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# What's New

## In land use planning

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reading for  
you!*

*RFM Land Use Consulting*

## Notes from the 2024 APA Riverside Conference

From September 28<sup>th</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, the California Chapter of the American Planning Association held its' annual Conference in Riverside, California. Approximately 1,900 planners from across the state were in attendance.

During the conference, there were breakout sessions covering issues from affordable housing, to environmental justice, to diversity, to ethics and sustainability, legislative updates and CEQA updates. There were also mobile workshops that toured wineries and waste treatment plants.

Conferences like this isn't just all seriousness; throughout the time there was an opening reception where planners could mix and mingle over beverages

and appetizers followed by samplings from local restaurants for dinner. In addition, there was a networking lunch, and breakfast each morning provided. A sponsor reception was also held for all to attend.

One of the highlights was the opening plenary, where actor, author and artist Cheech Marin (of Cheech and Chong fame) spoke of his art exhibits featuring Latino artists. He also spoke of his gallery in Riverside, called "The Cheech."

After all was said and done, the announcement was made that next years conference will be held in Monterey!

### Join me on...

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### Housing Rehabilitation

Housing Rehabilitation is rarely thought of as an aspect of the Planning world. But as Planning touches many aspects of land use (housing, land use, economic development, traffic, etc.), it all comes down to having a safe, healthy and general welfare of an individual and community.

Think about it...if your house has a leaky roof, non-functional air conditioning, poor plumbing, isn't conducive to a healthy environment, what happens? You get sick and can't go to work; your spouse gets sick and can't go to work; your kids get sick and can't go to school.

There's a trickle down effect going on. But because you are low or moderate income, how do you address these issues?

Most, if not all, jurisdictions have some form of grant or loan program that can be of assistance. These grants and loans typically come from a program through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and are administered through the jurisdiction. The loans typically are 30 year, no interest loans (which means that you don't need to pay it off right away – but it must be paid off within 30

### Housing Rehabilitation... (Cont.)



years – and there is no interest). They will pay for basic repairs and upgrades to make the home livable.

The beauty of these programs is that, as said, you don't have to pay off the loan right away. You can pay it off over the 30 years in payments, pay it off in a lump sum at the end of 30 years, or when the home sells.

Once the loan is paid off (to the jurisdiction), they can use those funds to loan out to other

rehabilitation projects in the form of Program Income.

These programs are not a hand out, but rather a hand up. They are designed to give everyone an equal chance to proper housing and thus be participating members of society, which benefits everyone in the long run.



### To Laugh, or Not to Laugh, that is the Joke...

Why don't sharks bite lawyers? ... Professional courtesy.

If spaghetti made an action movie, what would it be called? Mission: Im-pasta-ble.

What did the horse say after it tripped? Help! I fell and I can't giddy-up!

What has more lives than a cat? A frog...because it croaks everyday!

A termite walks in to a bar and asks "is the bartender here tonight?"

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Yes, Planners do have a sense of humor!!

### Public Participation in the Planning Process

Many people think Land Use Planning is done behind closed doors, with low whispers. Technically, no, it doesn't. While things like building permits are processed without public hearings, in most cases what leads up to those permits may require things like Zoning Permits or Conditional Use Permits.

Due to the nature of these Zoning Permits and Conditional Use Permits, the public has the right to know it's being considered for approval (or denial, which does happen by the way) and the public has the right to have their say on the impacts to their neighborhoods.

The jurisdiction is required to send notices to surrounding property owners, and post an ad in a newspaper (yes, they still print newspapers these days!) in advance of the hearing date. Most jurisdictions send notices to property owners within 300 feet of the subject property.

There has been some question if the people living in a residence are renting the property gets a notice. Not necessarily. It is typically those who OWN the property, even if they live out of the area. The renters can ask to be included if they choose to.

The hearings typically should be held at a time when people can actually attend (usually after the normal work hours) and at an area they may be familiar with (i.e. City Hall).

The public has the right to speak on an agenda item, whether it is for or against the item. Due to time limits, they are usually held to three minutes of time so as to allow others to also speak if they choose to. For those who cannot attend, they can send in letters in support or opposition to the project.

Take part in the process! It's your right!



### The General Plan and Zoning

City, county and regional planning cannot occur without an overall guiding framework – in California that is the General Plan. This is a mandatory document that has been around since 1937.

The general plan has seven required elements: land use, housing, transportation, conservation, open space, safety and noise.

The courts have described the general plan as the "constitution" of land use and development planning. Without a valid general plan, jurisdictions are on shaky grounds when it comes to approving developments, even to the potential point of having stays on developments where the general plan is deemed inadequate.

From here, the Land Use Element serves as the prefigure to the overall layout of the land uses within the jurisdiction. Zoning builds on this foundation by translating the generalized designations into enforceable ordinances and regulations. State law requires zoning and the general plan be consistent in counties and general law cities. Where there are inconsistencies, the general plan would prevail.

The General Plan is not a static document. It needs to be written with an eye towards flexibility and with a clear process for future amendment.

To be continued....





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*Where The  
Customer Comes  
First*

## Publications

I hope you have enjoyed this publication of RFM Land Use Consulting's newsletter! While short in nature, I hope you have found the information useful.

It is my hope to periodically publish a newsletter to keep my clients up to date with articles relating to the planning field, as well as highlight projects I feel are of note for the community.

If there are subjects of interest in the

planning field you would like to see here, please feel free to contact me with those ideas, and I will endeavor to include them in future publications.

Future editions will be sent via email for those who subscribe, and are clients.

Go to [www.rfmlanduseconsulting.com](http://www.rfmlanduseconsulting.com) to subscribe to this newsletter, it's free!

Thank you for reading!

### In future editions of the newsletter...

- Affordable housing
- NEPA
- The General Plan and zoning ... continued
- Ethics and the planner
- Managing fire
- Trail planning