

NEVADA PLANNER



American Planning Association
Nevada Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association

WINTER 2020

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American Planning Association Nevada Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen



ON THE COVER: QUAIN AND QUINTESSENTIALLY NEVADAN—
VIRGINIA CITY. © FLYTORENOTAHOE ON FLICKR, CEDAR PAVEL

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

NATHAN GOLDBERG, AICP
PRESIDENT, NEVADA CHAPTER

As you read this, a new decade is dawning. The 2010s brought some interesting times in our communities. Climbing back out of the great recession led to the challenge of addressing growth and updating aging infrastructure with ever-more limited funds. Moving into the 2020s, much of the focus from APA National will be on adapting to climate change and doing what we can to combat exacerbating the problem. Other related issues at the forefront of planning are addressing housing costs, shortages and condition issues as well as effectively offering mobility options in ever-changing ways. Planners have quite the to-do list!

In partnership with the 2020-2021 Nevada APA Board Members, and as your new Chapter President, the objectives for the next few years are laid out in the Strategic Plan, which I encourage you to check out on the new website. Focusing on bringing the Chapter into compliance with APA National requirements, promoting the planning profession and the experts we have in you – our members are the roots of the Strategic Plan. The Board and I would love to hear from you. Learning how the Chapter can add more value to the important work we all do in trying to build better communities is a priority. We are very excited about the new website and are always looking for content. Please reach out if you have ideas for the website, social media posts, or articles for the *Nevada Planner*.

Briefly introducing myself: I've worked for land-use and transportation planning agencies in my home state of Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, and Nevada. I am currently the Manager of Transit Planning for the RTC of Southern Nevada, the Chair of the Citizens Traffic Advisory Board for the City of Henderson, and have been involved with the APA's Nevada Chapter in various capacities since my arrival in Southern Nevada in 2005. When not working I can be found in my garage woodshop building things, travelling with my wife and son, and spending time at various ice rinks in my son's quest to be the next Marc-Andre Fleury as a goaltender in the Jr. Golden Knights program. 

I hope that you had a wonderful Holiday Season and I look forward to serving you!

Nathan Goldberg, AICP



PLANNING



I AM CARSON RIVER WATERSHED AND YOU ARE TOO!

BRENDA HUNT

We live in one of the most spectacular watersheds in the country! From the majestic views at Monitor, Ebbetts, and Carson Passes, down to the “Tatooine-esque” salt flats of the Carson Sink, our Carson River Watershed is one-of-a-kind. The Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) is excited and proud to launch the “I Am Carson River Watershed” campaign with a film that connects our community to the watershed they live in and asks everyone to do a few simple things to help improve the quality of our water.

Go to IAmCarsonRiver.org and join Vanessa Vancour on a “Walk Through the Carson River Watershed” to 24 spectacular locations in just over two minutes!

We’re excited to work with the NEON Agency in Reno to launch the I Am Carson River Watershed campaign with this incredible film. We surveyed our watershed community and found that the majority of residents didn’t know they lived in a watershed and didn’t think their actions affected its health. This film celebrates the natural wonder of the Carson River Watershed while inspiring individuals in our community to take action to improve its health and water quality.

The campaign is the culmination of hard work and tenacity by our Carson River Coalition (CRC) partners. In particular, we thank the CRC Education Working Group and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) for shaping the campaign into an effective and targeted message. Our watershed is beautiful, but several reaches of the Carson River are on the Clean Water Act 303(d) list of impaired waters. The No. 1 reason these reaches of the river are impaired is polluted run-off or non-point source pollution. You can help improve the quality of our water and the health of our watershed by picking up dog waste, washing your car at a car wash, recycling your motor oil, and curbing your use of chemicals in and around your homes.

We have created a campaign logo and sticker (below) to



spread the message. The back of the sticker includes simple actions you can take to improve water quality. Look for your free sticker in your water bill or pick one up at CWSD’s office, 777 E. William Street, Suite 110A, Carson City. We are also asking our partners to add the campaign logo graphic with a link to our Campaign Page to their websites and social media pages. Contact me and we’ll send you the logo graphic so you can help this film and campaign go viral!

What’s next? We’re working with NDEP and NEON to produce short films showing people taking actions that improve the water quality and the health of the watershed. We’ve already begun working on a film focused on protecting the quality of our drinking water. Look for its debut winter 2020.

Your actions matter! Please share the web address (IAmCarsonRiver.org) widely, display your sticker proudly, and implement one or all of the simple actions discussed in the film, because “I Am Carson River Watershed, and you are too!” 

