

November 26, 2019

MEMO TO: Traci N. T. Fujita
Director of Council Services

F R O M: Alison Stewart
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SUBJECT: **BUILDING VOICES SYMPOSIUM, SEPTEMBER 30 AND
OCTOBER 1, 2019** (PAF 19-318)

I attended the Building Voices Symposium on September 30, 2019 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa School of Architecture, and October 1, 2019 at the Hawaii Convention Center. The symposium was organized by the University of Hawaii Community Design Center to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on affordable housing. Although most of the participants were student and professional architects and designers, they view their role as builders of communities – not just buildings – and take a holistic approach to their work. There was an emphasis on public interest projects and concern about environmental issues throughout most of the presentations and discussions. Overall, it was an insightful and inspiring exploration of affordable housing through the lens of architecture and design.

“Housing for All”

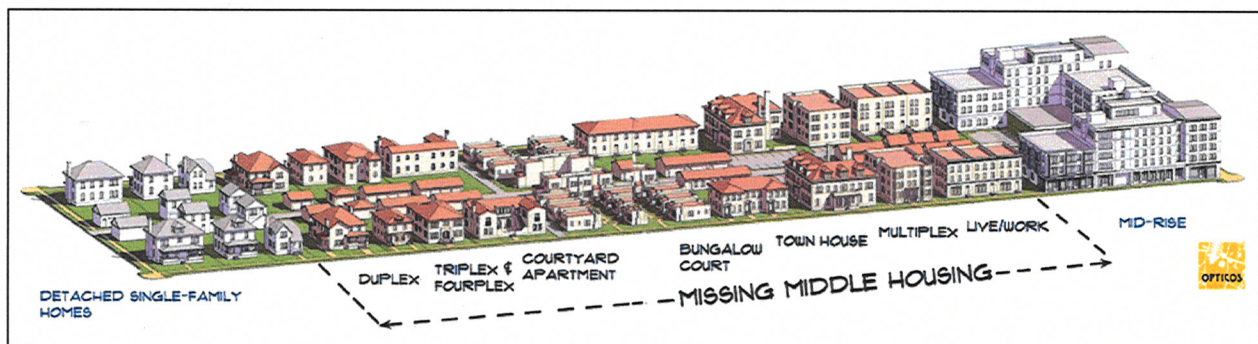
The September 30 keynote lecture was delivered by Christopher Hawthorne, formerly the architecture critic (who knew there was such a thing?!) for the *Los Angeles Times* and currently the Chief Design Officer (another eye-opening job title!) for the City of Los Angeles. His focus was on the metropolitan Los Angeles area, but many of the housing issues are relevant to Maui County.

For example, recent accessory dwelling unit (“ADU”) legislation in California has led to a marked increase in the number of permits issued – from less than 200 annually before 2017, to over 2,000 in 2017, doubling to 4,000 in 2018. Mr. Hawthorne said California also now allows two ADUs per lot, and there is legislation before the governor that would allow triplexes. The referenced triplex legislation, Assembly Bill 68, has since been signed into law as Chapter 655, Statutes of 2019.

Maui County Ordinance 4936, which took effect December 24, 2018, has the stated purpose of allowing “more accessory dwellings in order to increase the County's housing stock.” But perhaps the California ADU statutes can be useful models for additional State or County legislation here.

Other issues and ideas raised by Mr. Hawthorne include the following:

- Communities need more “missing middle” housing, such as triplex and fourplex buildings. This is the cheapest type of housing to build per unit; ten units can be built on a single half-acre lot. Also, a multifamily unit built on single-family lot has about the same carbon footprint as a single-family home, while serving many more people.



- A municipality's commitment to housing can in part be measured by the amount of resources provided for it. For example, the City of Los Angeles, with 4 million residents and 468 square miles, has about the same number of planners (450) as the City of Edmonton, Canada, which has a quarter of L.A.'s population and about half the square miles. As an aside, my calculations show the number of planners for Maui County (30) reflects ratios that are comparable to L.A., considering Maui County's population (167,000) and geographical size (728 square miles).
- L.A. passed Measure HHH in 2016, a \$1.2 billion bond to build 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless residents.
- Backyard Homes Project is a nonprofit partnership that provides a one-stop shop for financing, design, permitting, and construction of ADUs, in exchange for the units being rented to “Section 8” residents for at least five years.

- Mr. Hawthorne also noted the explosion of ADUs in L.A. has led to a renaissance how these units are designed.



