Earlier last month, Alison Martino’s phone was ringing off the hook. The social media doyenne of the Facebook group Vintage Los Angeles, a photo-driven celebration of iconic Los Angeles places and people, was commemorating with Googie architecture enthusiasts, who just learned that their beloved Norms...
Infinite Possibilities

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What do Aaron Betsky, Martin Pedersen, Steven Bungler, and Los Angeles developer Geoff Palmer have in common?

Betsky, Pedersen, and Bungler have recently been arguing in Architect Magazine and The New York Times over (among other things) whether architects should dictate their own path or follow the less effete road of consumer demand. In my opinion both approaches are valid—one doesn’t trump the other—and there is plenty of room for both radical and client-centered architecture. But neither will be effective if architects remain shut out of too much work.

This is the missing piece that architects need to address in order to fight over their increasingly small piece of the pie. It’s the constant stream of projects built in this country without competent architects, like housing developments, retail and commercial centers, gas stations, and, yes, faux Italianate monstrosities from the likes of Geoff Palmer, who has concocted an empire from the vacuum created in a city, and a country that has gotten used to mediocrity.

“Architecture for the masses,” as the modernists liked to call it, has been largely ceded to corporate developers, who are by their nature large, risk-averse, and sometimes leave architects out of the equation altogether. Of course they sometimes hire top architects, and many are well-intentioned, but since they, by nature, need to generate high profits they more often resort to a pro forma model, where building envelopes, plans, and programs look similar everywhere, with a few flourishes thrown in to cater to locality. This is the 98 percent of work that Frank Gehry recently called “pure shit.”

The Independent’s Jay Merrick summed this situation up superbly: “Architects serve commercial forces that are generally uninterested in the complex qualities of place, aesthetics, and history.”

After following this field for well more than a decade I’m high on the talent and sophistication of most architects. I’m less sanguine about the system and the clients that they work (or in many cases don’t work) under. All have drastically different priorities.

This wasn’t always the case. Sophisticated architects were once regularly commissioned by enlightened developers to design excellent housing developments, bowling alleys, offices, and coffee shops (like the beloved Norms Norm, which Angelinos recently fought to save). They weren’t just building houses for the rich, museums for wealthy institutions, and headquarters for the wealthiest and trendiest. They worked for everybody, and they brought style and livability to everyone’s lives. Now the type of developer who commissioned this work struggles on the fringe (burdened by unimaginative banks and corporate-favoring regulations), leaving architects to largely fend for themselves.

The AIA’s efforts to give architects a voice through well-produced commercials is laudable, and helps give them a face in the public consciousness. But dispassionate corporate clients aren’t moved by touching stories. We can best demonstrate the value of architecture through effective case studies, through the language of hard numbers and money, and by hammering home what people really want—quality. Only then can we return architecture to the masses.

It’s the Client, Stupid

“Hsieh likes that it’s something unique tower and a unique engineering feat,” said Rosenberg. “Hsieh likes that it’s something he, alone, can call his own, and never has to share. ‘It’s a true live-work revolution. ‘The interesting idea between contemporary commuting culture and architecture is生于澳门，自由之身。’”

“Rosenberg is uncertain. (Downtown Las Vegas) should do what works best for them, but it would improve air and water quality, reduce mortgage foreclosures and related crime, and could potentially be a large, full-scale development in making these connections. The plan would not just diversify the area’s economy and provide fresh local produce, but it would improve air and water quality, add local income, and provide public health.

“It allows us to look at this land in a totally different way,” said Samson.
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COLOR WARS

Employing bright facade colors is sometimes met with joy and other times with disdain. But rarely is it met with a lawsuit. The Markes, architect Christopher Coe’s red-gridded apartment complex in Santa Ana, is being sued by Orange County developer Lakeside Partners Hutton for violating aesthetic restrictions in its 46-acre Hutton Centre development.

According to the suit filed last month in Orange County Superior Court, Lyon Communities, the owners of the 300-unit Markes, “ignored the architectural committee’s request” to provide a new palette for the building by painting the facade “with the disapproved red color.” Lyon submitted their plans to the committee “in or about 2013,” and said that the committee “approved four of the five proposed colors,” but they “rejected the fifth color.”