Brenda Hunt works for the Carson Water Subconservancy District as the Watershed Program Manager. Contact her (brenda@cwsd.org) or Shane Fryer (shane@cwsd.org) for more information. This program is funded by US EPA Clean Water Act 319(h) grants administered by NDEP-Water Quality Planning and CWSD.

FILMING AT RIVER FORK RANCH, GENOA, AND LAHONTAN RESERVOIR. PHOTOS BY BRENDA HUNT AND SHANE FRYER.



NORTH DAYTON VALLEY AREA DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN

DEBBIE NEDDENRIEP

Alluvial Fan floods often become flash floods which wreak havoc when mud and debris rush downslope. North Dayton Valley experienced summer flash floods in 2014, 2015 and 2016, and winter flooding in 2017. During this time, relatively short periods of rain transformed dry gullies into torrential rivers. As a result, many roadways, including Highway 50, were inundated with water, rocks and debris. Culverts and roadside ditches were overwhelmed and filled with sediment. Lyon and Storey Counties repeatedly sent out crews to clean up the resulting debris. Estimated damage to public infrastructure from these flash floods in Carson River Watershed counties totaled over \$5 million.

This type of flash flood damage is common in the Carson River Watershed. The National Institute of Building Sciences recently reported “*Mitigation funding can save the nation \$6 in future disaster costs, for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation,*” in their [Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2017 interim Report](#). To reduce the flash flood hazard in North Dayton Valley, FEMA funded an Area Drainage Master Plan (DV-ADMP) conducted by consulting engineering firm JE Fuller in Lyon and Storey Counties. By mapping flood hazards and proposing mitigation alternatives, each county can better protect the lives and property of their residents from flooding. ADMP’s are developed to meet these primary objectives:

- Evaluate and identify flooding and sedimentation hazards within the project area.
- Develop a series of alternatives to either partially or wholly mitigate identified hazards.



CAR BEING RESCUED IN MARK TWAIN AREA OF STOREY COUNTY, 2017. PHOTO PROVIDED BY STOREY COUNTY

- Provide stakeholder coordination and public outreach through a series of public meetings to inform residents of existing hazards and present mitigation alternatives.

The [North Dayton Valley ADMP](#) study results were presented to Lyon and Storey County residents and Boards of Commissioners by JE Fuller in August. Maps identifying flood hazards and proposed solutions were presented in these meetings. Based on initial benefit-cost analysis, projects were prioritized to provide a blueprint to enhance resilience to flood disasters in North Dayton Valley. Both counties plan to use the study results to inform their flood hazard mitigation planning efforts. Specifically, Lyon County added this study to their Hazard Mitigation Plan and Storey County adopted the plan. [NV](#)

Debbie Neddenriep is Water Resource Specialist II at the Carson Water Subconservancy District.

For more information about this study, please contact Kathy Canfield (kcanfield@storeycounty.org or (775)847-1144) for Storey County Tammy Kinsley (tkinsley@lyon-county.org (775) 463-6592) for Lyon County.

ON THE MOVE...

Scott Carey has recently started a new position as State Lands Planner for the Nevada Division of State Lands. In this role, Scott will be responsible for administering the State Land Use Planning Agency, the Nevada Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and the Nevada State Clearinghouse.

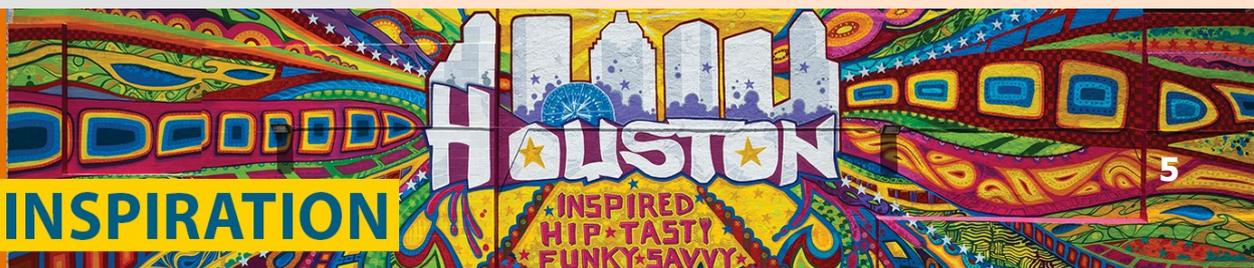


Scott is a graduate of the University of Nevada & Western Governor’s University-Nevada and has been working in planning at the tribal, state, and local levels of government throughout Nevada for the past 18 years. Since 2016, Scott has also served his hometown of Sparks as a citizen planner on the city’s Planning Commission.



