

ArtVULUPS

ART AS A VEHICLE TO UNDERSTAND LAND USE PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

APA
CA Inland Empire Section

Art as a Vehicle to Understand Land Use Planning and Sustainability

by Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP

Consider the following question: What would be the end result of a collaboration effort between planners and artists?

- a) The City Ugly Movement
- b) A "Forget About History" mural mitigation plan
- c) A Subway- Public Graffiti Art Program
- d) A collection of artwork conveying land use planning and sustainability concepts
- e) All the above

You can be sure that "e" is not the correct answer and by process of elimination the best possible choice is "d". It is also possible that this question may be included in a future planning certification examination... so go ahead and commit it to memory!

The reality is, planners and artists have historically worked together on many different fronts. The degree of collaboration has depended largely on vision, budget allocations and, of course, policies.

Monuments, public sculptures and murals are the most traditional and notorious landmarks associated with this mutual collaboration. In some instances it is also visible in certain buildings, particularly those erected during the City Beautiful Movement. What answer "d" represents is an opportunity to open up an avenue for constructive dialogue and collaboration in which artists take advantage of the planners' knowledge as a source of information, inspiration and critical thinking; and planners allow themselves to step outside of the box to see the planning profession through the artists' creative eyes.

Can you imagine a collection of artwork conveying land use planning and sustainability concepts? What would it look like? How would professionals in the two disciplines work together in the production? What subjects would they explore? How would the artwork be exhibited?

The answers to these questions lie beneath the project Art VULUPS (art as a vehicle to understand land use planning and sustainability), a project organized by members of the Inland Empire Section (IES/APA).



"Milieux" by the author

WHAT IS Art VULUPS?

Art VULUPS is the result of a simple formula: Planner + Artist= Artwork conveying a land use concept.

The premises of this formula are the beliefs that 1) land use planning literacy is an essential key towards achieving sustainability and, 2) the power of art can be used as a tool to disseminate planning and sustainability concepts in a creative and interesting way.

In the era of Wikipedia a proper definition would be: *"a collaborative project in which knowledge, creativity and artistic expressions are harnessed to promote sustainable land use development choices through curiosity and civic dialog engagement."*

COLLABORATIVE 1.0

Art VULUPS came into fruition on July 1, 2010 when a group of thirty planners and artists converged in the City of Riverside, CA, the "City of Arts and Innovation". They responded to an invitation to be part of a five-month journey of collaboration in the production of art based on land use planning and sustainability discussions. This distinguished group of individuals, known as "COLLABORATIVE 1.0" is made up of professional and emerging planners and artists. They include members of the American Institute of Certified Planners, planners in executive positions, recent graduate students of Cal Poly Pomona, educators, entrepreneurs, painters, photographers, installation artists and writers (some of the planners are also artists)! You may know some of them; they are:



Matt Burris AICP, LEED AP, sets the stage by addressing sustainability at the first gathering

Joe Berryhill
Stacy Burris
Lisa Cabrera
Melissa Culley
John Dingler
Rachael Dzikowski
Daniel Foster
Leora Lutz
Douglas McCulloh
Ruth Nolan
Nathaniel Osollo
John Romine
Sandra Rowe
Joshua Valencia
Selena Wilson

Matt Burris, AICP LEED AP
Ken Gutierrez, AICP
Mike Harrod
Kelly Hickler
John Earle Hildebrand III
Bob Johnson
Mitra Mehta-Cooper, AICP
Nelson Miller, AICP
Tom Oliver
Aaron Pfannestiel, AICP LEED AP
Carolyn Schutten
Mario Suarez, AICP
Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP
Virginia Viado
Grace Williams

This dedicated group volunteered their time, talents and resources to complete a collection of works based on the General Plan Elements. The City of Riverside's General Plan served as the point of departure. It includes the seven essential elements required under the California Government Code: 1) Land Use, 2) Circulation, 3) Housing, 4) Conservation, 5) Open Space, 6) Noise and 7) Public Safety. The additional Elements which reflect the City's vision and community goals were also addressed, they include Noise, Arts and Culture, Education, Public Facilities, Parks and Recreation; and Historic Preservation.

The Healthy Communities Element, being proposed at the County of Riverside, and the topics Vision and Jobs/Housing Balance were also discussed as part of this initial collaboration.

After various public gatherings, held during the Riverside Art Walk (every 1st Thursday of the month throughout downtown Riverside), the teams completed 15 intriguing and fascinating inaugural pieces.

THE COLLECTION

Art VULUPS emerged as a reaction to the exhibit entitled "*Sprawl: New Suburban Landscapes*" organized by the University of California Riverside in 2003. A group of artists presented several brilliant



"Vision" by Douglas McCulloh in collaboration with Bob Johnson

pieces condemning unsustainable development patterns, the planning and erection of bland built environments and the apparent uncontrolled land use decisions.

In contrast, the Collaborative 1.0 Collection reflects basic planning concepts essential to promote not only sustainability but also equity planning, as advocated by Norman Krumholz. In other words, this collection has been created as an empowerment tool for professional planners to promote sound land use development choices through education and public participation.

The content of each piece may not immediately reveal the concept, which may be buried under layers of allegory and metaphors. Curiosity is the first step in the learning process which stimulates the viewer to think and talk about planning. Once the channel of communication is open, the planner's role is to guide the discussion in an informative and imaginative manner, grounded in experience.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Now that the inaugural collection is completed, the leadership team has scheduled various activities at different venues to disseminate the collection and the concepts. For example, on November 4, 2010, Carolyn Schutten, Joe Berryhill, Leora Lutz and the author collaborated with staff from the Riverside Metropolitan Museum in the installation of a temporary outdoor interactive piece based on the Historic Preservation Element and a walking tour to Riverside's first Chinatown site.



Carolyn Schutten, and Kelly Hickler, Art VULUP's Outreach Coordinator and Education Liaison respectively.

The collection was recently exhibited at the Riverside Arts Project Gallery located in the Riverside Plaza and it will travel to the City of Palm Desert. Many other activities are being scheduled including a youth photography workshop lead by CA APA 2010 Media Award winner Douglas McCulloh and planners from the Inland Empire Section.

The team is currently working on tuning up a curriculum that accompanies the collection in an online format. All the materials are accessible to anyone interested in creatively using them in the promotion of land use planning and sustainability literacy.

A GIFT TO THE CALIFORNIA PLANNING FOUNDATION

One of the landmark milestones of this project will take place at the 2011 CCAPA Conference in Santa Barbara. All the members in attendance will not only have the opportunity to see the Collaborative 1.0 Collection, but also to bid on the works! Yes, all the works, including a CCAPA logo made out of legos (a



*CCAPA Lego Logo By John E.
Hildebrand III*

John E. Hildebrand III creation) will be on display and for purchase through the annual silent auction. This in-kind donation to the California Planning Foundation is a demonstration of altruism and the philanthropic nature of the Collaborative 1.0 participants.

To learn more about the project, the bios, upcoming events, news and to get involved please visit www.artvulups.org

Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP, is a contract Community Planner for the U.S. Marine Corps and an autodidact visual artist. He also serves as the Inland Empire Section's Historian and is the principal organizer of Art VULUPS. The City of Riverside and the Riverside Arts Council recently awarded the March 2011 "Arts Honoree of the Month" Award to the Inland Empire Section for the Art VULUPS effort.