

Report on the SCAG Energy and Environment Committee

Submitted by Britt Huff/ Mayor, City of Rolling Hills Estates

The SCAG Energy and Environment Committee met on Thursday, February 2, 2023

Several interesting informational items were presented, the first by a Brownfields Expert Panel. Brownfields are often found on polluting land uses such as industrial facilities, and are often located along commercial corridors, in industrial areas, or within underinvested communities. Brownfield sites can offer a significant opportunity for redevelopment and new housing; however remediation and cleanup efforts can be one of the most significant challenges to realizing redevelopment goals. Navigating technical and financial aspects of cleanup, as well as agency approvals increases the costs of redevelopment and requires technical knowledge and expertise as well as staff resources and upfront funding. Further, in the absence of intentional planning efforts, the underlying zoning might not permit for residential uses by-right on these sites.

Brownfield opportunity sites are found in a variety of community contexts. Local and community-based organizations are often highly invested in seeing the change and enhancement of abandoned sites, such as brownfields, but these groups often do not have the capacity or technical resources to initiate or participate in the brownfields redevelopment process. Redevelopment of brownfields, especially in underinvested areas should be viewed as opportunities to engage local community stakeholders and provide community benefits. Creating new residential development on these sites may require design guidelines to respond to the surrounding urban fabric (for example, to buffer residents from nuisance factors such as traffic and noise or to create appropriate scale and massing of new development that respects and enhances the existing urban fabric). Regulatory frameworks or programs that provide additional development incentives to offset costs from site cleanup efforts can make redevelopment opportunities more financially viable and attractive for private capital. At the February 2 meeting SCAG convened a panel of experts to dive into these issues further. To review the power-point log onto SCAG website/Environmental Committee.

Another helpful presentation was on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA): Climate Resilience Funding Opportunities, which make historic investments in climate, transportation, water, energy, and various other issues. Both bills were reviewed to highlight the various opportunities for local governments to secure grant funding for energy efficiency, water, and climate resilience. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) invests in the nation's infrastructure, including funding for roads and bridges, rail, transit, ports, airports, electric grid, water systems, and broadband, among other priorities. The BIL includes several authorizing bills, including the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act of 2021 (S.1931), Surface Transportation Investment Act (S. 2016), Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act (S. 914) and the Energy Infrastructure Act (S. 2377), among others. The BIL will allocate an estimated \$1.2 trillion in total funding over ten years, including \$550 billion in new spending during the law's first five years, divided between improving the surface-transportation network (\$284 billion) and society's core infrastructure (\$266 billion).