NPC20 • April 25–28

DISCOVER INSPIRATION





6TH GRADERS LEARN WHERE THEY LIVE, WORK, & PLAY

KAREN MELBY, AICP

As a part this year's Nevada State Planning Conference held in Sparks, local planners spent five weeks teaching at Dilworth Middle School in Ms. Lea Bell's Sixth Grade class about planning and cities. The fifth week the students demonstrated their knowledge by making group posters of their ideal city which were voted on by the attendees at the state conference.

To develop the five, weekly sessions, I started doing internet research to see other planning programs for children. After reviewing numerous publications and programs, none of them fit what I had in mind. Keeping in mind that the students were sixth graders and starting to think about what they wanted to be when they grow up, I decided I wanted a program that discussed planning, what a city is, and the professions that assist in the development of a city. I wanted a program that combined both what planning is and what makes up a city. I decided to use the opportunity to expose the students to new professions while teaching them about planning and how a city functions.

The first session was call "What Is a City?" At this session, besides myself, the professionals included a local planner and a civil engineer with the City of Sparks. We started by explaining how a city functions as a place to live, work, and play and gave an overview of the history of Sparks. We also discussed what a city is and what planning is. In discussion, the students defined their neighborhood as the area within a mile or so of Dilworth Middle School. Planning benefits were identified such as maintaining neighborhood character, reducing environmental impacts, providing protection from natural and man-made disasters, preserving parks and open space, and helping to determine where building, businesses, homes, and roads will be located. The students were shown the Sparks Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Zoning maps, and we explained the role

those play in the development of a city. After discussion on the concept of place and what makes a good place or bad place and why, the student exercise was to individually write down their favorite and least favorite places.

NAME YOUR FAVORITE PLACE:

Common Answers: Sparks Marina, Lake Tahoe, Nature, Their Home, and McDonald's

NAME YOUR LEAST FAVORITE PLACE:

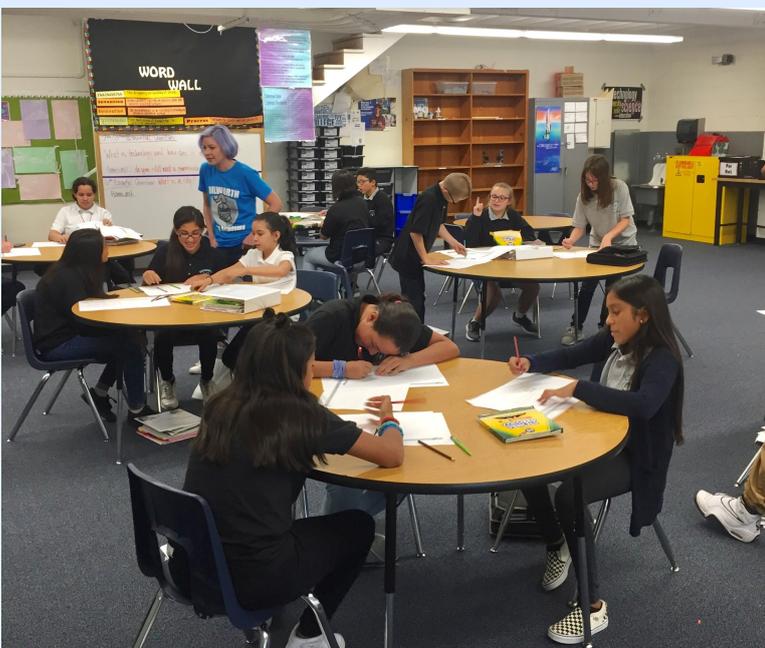
Common Answers: Hospital, Dilworth Middle School, Las Vegas, and 99 Cent Store

In the second session, "What Makes Up a City?", the team teaching included two civil engineers who worked for the City of Sparks Utility Division and me. This session focused on the back-bone infrastructure of a city, including streets, storm drainage, sewer treatment plants, and water as well as other services such as public safety (police and fire), traffic signals, maintenance of city property, and other utilities. The students' favor topic was learning where the waste goes when they flush the toilet. Getting back to the theme of live, work, and play, we discussed the importance of building placement and the relationship of land uses to each other, or compatibility considerations. We showed a series of PowerPoint slides that asked the students if two uses were compatible and why or why not. The student exercise was to take cards of different land uses and places them on their table in relationship to each other. All the students placed the sewer treatment plant a distance from the other land uses, usually across the class room! We all got a chuckle out of the placement.

