

## April is American City Quality Month: *Better City Planning and Better Decisions Required for Better Quality Communities*

Better decision making, in addition to better quality city planning, is needed to resolve continuing public concerns about property tax increases, urban sprawl, loss of open space, lack of affordable housing, increasing traffic, and other community issues, according to National League of Cities President and Mayor of Indianapolis, Bart Peterson.

As Peterson announced April is American City Quality Month he said, "We can have better city planning, but unless we have better decision-making, city quality will not improve. More informed elected and appointed officials, legislators, planning commissioners and citizens are needed to participate in the city planning process. Otherwise opportunities will be lost. Now is the time for action. Decision-makers and citizens need to meet with city planners and learn about options for new visions for development and an improved quality of life."

The need and importance of quality city planning, decision-making, and action to address large and small city issues will be

discussed across the country during the annual, national program.

"Hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars can be saved annually with quality city planning and development," said Gerald Mylroie, AICP, Chairman of the American City Planning Directors' Council that co-sponsors the month long event. He said, "Quality planning and development creates center city and neighborhood pedestrian areas with commercial and residential uses, increases public transportation use, and clusters housing surrounded by protected recreation and open space. It balances environmental, social and economic issues, but must be environmentally sustainable.

To achieve this, it is critical to constantly raise public awareness about the status and future of America's cities and demonstrate the need and value of not just better city planning, but better decisions to achieve better communities." *(continued on page 2)*

## Commitment + Cooperation = Green

### *Las Vegas Goes Green*

By Tina Past, Public Information Officer; Planning & Development Department, City of Las Vegas

Las Vegas is known for many things but not for being green as in fully invested in green design and conservation practices. The city of Las Vegas made its commitment to sustainable development two years ago as a stated priority in its strategic plan. The city's strategic plan priorities are implemented and measured and are not empty, rhetorical statements. With City Manager Doug Selby's leadership, city staff developed and implemented multiple programs and resolutions advancing the city's commitment to sustainability including the Green Building Program.



The city's Green Building Program is a cooperative initiative with the local development community and green building oriented organizations. The city's program is promotional in nature, designed to encourage and showcase green building practices within the residential and commercial development sector. The program launched in early 2005 as a public outreach effort about green building principles and practices and the leading local and national green organizations.

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## Plambeck Chairs April 2007 American City Quality Month

Maury Plambeck, AICP, Director of the Department of Metropolitan Development for the City of Indianapolis, Indiana, is the Chairman of the April 2007 American City Quality Month program. Mr.

Plambeck has been working closely with Indianapolis Mayor and President of the National League of Cities, Bart Peterson, to raise public awareness about the status and future of America's cities and promote better city planning, decisions, design, development, management, and action to improve the



Maury Plambeck

quality of cities. This year's theme focuses on the need for better city planning and better decisions to achieve better quality communities.

Mr. Plambeck has served for more than five years as the director, focusing on downtown improvement, stronger code enforcement, more efficient delivery of *(continued on page 3)*

## ACQM Sponsors

There are several sponsors of the American City Quality Month. They include:

### National League of Cities

The National League of Cities, as a co-sponsor, is committed to American City Quality Month. The League is the country's oldest, largest and most representative organization serving municipal governments. Founded in 1924 as the American Municipal Association by ten state municipal leagues, today its direct members include 49 state municipal leagues and more than 1,400 communities of all sizes. Through the membership of the state municipal leagues, NLC represents more than 17,000 municipalities.

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## April is City Quality Month *(continued from page 1)*

“It is critical we continue to focus national attention on the need to plan for smart growth and achieve quality communities for our citizens,” said former National League of Cities President Charlie Lyons.

This year’s theme links themes from previous years, “Planning for Quality Communities” and “Planning for Smart Growth”. Also, it continues the focus of increasing awareness about the recommendations in a National League of Cities 2001 Futures Report titled “Building Quality Communities.” These include:

1. Clarify the local context and causes of problems in communities.
2. Apply your community’s vision and values when making decisions about land use.
3. Use your tools including city planning and targets in purposeful and strategic ways to influence land use patterns.

“It is time to think in new ways about the decisions we make regarding land use and infrastructure investments, and about how those decisions reflect our community values

and our vision for the future. It is time to figure out once and for all how we can build quality communities by choice and not by chance,” said former National League of Cities President Karen Anderson.

According to Maury Plambeck, AICP, Director of the Department of Metropolitan Development for Indianapolis, and Chairman of the month’s activities, cities across America will discuss how quality city planning and smart growth will improve cities, as well as protect them if decision-makers and citizens can agree. Urban sprawl, the opposite of smart growth, continues to be identified by citizens as one of America’s priority concerns.