“The color is fine. It’s the amount of it that’s a problem,” Kenneth L. Perkins Jr., Lakeside Partners’ attorney told the Orange County Register. The committee had recommended a plan that “reduces the color and breaks up the red pattern so that it is not so linear.” Coe told AN that Lakeside “didn’t have any major complaints” for him during the design and construction process, except for an employee expressing one concern at a meeting. After that, “we never heard another thing, neither approval nor disapproval,” said Coe.

“I find it a little weird,” added Coe. “Aside from property rights and freedom of expression, it seems terribly short-sighted that [Lakeside Partners] didn’t know that you can’t market an apartment building the way you market an office building.”

The four-story apartment building has a grayish blue and white base, over which Coe designed a composition of vertical and horizontal red lines. He estimated that repainting the building could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The 2.3 million-square-foot Hutton Park complex was constructed in the 1980s, and features office towers, a high-rise apartment, hotels, and a food court surrounding a four-acre lake.

Coe believes the matter will be settled by Lyon Communities and Lakeside Partners out of court, although he has not heard from either party. “I can’t imagine what the endgame could be,” said Coe.

Homeowners associations have sued property owners for not adhering to their standards, but rarely if ever has a building of this scale faced a similar lawsuit.

OC DEVELOPER SUES OVER APARTMENT’S “REJECTED” RED PALLETTE

Even before Twitter descended on Market Street in San Francisco’s once downtrodden Mid-Market district, there was Huckleberry Bicycles, a retail and repair shop and de facto community space that came to the area in 2010. Now David Baker Architects, which worked on the original store, has added a 1,150-square-foot addition.

The design, located in a building that once housed a series of movie theaters, uses copious salvaged materials. Baker preserved the historic terrazzo lobby floor and sections of the original oak floor. Other saved elements include old storage shelving, rolling ladders, and bike racks. The firm also custom designed all merchandise racks, display items, and fixtures. Murals by local artist Brian Barneclo enliven the space, and signage by Roving Studio adds a retro touch.

The store’s rough-around-the-edges interior exudes a do-it-yourself charm that makes Huckleberry’s customers—whether they’re dropping in for a tune-up or purchasing a new helmet—feel right at home.
The museum has struggled to move to its new location since it acquired the plot of land more than 20 years ago. Fundraising issues and internal struggles held up the project recently, which at one time featured a design by the late Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta. Mexican Museum board chairman Andrew Kluger has been widely credited for reviving the long-dormant project. 

The museum will occupy the Aronson Building (above), inside naturally lit galleries (below). Administrative spaces, and classrooms. The scheme was scaled down from an original design that included a Jenga-like grid of interlaced cubes sandwiched between metallic screens. Millennium Partners is developing the condo towers, Page & Turnbull is overseeing renovation of the Aronson Building, and the museum’s executive architect is a consortium between A+D, Architecture and Design, and Pfau Long Architecture.

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Offered in five patterns, these 24-inch by 24-inch floor-rated porcelain tiles are available in beige, brown, and grey. Designed by Kasia Zareba.

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Soft New Zealand wool is loomed with crisp jute to create a unique textured floorcovering. In five colorways. Designed by Ariadna Miquel and Nani Marquina.
Visual grace notes to architectural compositions, surface materials can bring tactility, color, and pattern into a space. From floor to ceiling, here’s our pick of the palette. By Leslie Clagett

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Designtex

A wallcovering on DNA substrate, the strong vertical and diagonal lines produce a dynamic pattern; from a distance, the crisp edges blend into an overall design that recalls an ikat weave.

9 Waldilla

Offered in five wood species, these free-form flooring planks are anything but straight and narrow.

10 Star
Land Porcelain

Frost-resistant, this porcelain tile is thermoformed to achieve a three-dimensional surface. In a 60-centimeter by 60-centimeter format.

11 Tall
Wolf-Gordon

Bending lines weave foreground and background together to create the illusion of height. In seven colorways. Designed by Morgan Bajardi.

12 Deep Nocturne
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A classic jet black, the solid surfacing can span residential, office, and hospitality projects. Can be thermoformed or worked using wood shop techniques.