Week three focused on transportation: "We Are All Connected." The team of professional included the Sparks Transportation Manager, a transportation planner, and me. We asked the students how they got around the

community, and their answers ranged from walking, biking, and some bus transit but mostly private vehicle. There was discussion on other modes of transportation and classification of the street network. The exercise was to analyze the intersection of N. McCarran Boulevard and Nichols Boulevard in Sparks, which is adjacent to a truck stop, a fast food restaurant, and an apartment complex. It also has a cycle track connecting to Sparks Marina. The students answered a series of questions observing the intersection function, and their exercise for this week was to provide suggestions for improvements to the intersection. Their suggestions covered increasing pedestrian safety by lengthening the crossing time and providing pedestrian bridges, but also reducing the number of lanes and widening them, and—my favorite—installing barriers that would raise up when the lights turn red so vehicles couldn't go through the intersection or run the red light. The students' responses surprised the team by showing their understanding of how an intersection works.

Week four, the last teaching session, was titled "Building a City" and was taught by an architect, land entitlement manager for a housing developer, and me. This session talked about what besides land use, infrastructure/streets, people and parks/open space, gives a city its character. Of course, it is buildings, so we talked about what architecture is and looked at examples of famous buildings, architectural styles, "form versus function," and scale. As a simile, we compared a building to the human body: the nervous system being like the electrical system, the digestive system operating like the building plumbing, and the respiratory system functioning like a heating/air conditioning system. We also looked at a floor plan and reviewed types of building materials. The students' activity was to build models to understand the complexity of making an actual, three-dimensional structure. They used marshmallows and tooth picks to make their structures. The students were challenged by trying to figure out how to make their marshmallow structures, but their favorite part was that after they presented them to the class they could eat their "structural ties."



The final week's session was a recap of the previous 4 weeks. The students worked in groups on their posters of their ideal city, and each group had lively discussions and spent time laying out their city. They focused on the layout of their street network using black tape as the streets and then created their housing, shopping, and work areas. Each poster included parks and/or water features and one group included a dog park as an important component.

My favorite comment from one of the students in the last session was that he would like to be an architect. It's exciting to me to see the students open their eyes to career options. Looking at the group posters, it is apparent that the students' eyes were opened to see a city beyond just their route to school. They clearly understood that a city is a place that includes many considerations including placement of streets, land uses, and infrastructure to operate the city. The students asked tough questions, demonstrating their interest and understanding of the subject.

One student asked me if I enjoy my job (of course I answered "yes!"). As we all know, planning is not an easy subject for the general public to grasp. I believe that the students walked away from these sessions with a basic understanding of a city and all of its functions. They also had the opportunity to learn about planning, civil engineering, transportation engineering, and architecture.

I was nervous about whether the students would be excited about making a poster of their ideal city, but they dove in with both feet and asked good questions while laying the posters out. I was excited to witness their enthusiasm and participation. Who knew planning could be fun? The Dilworth Middle School STEM Sixth grade students know. 



Karen Melby, AICP, is the Development Services Manager for the City of Sparks.

2019 DeBoer Awards for Excellence in Planning



OUTSTANDING PLAN
Lake Tahoe Multimodal Corridor Management Plan

OUTSTANDING IMPLEMENTATION
City of Las Vegas Downtown Form-Based Code



OUTSTANDING RURAL PLAN
I-11 Northern Nevada Alternatives Analysis Planning and Environmental Linkages

**OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD
(NEW CATEGORY)**
Community Foundation of Western NV
Village on Sage Street Project



OUTSTANDING PUBLIC OUTREACH & JOURNALISM
Builders Association of Northern Nevada Legislative Campaign

OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL PROJECT
RSIC-NDOT Collaboration – Reno Spaghetti Bowl
Project EIS



DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP - CITIZEN PLANNER
Lee C. Farris, PE, The Landwell Company

DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP - PROFESSIONAL PLANNER
Jim Rundle, City of Sparks



PRESIDENT'S AWARD
Peter Gower, AICP CEP, EMPSi, Reno

DeBULL AWARD
Tim Thompson, AICP



DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP - ELECTED OFFICIAL
Congressman Mark Amodei, 2nd District
(Not Pictured)

TRAVERSING THE NUANCED PROCESS OF LOCAL AND STATE PERMITTING

JACK DULIN AND DON EBERLY

Building permits, though required for nearly every new building, remodel, or existing building project in Nevada, can be an extremely complex and time-consuming process. The building permit process extends beyond major building or remodel projects as well; the appropriate permits are also needed for most major structural, electrical or plumbing changes made to a building, regardless if it is commercial or residential.

The same applies for entitlements. Land entitlements are the cornerstone of land development. Yet, a deep well of patience and guidance is necessary to unravel the bureaucratic processes and multifarious requirements.

Navigating the Landscape of Entitlements

George Garcia, the founder and president of real estate development and redevelopment services company G.C. Garcia, Inc., located in Henderson, guides real estate investors, site owners, and developers as they navigate such enterprises as attaining the proper building permits and untangling land entitlements. Because of this, Garcia and his team have even received the nickname of “Red Tape Sherpas.”

