Performance or prescription?  
Energy policy-making in California:  
A quiet revolution in architecture  
By Jonathan Kirsch  
L.A. ARCHITECT  

A quiet revolution in energy policy is proceeding in California. It is taking place in Sacramento, and the architectural profession is playing a crucial role in the making of it. 

Today, the controversies are philosophical. The prescriptive versus the performance approach. Tomorrow, these debates may produce a style of architecture very different from what we have known in Southern California for the past 40 years. 
The key question is whether the residents of this state will be permitted to implement their own making decisions — or prescriptive standards, which govern the kinds and quantities of building materials allowed by the architect. 
The California legislature has enacted The 20 percent rule: "The 20 percent rule" means that any building material — whether concrete, wood, aluminum, glass, or any other material — that does not pass a test of energy conservation standards will not be allowed in the building. 

This rule has been in effect throughout the state, the basic placing area for a building of three stories or less is limited to 20 percent of the gross floor area, the building may not be above 5 stories, the building may not be above 20 feet in height, and the building may not be above a certain amount of area. 

The result of the agency's proceeding was the promulgation of a highly technical document establishing the prescribed thermal design standards and energy use requirements for residential buildings. But the story of this rule is not finished. It has earned the nickname of "the most controversial building code in the country". 

The purpose of this article is to inform the readers of the architectural profession and other concerned professions about the most controversial element — the Energy Conservation Bill for New Residential Buildings. 

The purpose of the Energy Conservation Bill for New Residential Buildings (HCD) is to establish a set of prescriptive standards for new residential buildings. The bill was introduced in the California State Assembly on June 10, 1970 by Assemblyman Michael O'Sullivan, AIA, to under­take a "mechanical" or prescriptive approach to the implementation of the energy conservation standards.
The decline of construction over crisis presents opportunities as quarters this past January concluded that the situation is indeed bad, but the current economic crisis presents opportunities as well as problems to the architectural profession. The opportunities are represented by the special services that architects can be called upon to perform, even though they may be called upon to perform these services outside of their particular state. Among these expanded services is graphic design.

For Chapter member Lester Wertheimer, graphic design has been a long-term hobby. "What amazes me," he said, "is that more architects have not become involved in graphic design. We are trained to operate in a visual world, and two-dimensional graphic design is very much a part of that world. An architect who specializes in a particular building would be ignored by an unattractive sign. He who sees months of work destroyed by an unattractive logo would blame no one but himself."

Illustrated below are several examples of Wertheimer's graphic work produced over the past few years.

The trade is joined: Performance or prescription?

The corollary to Senator Alquist's 1972 bill on residential buildings is SB 144, the Architectural Energy Insu­lation Bill for Non-Residential Buildings. Enacted in 1974, the bill mandates HCD to establish energy conservation standards based on energy consumption per square foot of floor area. Although the standards will be more sophisticated and technologically advanced for residential buildings, the debate over performance vs. prescription continues.

The agency procedure for evaluating and promulgating standards for non-residential buildings is similar to the process carried out earlier this year by HCD and its Advisory Committees for residential buildings. But there will be a distinct difference in the participation in the architectural and legal communities, according to the consultant managing the standard-making process was minimal. Before the Bicentennial Committee, Wertheimer was working on the site for a graphic design project but the file became a larger number of studies. "Since we are all interested in a more attractive environment," he explained, "it is important to get involved in all phases of design, wherever the opportunities exist. The architect who sees months of work destroyed by an unattractive sign on his well-designed structural profession. The opportunities exist. The architect who sees months of work destroyed by an unattractive sign on his well-designed

To perform or prescribe

CAIA Energy Task Force Chairman Philip Fleury, FAIA, has been working for the past six months to ensure that the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the energy profession will be expected to contribute to the full extent of their experience and knowledge in the development of the new standards. Fleury and his colleagues are currently working on the development of standards for residential buildings, which will be the first set of standards to be proposed by the AIA. Fleury and his colleagues are currently working on the development of standards for residential buildings, which will be the first set of standards to be proposed by the AIA.

