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Implementing sustainable development in the community

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Sustainable development practices are becoming the norm for local jurisdictions. Citizens and community leaders are calling on public policy makers to develop and implement programs and initiatives that conserve energy, reduce carbon emissions and protect natural resources, all while balancing economic and social opportunities.

Unfortunately, the desire to implement these efforts has outpaced our ability to develop standard practices, codes and a common set of accepted practices.

The Urban Land Institute San Diego/Tijuana District Council, the leading land use organization for real estate issues in our region, has partnered with the ULI Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use, which seeks to encourage and support excellence in land use decision making. The Rose Center helps provide public officials with access to information, best practices, peer networks and other resources. ULI and the Rose Center will be hosting a public policy workshop entitled, "Implementing Sustainable Development in Your Community -- A Workshop for Local Public Officials." The two-day workshop will be held on May 19-20 at the New School of Architecture and Design in downtown San Diego.

The workshop will provide tools and strategies for local public officials to help them understand, implement and leverage more sustainable development practices in their communities. The workshop includes definitions, measurements, case studies and group exercises that focus on best practices and the most effective role that public officials can play in creating more sustainable communities while enhancing constituents' quality of life. Probably more importantly, ULI, as a real estate organization with both public and private sector members is well equipped to help define strategies that have real-world, business friendly approaches.

During the workshop attendees will learn new trends in sustainability programs and policies; emerging tools and best practices for sustainable development; lessons from successful programs for setting goals and measuring what matters; how private sector sustainable development can create public economic benefits; models for public/private leadership and collaboration; and barriers to sustainable development practices and ways to overcome them. Of greatest importance is likely the real world and private sector experiences that can be shared with our public sector partners.

The workshop will be taught by Charlie Long, principal with Berkeley-based Charles A. Long Properties LLC and will feature a wide range of distinguished panelists, including Carolina Gregor, SANDAG; John DeWald, John DeWald & Associates; Marisa Lundstedt, city of Chula Vista; and Devon Muto and Jeff Murphy, county of San Diego, just to name a few. The panelists will provide case-study examples of sustainable development in the region.

Locally, tremendous efforts are under way to protect and improve the important aspects of this region. The city of San Diego has a number of sustainable initiatives already in practice, including a recently announced and ambitious solar roof plan that will help residents finance solar panels on new and existing homes. In early 2008, the San Diego City Council unanimously approved a comprehensive update to the city's General Plan.

The plan sets out a long-range vision and policy framework for how the city should plan for projected growth and development, provide public services and maintain the qualities that define San Diego over the next 20 to 30 years. It represents a shift in focus from how to develop vacant land to how to design infill development and reinvest in existing communities.

Register online at ulisd.org.

Lydon is executive director and Pauker is chair of Urban Land Institute San Diego/Tijuana.