“Cutting through the red tape involved in land

GEORGE AND THE G.C. GARCIA, INC. STAFF ACHIEVED THE MONIKER, “RED TAPE SHERPAS” DUE TO THEIR ABILITY TO NAVIGATE THE SOMETIMES-TREACHEROUS TERRAINS OF GOVERNMENT ZONING, LICENSING, PERMITTING, AND REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS.



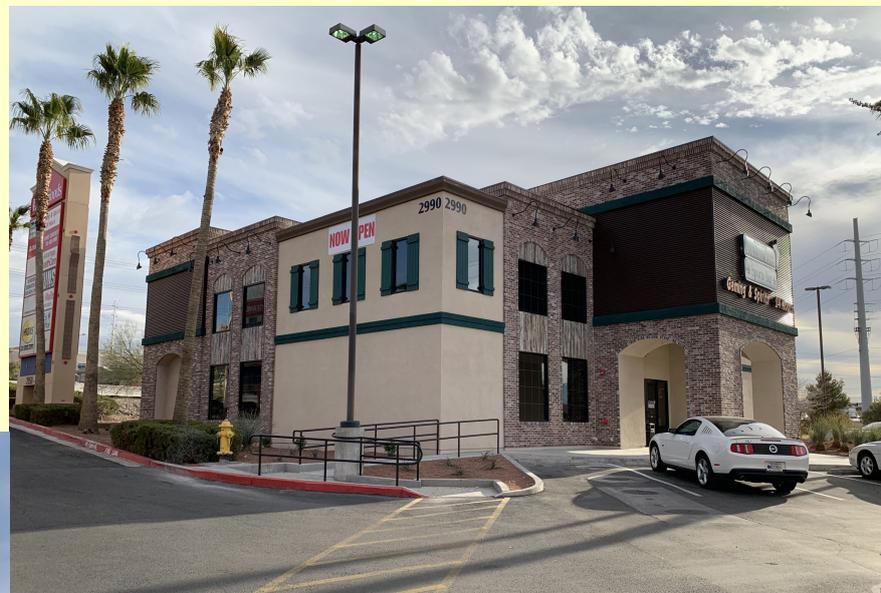
development, zoning, and entitlements is nothing short of a complex series of carefully managed activities and processes,” says Garcia.

Garcia has nearly 30 years in government planning, land planning, and real estate development. Prior to founding his company, he served as Planning Director for the City of Henderson and Assistant Planning Director in Overland Park, Kansas.

A systematic approach to site exploration and procedural planning are prerequisites for real estate investments, according to Garcia. “Government and neighborhood relations, entitlements, due diligence, development coordination, permitting, and business licensing are equally key elements,” he says.

The Overlooked Art of Jurisdictional Guidance and Expedited Permitting

Though many planners, as well as developers, landowners, and other stakeholders understand the intricacies of entitlements, due diligence and other facets of developing a piece of land, finding the time and staff needed to process and accomplish this task list can be difficult.



IN THE OPENING OF BOURBON STREET SPORTS BAR IN HENDERSON, GARCIA AND HIS TEAM WERE ABLE TO ASSIST NEVADA RESTAURANT SERVICES IN HANDLING THE RECENTLY OPENED RESTAURANT’S ENTITLEMENTS, THE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR TAVERN USE, AND THE PRIVILEGED LICENSES FOR LIQUOR SALES AND GAMING.

This procedural planning often begins with the guidance of a development consulting and services firm, assisting a developer or landowner in applying for permits and monitoring the permitting process when working with a local jurisdiction. However, the tedious work of coordinating with governmental entities can sometimes be highly time consuming.

Not to mention, many of these processes vary drastically

from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, which can lead to discrepancies in the mutual understanding of rules and regulations between a developer and a municipality. For developers, it is advisable to stay accurately tuned-in to regulatory changes and evolution within the cities and counties in which projects are being considered and developed.



GARCIA AND HIS TEAM WORKED WITH VARIOUS LOCAL AND STATE AGENCIES IN ASSISTING THE OWNERS OF BOBBY MAO'S IN HENDERSON TO ATTAIN THE NEEDED LICENSING FOR THEIR RESTAURANT.

A current trend across the United States, but especially in Nevada, involves developers taking their money out of maximum-growth areas, such as California, and looking to build in growing and less-developed areas. These are areas that are rife for development because of fewer regulations, and leave the developer with higher margins for profit. However, the assumption that building permits can be planned and attained faster in smaller, less-complex bureaucracies can lead to a developer's demise if he or she does not understand the intricacies of a smaller jurisdiction.