During April, cities across America are conducting public meetings; adopting proclamations; and holding media events, exhibits and “teach-ins” at local schools. Local city planners and officials are talking about changing demographics, local economic and social issues, land use for

development and conservation, smart growth concepts, setting new goals, preparing plans, and adopting programs and budgets to implement the plans. All of these initiatives are aimed at achieving better quality communities.

The National League of Cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, American City Planning Directors’ Council, and American City Quality Foundation have designated April as American City Quality Month. Other sponsors include Urban Land Institute, National Building Museum, and Partners for Livable Communities. The purpose is to annually focus national and local public attention on the status and future of America’s cities, and to promote better quality city planning, decisions, design, development, management, and action to improve cities.

For more information, see [www.cityquality.org](http://www.cityquality.org), [www.cityplanningdirectors.org](http://www.cityplanningdirectors.org), or contact American City Planning Directors’ Council at ACQF@aol.com.

## City Quality Month Sponsors *(continued from page 1)*

**The United States Conference of Mayors**  
The United States Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities of 30,000 or more. There are well over 1,150 such cities in the country today; each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor. The Conference of Mayors was established in 1932 as a service to the Mayors and citizens of America’s principal cities. Throughout its history, the Conference of Mayors has taken the lead in calling national attention to the problems and the potential of urban America. It has carried the message of cities to every President and every Congress.

### **American City Planning Directors’ Council**

American City Planning Directors’ Council is a national organization of the city planning directors of America’s larger cities within each state. The purpose is to improve the quality of America’s cities by promoting better city planning and development, exchanging information, and helping elected officials and citizens make better decisions to improve the quality of America’s cities and promote city planning. The Council is underwritten by the American City Quality Foundation. American City Quality Foundation

American City Quality Foundation, Inc (ACQF) was founded in 1995, by city planning directors and colleagues to improve the quality of America’s cities. Also, ACQF works to raise public awareness about the status and future of our cities and promote better city planning, design, development, management and action to improve cities. Members include city planning directors across America as well as prior directors, colleagues and other public and private sector business and civic leaders.

### **Urban Land Institute**

Established in 1936, the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit educational and research institute that studies land use and real estate development policy and practice. Today ULI had approximately 15,000 members in 52 countries, representing more than 26 disciplines in the public and private sectors including developers, public officials, investors, property owners, consultants, architects, brokers and lenders.

### **National Building Museum**

Created by an act of Congress, the National Building Museum is America’s premier cultural institution dedicated to exploring and celebrating architecture, design, engineering, construction, and urban

planning. Through engaging exhibitions and education programs – including innovative curricula for school children and stimulating programs for adults – the Museum is the forum for exchanging ideas and information about such topical issues as managing suburban growth, preserving landmarks and communities, and revitalizing urban centers.

### **Partners for Livable Communities**

Partners for Livable Communities is a nonprofit, Washington, D.C. based coalition of 1,000 organizations concerned with the economic health, quality of life and social equity of communities.

American City Quality Month is a unique opportunity to raise public awareness about the status and future of America’s cities. It is a unique opportunity to continually promote better city planning, design, development, management and action to improve cities; make cities better places to live, work and play. There is a role for everyone and great opportunity to develop cities that represent the best of America.

For further information, call the American City Planning Directors’ Council or American City Quality Foundation office at 207-712-6333 or send e-mail to ACQF @ aol.com

## Plambeck Chairs ACQM *(continued from page 1)*

city services, and the redevelopment of vacant and dilapidated properties. He also is a strong supporter of targeted economic development efforts for neighborhoods that need it most, increasing the city's affordable housing options, and continuing development in thriving Downtown Indianapolis.

Plambeck has over 20 years of experience as a city planner. Before joining the City of Indianapolis, he worked as a senior planner for the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he initiated a rewrite of the zoning ordinances and helped found Wyoming's first local historic preservation program.

Plambeck received a bachelor's degree in architectural studies in 1979 and his master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Nebraska.

## "Green" Las Vegas

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Meanwhile, staff from the Planning and Development Department immediately sought community partnerships to build cooperation and endorsement for the program. With the oversight of Las Vegas' Planning and Development Director Margo Wheeler, Deputy Director Tom Perrigo, AICP, *(shown to the right)* led the department's effort and developed a winning strategy enlisting the savvy, expertise and success of the Southern Nevada Homebuilders Association (SNHBA).



It was known that the SNHBA was developing a green building program in partnership with the Green Building Initiative (GBI) that would address the unique climatic conditions and natural resource constraints of the high desert. Would they consider allowing the city to use their program as a foundation of their city's residential green building program? Wouldn't all, the city and its residents, the environment, the homeowners, and the homebuilders, be served best if the green standards and criteria established by the professionals were employed? All agreed and the city partnered with the Green Building Partnership formed by the SNHBA and GBI.