The American Institute of Architects has long supported the principles of energy conservation and energy planning as an essential part of architectural education. The AIA has been a leader in the development of energy conservation standards for commercial buildings, and the AIA's efforts in this area have been recognized by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), which has adopted the AIA's energy conservation standards as guidelines for the design of buildings.

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Planning for a humane environment has always been an umbrella for growth. E.H. Pottenger, co-founder of Interactive Planning, said it this way:

Each man is his own world's expert.
On what he values.
If you would deal with him
Learn to hear him.
For, if you hear him,
You both are more than
"you were yesterday.
The first role of the architect is to listen to
and to hear them well.

Information
And good intentions
Are both
Parsimonious.
And, as information spoils,
It spoils intentions.
For who would act
On what was used to be
The second role of the architect
Is to live with his
client's here-and-now.

Planning is the discovery
Of what you didn't want to do.
As you face what must be done
What can be.
The third role of the architect
Is to set a
Stage that permits the
Successful unfolding
And clarification of goals as each
New facet of what
Must be encountered and
Evolve into what can be.

Again you will say a Chapter Committee was "remiss".
Let’s see again what is being
said.
The SCAIA is on the
Chapter, working
to get the
new standards
digestible before issue;
And the Chapter Building Planning
Committee, as chairman of the
CCAIA Building
Codes Committee, has spent many
hours in public meetings
considering these matters
in various communities.
Half of these
were held right here in
Los Angeles, and of which the
Architects to get additional educa-
tion.

The public and the profession
would both be served if we spoke
out with clarity. If we don’t speak
out, others will as well qualified
content to fill the vacuum that
exists.

The humane environment man-
tests itself as the aesthetic expres-
so-called " ignorance like yours.
Read your letter... failure to inform.
May I say, L.A. member,
A Chapter Committee has been
asked.
You probably have a right to
be "irritated"; but after all,
ignorance isn’t yours.
I even reached you.

The public, you say that a
Chapter Committee is "remiss".
Other people have said a
lot in the past.
Is anyone "remiss"?
The City of Los Angeles was
confronted with the need to
present evidence to the
State Energy Conservation
Act, senate bill 277, but not for a
long time.
I will get you the facts.

Let’s see. The State Act was being
conceived as late as February
and 20 public hearings before
the act was composed.

And one year before the
Cities were made aware of
the CCAIA Green Sheets, which you
were alerted to this attention and the
hearings were held.
The State Act was published in the
City’s Bulletin.

And Industry representatives called
outrage and alarm — which you
didn’t hear, or ignored?

The State Act was composed of
10,000 words, with 200 public
hearings before the bill was
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hearings were held. 
Michael F. Ross of Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall has been accepted as a corporate member of the Southern California Chapter AIA. Ross is a member of the L.A. ARCHITECT Editorial Board and contributes frequently to these pages.

Winning entries in the 1975 Chap­ter Photography Competition will be on display at the Chapter office throughout the month of June. Entrants whose photographs are not on display may pick them up at the Chapter office.

Bob Clark, AIA, Larry Davidson, AIA, Mario Kow, AIA, and Gin Wong, FAIA, emerged as winners of the Producers’ Council AIA Annual Golf Day at the California Country Club last month. They will go on to meet the winners of a similar competition in Northern California at the CCAIA confer­ence in October.

The 2106th meeting of the SCC/ AIA Board of Directors (April 1, 1975): The recommendation of the Membership Review Committee was unanimously approved and the following applicants for mem­bership were approved: Corporate: Gordon D. Davis, Robert L. Timmerman, Associate; Gail Babnew, Richard Berry, Dann Timmerman; Individuals: Michael Elliott, Maria Baker, Robert A. Brown, Robert L. Brown. The recommendation of the Membership Review Committee was unanimously approved and the following applicants for mem­bership were approved: Corporate: Gordon D. Davis, Robert L. Timmerman, Associate; Gail Babnew, Richard Berry, Dann Timmerman; Individuals: Michael Elliott, Maria Baker, Robert A. Brown, Robert L. Brown.