"When the due diligence has been conducted, and channels of communication between the developer and municipality have been properly cultivated, building permits very rarely are denied in areas of high or low growth," notes Garcia. "What can slow-up, or perhaps destroy, a project in the permitting stage of a development is when assumptions are made by a developer that the permits can be attained in the same manner and timeframe as other jurisdictions in which they have worked in the past."

Thus, in an era of nationwide development coming to small and mid-sized cities, such as Henderson or Reno, the need for grasping local development standards and protocols has never been as high. Maintaining detailed cognizance about city and community regulatory matters is worth the time it takes for a developer's personnel. Notwithstanding, augmenting internal knowledge, unified with advice from a local development consulting-services firm, will help generate a more comprehensive

understanding of a jurisdiction's regulations. This form of multidisciplinary approach, in which entitlements are granted and permits are approved, can result in condensed time and energy.

"Many times, the services of a development consulting firm will be requested when a developer does not have the proper time to have a vital permit approved," says Garcia. This can be caused by a number of factors, including a general lack of knowing the local jurisdiction's mandatory deadlines and overall timelines. It could also be caused by a general discrepancy in regional or legal terminology.

Despite a development company's policies for how and when to manage entitlements, permit expediting can be as tedious and time-consuming as regular permitting. It is the responsibility of a development company to not only manage the process from start to finish, but to ensure materials submitted to the proper channels within an agency are as clean, simple, and cognizant of local formalities and regulations as possible.

"A government agency in one part of the state may have completely different interpretations of certain code provisions and standards in a different area or district," says Garcia. "The developer's goal should be to minimize any inconsistencies between the development project's process and an agency's protocol, especially when time and money are on the line."

Garcia has received calls from dozens of developers and managers who lost hope after finding their tight deadlines did not align with a jurisdiction's timeline for standard permitting approvals. It goes without saying these sorts of incongruencies do nothing but delay projects and, ultimately, hemorrhage capital.

Expedited permitting, due diligence, entitlements, and other procedural necessities provided by a development consulting services firm require room in the budget. The value is often validated through the minimized headaches and lost funds saved throughout the process.

"Point blank, streamlined communications between a developer and municipality necessitate the inclusion of a strategic methodology to address local and statewide regulations, thorough knowledge of government and community relations, and wide-ranging local support," Garcia concludes. 



George Garcia is the President of G.C. Garcia, Inc., a 20-year old Nevada land planning and development services firm. George has nearly 30 years of local government planning experience, including five years as the Planning Director of the City of Henderson. George is also a member of the American Planning Association and the Nevada Chapter. gcgarciainc.com

Jack Dulin and Don Eberly are with the firm Eberly & Collard Public Relations in Atlanta.

THỦ THIÊM REDEVELOPMENT, VIETNAM

ALEX STRAWSER



This past September, I had the opportunity to travel to Ho Chi Minh City, the largest city in Vietnam, formerly known as Saigon. This soon-to-be megacity is a booming technology hub of Southeast Asia. As a planner, I am compelled to explore the similarities and differences with planning and development in these foreign environments. During my travels, I came across one of the largest urban development projects in Asia that is surrounded by ambition and controversy.

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is divided into several districts. For example, District 1 is the downtown city center. District 2 is generally located on the Saigon River across from District 1. Each district is then subdivided into different wards; within District 2's 11 wards, an ambitious redevelopment plan has been in the works for the past 25 years in Thủ Thiêm. The goal is to create a modern financial and commercial center that would compete with megacities like Bangkok, Singapore, or Shanghai. The redevelopment area is approximately 1,623 acres, which is about twice the size of New York's Central Park.

Since 1950, planners and city officials started paying more attention to Thủ Thiêm for the expansion and future

development of Saigon. The Hoang Hung Plan was the first master plan to propose that Thủ Thiêm should overtake District 1 as the new city center. In 1995, Thủ Thiêm was officially identified as the new center of Ho Chi Minh City; however, economic challenges in Asia made the project impractical at that time.

In 2003, an international request for proposals was held for designing the redevelopment master plan. By 2005, the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee (HCMC's local governing board) had approved a master plan by Massachusetts-based firm Sasaki Associates. The plan's main points were to connect the riverfront, promote density, preserve native vegetation, and to accommodate flood events.

In 2002, the eviction process began. Over the next 10 years, approximately 15,000 Thủ Thiêm households were relocated, resulting in an expense of 30 trillion VND (or \$1.32 billion USD). The eviction process was overall problematic for residents, city officials, and investors. A declining economy, insufficient infrastructure improvements, and high leasing fees had drastically slowed the momentum. Despite the project's potential, investors became hesitant due to the obstacles and prolonged infrastructure completion. Many were concerned that the project would ultimately fall through. In order to keep the project moving forward, the government did everything possible to keep the project on track; their tactics eventually led to corruption. "We no longer trust any officials who work for District 2," said resident Doan Van Phuong. Some of the most concerning issues residents faced with the evictions were fair compensation, the redevelopment boundaries changing, and appropriate resettlement housing.

