

Monday, April 24, 2017

Series of events to address housing shortage

By Mark Armao

Building on the discussion of how to accommodate the city's future housing needs, the Housing San Diego's Future alliance will host events this year bringing various stakeholders together to develop possible solutions.

Organizations, including the San Diego Architectural Foundation, the American Institute of Architects San Diego, Housing You Matters and CityAge, will host various conferences, workshops and presentations to explore ways to house the region's population, which SANDAG projects will increase by 1 million by 2050.

"It's critical now for thought leaders and practitioners to synergize their ideas and work together," said Mary Lydon, executive director of Housing You Matters, a local coalition that aims to address the region's housing needs. "These events will bring together community members, organizations, professionals and important stakeholders as a meeting of the minds to identify and envision real solutions."

The first event of the program is CityAge: Build the Future, which begins on Tuesday. The two-day conference is part of an international program that brings civic, business and academic leaders together to discuss ways for a city to catalyze growth and compete in the global economy.

Sessions will highlight topics including "Brands and the Business of City Building," "Partnerships to Build the Future City," and "The Business of Housing."

Speakers will include Mayor Kevin Faulconer; San Diego Regional Chamber president and CEO Jerry Sanders; and Mark Cafferty, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp.

The event will be held at the San Diego Central Library.

The American Institute of Architects San Diego is holding workshops leading up to its Housing the Next 1 Million Planning & Design Charrette on November 4 and 5.

The event will feature presentations from 12 multidisciplinary teams of architects, planners, engineers, developers, builders, community planning-group representatives, students and faculty who will introduce ideas to increase San Diego's housing stock.

"If we're going to change San Diego, and we're going to have another million people, then everybody deserves an opportunity to help shape that future," said Phil Bona, president of AIA San Diego.

During several workshops and meetings, the teams—one for each of the nine city council districts and North County, East County and South County—will take a fine-grained approach to adding housing within neighborhoods SANDAG has identified as smart growth areas.

To plan for the additional 400,000 housing units that SANDAG projects will be needed to accommodate the region's population in 2050, the teams will target sites that are conducive to urban infill and brownfield redevelopment.

"We can always sprawl, but we don't want to do that—we don't need to do that," Bona said. "There are other moves we can make and that's what we want to focus on."

With suggestions about where to put housing, the teams will also make recommendations on changes to the land-use code that would foster smart growth. These will likely include policies that would allow for residential units to be built alongside light industrial uses and would encourage the development of alternative housing forms such as granny flats, which are small, detached units built on residential properties.

After the teams' ideas are "thrown in a blender," each will develop presentations—complete with graphic representations—that will be revealed to the public at the culminating event in the fall.

On June 6, the San Diego Architectural Foundation will host Context Vol. 4, which will feature exhibits and lectures focusing on the importance of design in creating a denser, more affordable city.

SDAF's fourth annual Context forum, Neighborhoods 2027, will comprise a free public event with exhibits, films and guest speakers, and a ticket-only reception and panel discussion.

"We're having a ten-year look-ahead as to what neighborhoods might look like if we actually got busy thinking about them and planning them now," said SDAF vice president Margit Whitlock.

The event, which will be held at greenACRE Campus Pointe, will highlight studio work by design students from NewSchool of Architecture + Design, Woodbury University, USD, UCSD and others.

Vishaan Chakabarti, author of "A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America," will deliver the keynote address.

"If we keep talking about it from all these different angles, it might just sink in," Whitlock said. "As long as we're aware and we have a common mission, we can do it together."

Housing You Matters, in partnership with California Forward, will host the 2017 California Economic Summit in mid-November. During the conference, leaders from the public, private and civic sectors will develop a shared economic agenda to "expand prosperity for all," according to a release.

Bona said the ongoing discourse regarding San Diego's housing needs is imperative if city leaders want to cultivate a livable, affordable environment for future generations.

"We're no longer going to build like we've been building for the last hundred years," Bona said. "We're going to begin to build and design for the next hundred years."

mark_armao@sdtranscript.com