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AIA Members’ Annual Spring Meeting

The AIA members’ Annual Spring Meeting was held on March 28, 1975, at the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel. The meeting was attended by 850 architects. The Spring Trip, which was held on May 15, 1975, was sponsored by the Plastering Information Bureau and the AIA Chapter of Northern California.

The Chapter officers were installed on April 8, 1975, at a meeting held in the offices of the Plastering Information Bureau in Los Angeles. The new officers are: President—Robert A. Brown; Vice President—Robert L. Brown; Secretary—Robert A. Brown; and Treasurer—Gail Babnew.

The Plastering Information Bureau has been requested by the City of Simi Valley to submit master plan proposals for the city’s civic center; there was a general con­sensus that the city’s proposal amounted to a design competi­tion, and it was agreed that the firms should be notified of a re­view of the situation by the Ethics and Practice Committee. Landscape architect Howard Troiler requested help from the Board in the case of the foundering City Hall East Mall, which is not being developed due to lack of interest on the part of several city departments in charge of the pro­ject. WAL Vice President Mrs. Edgar (Ann) Szanto reported on the WAL Spring fundraiser at Sol­arc, the Rap Sessions, and the October Tour under the direction of Carol New West. Mrs. Szanto also reported that the WAL is working with Director Joseph Rallia on their new Environmental Awareness project. The meeting concluded with discussion of a letter from USC, which invited the Chapter to meet with the candi­dates for the deanship of the Department of Architecture and Fine Arts.

“Federal Agency Budget Survey” is a handbook published by the AIA’s Government Affairs Depart­ment and available to members at the Chapter office — outlines the procedures for participating in the contract­ing and details the agencies which have money to spend on construction, how much they have to spend, and who to contact within the agency. A limited number of handbooks are available directly from the Government Affairs Department’s Federal Agency Liai­son section at headquarters.

AIA Associates are invited to parti­cipate in a series of meetings and seminars to be held in Dubu, Director of Technical Pro­grams. Upcoming subjects include “Prefab — The Forest City Dillon System” by Herb Crump at DWP Auditorium on July 8, 1975, from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. and an orien­tation tour of Lockhead Plant 42 (Palmdale) on September 13, 1975. A fee of $1.00 is charged to mem­bers and $2.00 to non-members. Contact Marc Dubin for further information.

A. Quincy Jones, FAIA, was named Dean of the University of Southern California’s School of Architecture and Fine Arts, Jones, who will take office on July 1, has been president of his own archi­tectural office for 30 years and will continue in a design capacity with his firm. Jones is currently the architect for the Annenberg School of Communications build­ing on the USC campus and is completing an addition to his original design of the Faculty Center build­ing. Jones succeeds interim dean Ralph L. Knowles, who will remain on the USC faculty.

Fortune Magazine has called architecture the “tongue-­lided” profession. The Architects Trust­masters Club, a committee of the SCC/AIA, is dedicated to chang­ing that image. The Architects Club recently held a joint meeting with the Toastmasters Club from the Department of Water Re­sources. Speeches delivered at the meeting included: “The History of Architecture in Cal­ifornia Architecture,” “How to Order a Good Restaurant,” and “What We Have Here is a Lack of Communication.” The latter was a humorous speech about a New Yorker’s difficulties communicating with Californians. The benefits derived from effective communication are open to all AIA members. Please contact Marc Dubin (evenings, 892-1234) for further information.

In these times of rampant infla­tion, how much money do you have money to spend for construc­tion? With the cost of living going up, many owners find it difficult to afford means to communicate with Californians. The benefits derived from effective communication are open to all AIA members. Please contact Marc Dubin (evenings, 892-1234) for further information.

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