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**Good Intentions, Bad Management**

The San Francisco-based nonprofit Architecture for Humanity (AFH), a 15-year-old organization dedicated to providing critical buildings in areas of need, shut down operations abruptly this year on January 1. The official announcement from the board of directors, which came nearly three weeks later, said that the organization was filing for bankruptcy because of “serious funding challenges… the deficit combined with budget overruns and an overall decrease in donations finally became an insurmountable situation.” Coming at a time when the economy is doing well and an interest in bettering the world through design is pervasive, the closure was all the more surprising. The specifics about how the organization got itself into financial straits are still outstanding. But the overall arc indicates that the organization had trouble with the challenge that so many small businesses face—how to scale up in a sustainable way.

“Ultimately the story of AFH is of an organization that grew too fast,” said Eric Cesal, its last executive director, who started as a volunteer in 2006 and joined the staff as the manager of its Haiti program in 2010. “Our programs and ambitions for doing good grew faster than our fundraising.”

Launched in 1999, AFH was one of the largest and most high-profile organizations dedicated to humanitarian design, predating later efforts such as Make It Right and Public Architecture’s 1%. The organization provided pro-bono design and construction management services, acting as the developer in complex situations to build homes, schools, clinics, parks, and community centers. With disaster-relief projects in far-flung parts of the globe, they had the status of an architectural version of Doctors Without Borders. It was an ambitious agenda that attracted many supporters and young architects, offering the chance to “design like you give a damn”—also the title of co-founders Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr’s 2006 book.

Sinclair and Stohr launched AFH as an international competition to design temporary housing for refugees of the war in Kosovo, and encouraged by the response, followed it with another to do mobile AIDS clinics in Africa. Sinclair, who trained as an architect, was a passionate and inspiring spokesperson for the fledging organization; and Stohr, a former journalist, was in charge of its day-to-day management. For the first several years, the husband-and-wife team were the only full-time employees. Things started to rev up around 2008, when Sinclair won a $100,000 TED Award, and AFH worked with Oprah’s Angel Network on post-Katrina housing. By mid-2013, it had nearly $12 million in contributions and grants, 32 employees at its San Francisco headquarters, and roughly 40 contractors at various field offices around the globe. It had also moved into its own office, which was purchased and renovated using a $1.9 million loan from a board member. However, the fundamentals were worrisome. In mid-2012, the organization reported a small gap of $88,000 in unrestricted funds, which represents the bottom line for a nonprofit’s financial health, since this general bucket of money is drawn upon for any shortcomings. It had nearly $6 million in the bank, but those funds were earmarked for specific projects; unrestricted funds are used to pay operating expenses such as salaries and rent. By mid-2013, the gap had leapt more than a tenfold to $1.1 million, even as funding had doubled. Reviewing the information, AFH’s auditors reported that “the Organization has suffered recurring losses in unrestricted activities and has a net deficit in unrestricted net assets that raise substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern.” According to Cesal, the deficit was at $2.1 million by the end of 2013.

Sinclair attributes the change in fortune to the funding landscape and project overruns. In an email, he wrote, “As the economy recovered in 2012, donors only wanted to fund restricted projects and not contribute to the organization… this shift in how funds were allocated coupled with project overruns created a huge hurdle to climb for the current management team.” He also wrote, “From 1999 to Oct 2013 I was Executive Director of AFH and the budget was relatively small so I take full responsibility in not forcing our studio directors in tightening their budgets and programs as well as not bringing more unrestricted funding on the books.”

The organization also invested in new initiatives, including the acquisition of Worldchanging in 2011, that didn’t pan out. According to multiple sources with intimate knowledge of the organization, there were also problems with management and significant turnover in key staff positions. “Kate really micromanaged everything—it was hard to make your own decisions,” said Matt Miller, who volunteered with AFH in the summers of 2005 and 2006, and was an AFH design fellow in Uganda for six months in 2008. “Kate and Cameron are great visionaries but not business people.”