Following the presentation, Mr. Hawthorne participated in a panel discussion with Carol Fukunaga, Honolulu City Councilmember; Marc Alexander, Executive Director of the Office of Housing, City and County of Honolulu; and Kevin Auger, Redevelopment Officer, Hawaii Public Housing Authority. The discussion included some notable comments:

- Kakaako was originally intended as a workforce housing community, but some of the projects in the area had only one year of affordability before reverting to market rate, with no buyback or resale restrictions.
- An idea for addressing homelessness and increasing housing affordability is inclusionary zoning for commercial developments – requiring commercial developers to build workforce housing.
- True accessibility for persons with disabilities is not just about design features in homes and public transportation. Sidewalks, streets, and neighborhoods all need to be connected and traversable for all users.

“Better Living through Density”

The October 1 keynote lecture by architect David Baker was focused on the benefits of high-density development and included the following highlights:

- Population density is inversely related to energy consumption. Manhattan has over 70,000 people per square mile and the nation’s lowest carbon footprint. Oklahoma City has less than 900 people per square mile, and each resident produces twice the carbon of a Manhattanite.
- The value of higher-density development can be seen in comparisons of dwelling units per acre (“DUPA”) and people per square mile (“PPM”) served by different types of housing:

| HOUSING TYPE | DUPA | PPM |
|--|------|---------|
| Single-family house subdivisions | 5 | 6,000 |
| Townhouse developments | 43 | 23,000 |
| Low rises (4-6 stories) with retail base | 155 | 83,000 |
| Mid rises (8-9 stories) | 223 | 119,000 |
| High rises | 300 | 160,000 |

- Higher density means residents drive less, plus it takes less “stuff” per person to make a denser environment, because there is lower cost and demand for sewer and water lines, electrical wires, land, roads, and other infrastructure.
- High density requires reduced parking spaces. Communities also should avoid isolating high-density areas away from transportation corridors.
- In places with increasing populations, the only alternative to higher density is increased sprawl. Sprawl is depicted below.



“Architecture as a Catalyst for Change”

Architect Marsha Maytum’s San Francisco firm, Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, has designed projects for an array of niche populations, including adults with autism, children undergoing cancer treatment, seniors with HIV/AIDS, foster youth aging out of the system, veterans living at a men’s shelter, and art students living in a college dormitory. There were several aspects of these projects that were applicable to any community with affordable-housing needs, including:

- The ability to achieve LEED certifications without a huge budget.
- Designing for the public interest and following “design code” principles to foster equitable communities, wellness, and resilience.
- Onsite support services to ease the burden on other social services and emergency services.
- Retail space to help offset operating costs.

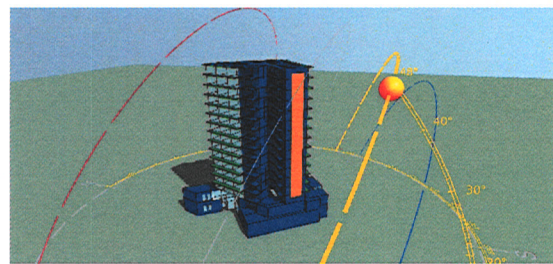
Ms. Maytum said to “just look around you” for potential sites to develop affordable housing, suggesting they are more prevalent than one might otherwise think. For example, Oakland’s Merritt Crossing apartment complex for

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low-income seniors, depicted below, was built near a busy freeway on a former gas-station lot.



Another example is Nohona Hale, a 16-story, 111-unit studio apartment project being built in Honolulu at the site of an underused 9,000-square-foot parking lot. Ironically, the final project will not include any resident parking, but there are bus, bike, rideshare, and, eventually, rail options for the residents. The designers at EAH Housing figured out how to add vertical solar panels to the side of the slim building, shown below.



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“Climate Change”

The final session elucidated connections between housing and climate change. Residential and commercial buildings account for 40 percent of greenhouse-gas emissions in the United States. By 2060, worldwide building size is expected to double, from 2.5 trillion to 5 trillion square feet. As Ms. Maytum put it, we will be rebuilding the world in the next 40 years.

“Between 1925-1955, we produced steel structures, high rises, and different types of energy – all with just T-squares, pencils, and slide rules,” she said. So given today’s technologies, Ms. Maytum and others in the architecture and design community are optimistic about the future of carbon-neutral building and achieving high performance through good design.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend this symposium. Please let me know if you have any questions.

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