Erik Harms, an associate professor from Yale University, studied and visited Thủ Thiêm for nearly two months while researching for his book *Luxury and Rubble: Civility and Dispossession in the New Saigon*. "People don't want to be evicted from their homes. People were not angry about the idea of the project. They knew about the master plan, they weren't ignorant... People felt like there are a lot of people making a lot of money off this project and [they're] not getting enough compensation for our land," he says. For example, one resident, Le Thi Bach Tuyet, originally had her home valued for 350 million VND (or \$15,625 USD) per square meter by a local real estate agency. However, the city only compensated her 18 million VND (or \$803 USD). "This is bullying," exclaimed Tuyet.

Other residents like Lei Thi Hong Van have had other issues with the redevelopment process. Her residence was not originally included in the identified redevelopment area, and yet HCMC threatened to vacate her property

anyway. Several residents have demanded that the government provide the original 1996 planned area and boundary map that was approved by the Prime Minister, a critical document that has supposedly gone missing. "The authorities never registered my house for reclamation," says one woman. "They suddenly forced us out and demolished our home. They signed the decision and came the very next day to destroy my house. How can they do that to us without giving us a chance to at least find somewhere else to live?"

Lastly, the eminent domain process had begun prior to any plans for building resettlement housing. The resettlement land was originally approved by the Prime Minister, but the HCMC People's Committee had been using the designated land for other purposes. As a result, there was not enough land, leading to more expensive resettlement apartments. "If I want to live in one of the resettlement apartments I would have to pay 800 million VND extra (\$34,606 USD). Of course I am frustrated," expressed one resident.

Government officials have recognized the mistakes and issues with the redevelopment project. "On behalf of the City's leaders in all periods, I sincerely apologize to the people of Thủ Thiêm for my mistakes during the implementation of Thủ Thiêm's planning," said Nguyen Thanh Phong. "We know we have to work hard," responded Phan Nguyen Nhu Khue, the Deputy Head of Delegation. "The time can't last any longer."

With the eminent domain portion of the project wrapped up, different developers have seized the opportunity to develop in this new city center. Having a majority of prime land currently lying vacant along the Saigon River, an illusion has been created that not a lot has been done.

The redevelopment of Thủ Thiêm is highlighted by the \$2.2 billion Empire City. The 36-acre complex will feature a luxury shopping mall, a five-star hotel, offices, 3,000 apartments, public spaces, and the Empire 88 Tower, a 1,098-foot skyscraper that would redefine the city's skyline. Designed by German architect Büro Ole Scheeren, the tower features an observation deck and towering urban garden. The design has been referred to as a "garden skyscraper" or "sky forest." "There's an expectation to create new meaning in Vietnam's own context" said Scheeren. "There's an ambition to create meaningful places for the city's people, and to create a new identity that can be an arch between their past and their future." Site preparation for this project has begun.

Occupying the lot next to Empire City is the Lotte Eco Smart City. The 25-acre site will be a modern financial and commerce center. The complex will be comprised of luxurious trade centers, hotels, offices, and hotels and



apartments. However, this project is currently stalled due to land clearance and compensation disputes with an occupying church that has served the community since 1859.

Other development projects in the redevelopment area include: Marina Bay, a 24-acre complex featuring commercial centers, restaurants, hotels, offices, and nine high-end luxury apartment towers; the Metropole apartments, an 18.7-acre complex featuring 1,534 apartments and ground-level retail. In addition, general improvements include two new bridges, two metro lines (HCMC does not currently have an active rail system), a long-distance railway station, a variety of open spaces, and a city square opposite of the iconic Rex Square in District 1.

After years of stalled progress and societal pushback, the development of Thủ Thiêm is finally underway. While the redevelopment projects are filled with exciting, eco-friendly, and prosperous development opportunities, the eminent domain, corruption, and neglect of historic property has ultimately tarnished the reputation of the ward and governing agencies. It will be exciting to visit Ho Chi Minh City again once the redevelopment of the peninsula has been fully completed. 



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STAFF EMPOWERMENT AND EFFICIENCIES IN THE CITY OF NORTH LAS VEGAS

ROBERT EASTMAN, AICP

During the last ten years, the City of North Las Vegas (CNLV) has implemented several measures in current planning that have resulted in 29% of the staff being able to handle the 86% of workload when compared to 2008. Additionally, developers have seen a reduction in time from submission to approval for use permits, most site plan reviews, and most entitlements within the redevelopment area.