In September 2013, the organization announced that the founders were moving on. Stohr returned to media production; Sinclair became the executive director for the Jolie-Pitt Foundation. After the departure, the organization took serious cost-cutting measures to try and get back on track. In the following months, it sold its office and moved into rented quarters, the headquarters staff shrank by half through layoffs and attrition, according to Cesal, who took over as executive director in May 2014. “I went into this difficult situation with the thought that every month we were in operation was doing a lot of good, building schools and clinics, and that we owed it to our supporters to try and pull through.”

Out of what was once the organization’s history, it raised some $50 million dollars for projects in 48 countries. “AFH was designing and developing over $14 million dollars for projects in third world countries. Trailblazing organizations like this take on real risk,” said John Peterson, founder of San Francisco-based nonprofit Public Architecture.

In the aftermath, the San Francisco Examiner reported that multiple volunteer organizations have offered to take over operations. Some of the 60 volunteer chapters, which functioned independently and raised money for local projects, including AFH London, have said they will continue on. Besides its built work, AFH’s greatest legacy may be how it facilitated the participation of so many in socially conscious design—even those on the periphery. “They were mentors,” said Emily Pilotto, who started the Berkeley student group H, a program that teaches design and construction skills to schoolchildren, in a “hands-on” manner in 2008. “They cleared a path for a lot of other people to do humanitarian design and architecture.”
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Kevin Daly Architects have brought the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music into the digital age, with additions that enliven one of the main entry points to the campus. Welton Becket designed the Schoenberg Music Building in 1955. His firm added another wing in 1985. Both are introverted red brick boxes, turning their backs on the Inverted Fountain to the west, and overshadowed by the tall arched facade of Knudsen Hall, the 1963 physics building across the cobbled plaza.

“Facilities of this kind are usually opaque,” said Daly. “The musicians are hidden away and have very little interaction or participation in the life of the campus. So we’ve tried to crack it open at a few points.”

The architects have reinterpreted the red brick and white stone palette of the campus in terra-cotta planks that are tilted in and out to catch the light and create a lively surface pattern. They come in two tones and three shapes, and are clipped to an aluminum frame. Angled planes with white trim and window reveals wrap a recording studio to the north and an ensemble/rehearsal room to the south. The asymmetry of their plans is expressed in the exterior geometry. In between is a glazed block containing a ground-floor café, second-floor faculty offices, and third-floor studios, with a computer lab, and mixing and editing bays below grade. These additions are linked to the existing buildings, which may be upgraded and extended in future phases of construction.

The dull mediocrity of postwar additions to the UCLA campus is redeemed outside the building by leafy open spaces and mature trees. Over the past decade there have been some glimmerings of architectural awareness, and Daly has raised the bar. Michael Palladino of Richard Meier Partners made the Broad Art Center and Wasserman Eye Clinic studiedly reticent; in contrast, the Ostin Music Center is as joyful and exuberant as a Handel anthem or Stravinsky’s wind octet. Each of its three elements has its own expressive personality, but plays in harmony like a polished trio.

The precise detailing and pronounced horizontality of Daly’s composition stand in contrast with the massive verticality of Knudsen Hall. The scale is humane, the facades tactile, and the closed forms accentuate the transparency and openness of the glass-walled café and the projecting brise-soleils that shade the two upper floors. A crystalline porch provides a symbolic entry to the ensemble room, there’s an outdoor stage for occasional performances, and there’s an easy flow of space to promote social intercourse.

The two major interiors have similar end grain wood block floors, finned Douglas fir baffles over white plaster walls, and an angled soffit backed with sound absorbing materials. Windows pull in natural light and offer views. But each space has its own distinctive character. In the ensemble room, the baffles rise halfway toward the suspended plaster folds of the soffit. Daly worked closely with three acousticians to achieve a good balance for radically different kinds of music making, breaking up sound at a lot of different wavelengths, and settling on a 1.2 reverb count. The irregular floor plan allows musicians to come together in different configurations.

The recording studio is acoustically isolated within a steel-roofed concrete block building clad with terracotta panels. Isolation buffers and springs separate the inner steel-stud floor and walls from the outer shell and concrete slab floor, openings contain 1.25-inch laminated glass, and a low-velocity air displacement system employs the space between the folded fir soffit and roof as a return plenum. The wall baffles rise to full height, creating intriguing and warm geometric relief. In a city that’s full of professional musicians, this may become the recording studio of choice for its artistic and aural excellence.

