that are quiet and self-effacing.

One would think that, as thoroughly grounded professionals, archi-

texts would be above such grandstanding. However, there are two trends stemming from academic experience that serve to justify the creation of eccentric works. The first is the still-spreading conviction among contemporary architects that architecture should be practiced as a "pure art," as opposed to an applied art. This view holds that a building's poetic content is more important than its pragmatic responses. That functionality, technical economy and contextual appropriateness are *less* important than a building's unique artistic conception and the aesthetic experience it promises. With this view, the pragmatic elements of architecture (structure, program, environmental systems) often become afterthoughts or mere scaffolding on which artifice is hung—artifice that is typically esoteric or fantastic.

The second trend is found in the history and design curricula of the architectural academics. Here students learn that the heroes of 20th-century architecture were the great iconoclasts. Students are impressed with the radical breaks in tradition achieved by the work of important architects like Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Unfortunately, what students often find heroic is not the new architectural problem solving explored by these architects, but their radicalism. There is excitement and drama in challenging the status quo, and many bright young graduates go away thinking, "That's what I want to do." Whatever the existing architectural values of the day are, they must be challenged, or completely avoided, if the young architect is ever to be esteemed like *his heroes*.

Such students enter professional practice with a mission to become an "original." Their self-inflicted burden is nothing less than to create an entirely new architectural language. To someone with this attitude, the idea of mak-

ing a background building is unacceptable. Every commission, however small, is another chance to draw attention to their unique vision and promote their career.

Obviously, these two trends feed each other. The imperative that architecture should be practiced as a "pure" art supports the novice in his determination to create an original architecture. In turn, the novice embraces this belief for the obvious license and validation it provides his eccentric pursuits. Meanwhile, the public environment becomes a bewildering collection of private fantasies, and the number of serene, restrained buildings our cities need most continues to shrink.

Though the outlook seems pessimistic, there are still grounds for real optimism. Altering these trends and steering our cities toward greater coherence is a challenge that presents great new opportunities. It provides a chance to expand public interest in architecture, increase the influence of the architectural profession and increase the economic success of its practitioners. By embracing a class of buildings long considered unworthy of attention, and by demonstrating how beautifully they can contribute to the fabric of the city, architects can vastly expand their sphere of influence and reclaim much of the authority they have steadily lost over the previous decades.

To achieve this, the distinction between background and foreground buildings should be more clearly elucidated in architectural curricula. Special consideration should be given to helping students of architecture form criteria for judging whether a building should be background, foreground or something in between. In addition, successful background buildings should be singled out for applause as often as successful foreground works—both in the studio and in the media—as another rich form of architecture with its

own complexities and virtues. Finally, practicing architects should promote their services to those who typically build without architects, not only as a means of expanding the market for their services, but as an additional way of leading the quality of the city's development.

In the broadest sense, architects are the custodians of the background. By creating the settings in which people live, they exert a tremendous influence over our cultures collective self image. Architects have the power to frame man in a noble positive environment that dignifies his presence and honors his activities or to marginalize him.

The excessive emphasis on foreground work in our academies and our professional journals, the tendencies of practitioners to indiscriminately produce eccentric works of "pure art," and the imperative of the commercial marketplace to make buildings that "stand out" lead to a disintegrated environment. Not only do these trends make the city a less gracious place, but they also limit the field of professional action for architects by implying that only foreground works are worth their efforts. By actively soliciting and promoting background architecture, the profession can expand and strengthen its leadership within the community while dramatically improving our civic environment.

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## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS FOR VOLUME 19:2 AND 20:1

The Editorial Board of *Architecture California* seeks abstracts for the next two issues of *Architectural California*—Volumes 19:2, Spring 1998 and 20:1 Fall 1998. The 1998 National AIA Convention to be held in San Francisco provides an opportunity to showcase the architectural community of California. Volume 19:2 of the AIACC official journal will be published just prior to the convention, providing an update, by California region, on the pulse of the profession including current projects and conditions in practice and the state of architectural education. California represents the fifth largest economic community in the world; it has the most diverse population of any of the fifty states; and it is divided into several distinct regions with local concerns and characteristics, i.e., Southern California, Northern California, the Central Coast, the Central Valley, and the Redwood Empire. Articles are solicited which illustrate this context and focus on changes in professional practice, case studies of major projects in specific regions, major issues or conditions impacting the making of the environment by region, and the role architectural education plays in this constantly changing context.

The theme of Volume 20:1, to be published in Fall 1998, is "Design as Commodity." Design is no longer only about the design of our cities or our buildings, or our landscapes, but about every aspect of our everyday lives, i.e. clothing, accessories, our Nikes, packaging, advertising, methods of communication, the way we bank, and the way we learn. The act of designing leaves no issue, service, or product untouched. This edition of *Architecture California* will explore the value added by design action to our lives: How is value added? What knowledge, skills and values are needed by designers to have the opportunity to add value? What is the perception of consumers of how design adds value? Where and how does this value adding take place? Who pays for added design value? What is the ethical context of value added design? What is good design that adds value? A select number of built projects which illustrates the nature of "design as a commodity" will be published.

The *etcetera* section always welcomes a variety of submissions beyond the scope of the focus topic. We welcome these general submittals.

The abstract, of approximately 500 words, should clearly illustrate the primary topic, structure and organization of the proposed article including an indication of the type of charts, graphs, and photographs to be included in the final version of the article. A short biographical statement about the author is also required. All proposals will be reviewed by the Editorial Board, and those selected for publication will be further developed with assistance of the Editor. Please submit abstracts for Volume 19:2 **no later than November 1, 1997**. Abstracts for Volume 20:2 should be received **no later than March 1, 1998**. Snail-mail, e-mail or fax materials to:

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*Forthcoming themes:* Regional Update: Pulse of the Profession 19:2  
Design as Commodity 20:1