As Mayor Peterson announced April to be American City Quality month, he said, "We can have better city planning, but unless we have better decision-making, city quality will not improve. More informed elected and appointed officials, legislators, planning commissioners and citizens are needed to participate in the city planning process. Otherwise opportunities will be lost. Now is the time for action. Decision-makers and citizens need to meet with city planners and learn about options for new visions for development and an improved quality of life."

Several topics will be discussed across the country during the annual, national program that is sponsored by the National League of Cities, US Conference of

Mayors, American City Planning Directors' Council, the American City Quality Foundation and others. Focus for discussion this year is the need for quality city planning, decision making and action in big and small cities alike.

According to Plambeck, cities across America will use American City Quality Month to discuss how quality city planning and smart growth will improve cities, as well as protect them if decision-makers and citizens can agree. Urban sprawl, the opposite of smart growth, continues to be identified by citizens as one of America's biggest concerns.

**A new home built in the city of Las Vegas by one of the partnership's builders qualifies as a green building if it meets the following requirements:**

- Resource efficiency through the use of recycled and renewable materials and supplies, as well as stringent waste management practices.
- Energy efficiency at a level 15% greater than required by city codes.
- Water efficiency standards that meet or exceed the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Water Smart Home program standards.
- Indoor environmental quality through enhanced ventilation and moisture management.
- Enhanced homeowner education by the builder on sustainable living including recycling, transit, household maintenance and resource conservation.
- Private inspectors will certify that the new homes meet these requirements.

The city of Las Vegas and the Green Building Partnership (SNHBA & GBI) introduced their residential programs simultaneously in October 2006. The city's program provides certification, listing on city website and literature, and promotional display items for the homes meeting the Green Building Partnership's requirements and verification. The City Council adopted its program by resolution with members of

the Green Building Partnership presenting before them. An integrative media campaign was developed to include public communications, media relations, public outreach and community events. All three entities, the city, SNHBA and GBI received numerous media inquiries and stories in local and regional print and broadcast media. But most important, buyers of new houses have a clear identifier that lets them know they are considering a "green" home.

The city program's next step is to add commercial development elements. Already, the first privately developed commercial office building to be LEED certified in Nevada will be in the city of Las Vegas. The award winning LEED certified Lied Animal Campus is operational and the Springs Preserve, expected to receive international acclaim, is under construction. By resolution, the city has committed that new city facilities will be at least certified LEED Silver or its equivalent.



*Planners and leading residential and water resources executives launched the city of Las Vegas Green Building Program. Pictured left to right are: Tom Perrigo, AICP (Las Vegas Planning & Development Dept.), Carrie Lee and Doug Bennett (Southern Nevada Water Authority), Connie Suckling, Irene Porter, and Monica Caruso (Southern Nevada Home Builders Association), and Larry Simon (Pardee Homes).*

## St. Louis Wins International Urban Renewal Award *by Rollin Stanley, Planning Director, City of St. Louis*

The City of St. Louis has won the 2006 World Leadership Award in the category of Urban Renewal. The City was short listed along with Manchester, Kolkatta and Kansas City. Mayor Francis Slay and Planning Director Rollin Stanley, made the presentation in London England to a panel of judges who then made the decision on which submission

best exemplified a coordinated strategy for overcoming urban blight.

The World Leadership Awards cover several categories from architecture to environmental policy. The awards are intended to showcase urban examples that can be a model for cities around the world. This year's urban renewal category was the most competitive category.

The St. Louis presentation included illustrating the issues they are overcoming as well as measures to show what progress has been made. Mayor Slay emphasized the cities efforts are not "just bricks and mortar". The judges were impressed with the comprehensive nature of the renewal strategy, including issues like health, education and recreation in the strategy to rebuild neighborhoods.

With a growing population after 45 years of decline, with major construction projects from the new baseball stadium and adjacent mixed use development, the Mayor had a positive story to tell. The coordinated application of incentives and the use of city owned property have resulted in a booming downtown loft market with retail activity growing at rates unseen in decades.

In accepting the award the Mayor noted the benefits of sharing information with cities around the globe and that we can all learn from each other. Winning cities included Stuttgart, Lima and Krakow among others. Five American cities were finalists. Albuquerque was the other U.S. city to take home an award in the category of "public utilities".



*Mayor Francis Slay & Planning Director Rollin Stanley accepting the World Leadership Award for Urban Renewal in London*

### Newsletter Production

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The *American City Quality News* is published by the American City Quality Foundation as an information source for city and civic leader planners. City profiles, plans and activities promoting American City Quality are especially solicited. Articles, photographs or announcements for publication are requested to be sent to: American City Quality Foundation, Inc., P. O. Box 10363, Portland, Maine 04104; 207.712-6333; e-mail address: ACQF@aol.com



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