For a numerical comparison (FY 2008/09), the city processed 886 land use entitlements through either administrative review or Planning Commission. This last fiscal year (FY 2018/19), the city processed 767 items.

In North Las Vegas, staff is empowered to represent the City and work with citizens and developers to create a more efficient development atmosphere. Additionally, laws and procedures were altered to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy.

On the current planning side (with 5-1/2 employees), the City has streamlined services to help reduce staff workload and speed service delivery. The first step was an increase in Conditional Use Permits (CUP). The City of North Las Vegas has both CUPs and Special Use Permits (SUP). SUPs require approval by the Planning Commission, while CUPs only require an administrative review. With approval of our current zoning ordinance in 2011, the City converted many SUPs into CUPs. We found that many SUPs had a 90% approval rate and were appropriate with suitable buffering and conditions. This led us to create appropriate conditions for the individual uses and allowed the SUPs to be converted into CUPs. This has saved both developers and staff time, as a CUP has a two-week response, while an SUP is a minimum of six-weeks prior to the hearing at the Planning Commission.

Another change to the code in 2011 was the way in which waivers are reviewed. Previously, waivers were only considered as part of a Major Site Plan Review. The Site Plan Review was approved or denied by the Planning Commission without any compensation to the City or neighborhood, and it was typically a six-week process. With the separate Waiver application, only certain requests are considered (such as landscaping, buffers, or parking) and the applicant is required to provide a compensatory benefit to the City. Additionally, waivers may only be approved by the City Council after a recommendation by the Planning Commission. This change made waivers a 12-week process and additional costs were levied in the form of the compensating benefit. The new process has encouraged developers to comply with our design guidelines and development standards, as the time savings has been a stronger incentive than saving money on development costs. This has resulted in higher quality projects.

Since the municipal election in 2013 the Mayor and Council

have asked, "How can we speed development but still get what we need for the City?" One problem for developers is the development timeline. Eleven special use items required Planning Commission and City Council approval. When comparing SUPs for the previous ten-year period, City Council agreed with Planning Commission on 96% (50 out of 52) of SUPs. Within the City's redevelopment area all items required Planning Commission and Redevelopment Agency (City Council) approval. A similar study in the redevelopment area showed that the Redevelopment Agency agreed with the Planning Commission on 97% of all items (72 out of 74). Many special uses and every item within the redevelopment area took an additional six to eight weeks to obtain their development entitlements.

With this information, the Mayor and Council determined that the Planning Commissioners should be empowered and trusted to make the correct decision without additional review from Council. Now all CUPs (except casinos) and all items that previously required Planning Commission and Council/Redevelopment Agency review within the redevelopment area are reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission within six weeks (unless required by the Nevada Revised Statutes).

In 2015 and again in 2019, the Planning Commission passed resolutions that empowered planning staff to review Major Site Plan Reviews for industrial development (2015) and commercial development (2019). This allows major developments (above 60,000 square feet) to be treated in the same manner as smaller developments and are reviewed by staff without review or approval by the Planning Commission. There are, however, some caveats: the site plan must comply with the development standards and design guidelines and be located in the proper zoning district. If the site plan does not comply or requires a waiver, the 12-week waiver process with a compensatory benefit is added. To date, every developer has chosen to comply with our development codes and saved themselves three months of development time. This has resulted in positive industrial growth for the community without the waivers that previously may have been considered.

In 2017, we also began self-certification of building plans. This is led by our Building Safety Division but also includes planning review and civil plan review from the Public Works Department. The self-certification process allows an approved architect and engineer to certify that their plans are compliant with all building codes and development codes. The certified plans are subject to spot checks and audits, but the building permit may be obtained within four days of initial submittal. During 2019, the self-certification process created 29 projects with 3,963,691 square feet and a valuation of \$151,882,818 for the City.

These changes have afforded CNLV staff more power and responsibility. The Council's and Commission's trust in staff to make decisions that will improve the city has provided benefits to developers, staff, and the city as a whole. 

Robert Eastman, AICP, is the Planning and Zoning Manager for the City of North Las Vegas.

NEVADA PLANNER

The *Nevada Planner* is a publication of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association, with a circulation of approximately 300 Chapter members, members of APA leadership, and Chapter Presidents. It is published three times per year.

ARTICLES

To submit articles, letters, announcements, events, or photos, please contact Greg Toth, Editor, at greg.toth@cityofhenderson.com. The next issue is planned for this winter.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The Nevada Chapter receives all member mailing and email addresses from APA's National database. To change your mailing or email address, please log in to your account at www.planning.org and update your information there.

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