MICHAEL WEBB
RETURN TO SPLENDOR

Restoration Brings Long-Suffering Wright House Back To Original Form
The lengthy renovation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House—his first residence in Los Angeles—is finally over. On February 13, Mayor Eric Garcetti and other local luminaries cut the ribbon on the landmark's re-opening. Built between 1919 and 1921, the house takes its name from the favorite flower of Wright's client, feisty oil heiress Aline Barnsdall. Its eclectic style combines elements of Mayan Revival, early modernism, Japanese forms, and Wright's own Prairie Style, featuring tilted concrete walls, narrow leaded art glass windows, bas-reliefs, and an expansive central courtyard. The centerpiece is the living room, with its theatrical fireplace, which was once fronted by a large, water-filled moat. The Hollyhock motif is repeated in details throughout. The house, which Wright worked on with his son Lloyd and his protegé Rudolph Schindler, had already undergone renovations in 1944, 1974, and 2001 (due to earthquake damage.) But over time the property had further deteriorated. The $4.35 million renovation began in 2011, led by curator Jeffrey Herr, non-profit Project Restore, Griswold Conservation Associates, and the city's departments of Engineering and Cultural Affairs, among others. The bulk of funding for the restoration came from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, the National Park Service’s Save America’s Treasures program, and the City of Los Angeles. "We were able to dig deeper into this than has ever been done before," said Herr, who noted the team brought the house as close as possible to its original form through "archaeological" explorations, investigating everything from paint and plaster layers to original drawings and blueprints. For instance, to bring plaster finishes from their "muddy" form back to their original glistening gold state, the team devised a formula of mica suspended in alcohol. "When you walk in, it’s pretty amazing the difference. I still haven’t gotten used to it, which is a good thing," said Herr. Among other things, the team restored many of the home’s moldings, walls, floors, fixtures, doors, and fenestration. Heavy lifting included waterproofing the house, fixing drainage systems, restoring the roof, and performing crack repairs. The most rigorously restored rooms were the dining room, library, enclosed porch, garage, kitchen, and chauffeur's quarters. Outside, the courtyard has been returned to its original grandeur. "This house has never looked better," said Herr. "It’s become more lush, more romantic than I ever dreamed." 

Frank Lloyd Wright’s Hollyhock House underwent a thorough renovation, meticulously restoring interior details, including moldings and windows, and reviving the lush courtyard.
Houston is famously, or notoriously, known as the largest city in America without zoning. It covers roughly 630 square miles. To put that in perspective, Houston could accommodate within its limits Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Denver, Miami, and San Francisco combined. As of the 2010 census, the city had a population of about 2.1 million with a metro area totaling 5.95 million. In the next 20 years, a million more residents are expected to call the Bayou City home.

In the past, Houston has managed such projected growth by expanding its hub-and-spoke freeway system and sprawling out across the vast coastal plain. Now, however, the city is on the cusp of adopting its first general plan, which addresses the challenges of accommodating growth within its limits. This historic approach of meeting growth pattern and won’t serve the city in the long run.

The city, having never done this before, had no concept of how to develop the plan, scopes, budgets, and timelines. “The city, having never done this before, had no concept of resources,” said Webb. The City of Houston pitched in $10,000 to hire the consultant.

Blueprint hired Peter Park—the urban planner, professor, former Loeb Fellow, and visiting critic at Harvard’s GSD, former planning director of Milwaukee and Denver, and director of his own planning practice—to work as a consultant to the City of Houston’s Mayor’s Office and the Planning Department.

Park’s track record includes innovative planning in urban land use and regeneration, transit-oriented development, and zoning code reform. His research and work focuses on the link between leading innovation for quality design and practical implementation strategies for communities. Blueprint also held three citizens’ campaigns over the years to collect visions of what citizens wanted their city to be. “We compiled all that and gave it to Peter Park,” said Martha Murphree, Blueprint’s executive director.

**THE URBAN PLANNER**

Park initiated the exploratory steps for the plan to spur the discussion about viable strategies critical to the growth of a major metropolitan area. He worked with city staff to define the scope of the plan and what it should accomplish.

“It’s a big change from what Houston has been in the past, and while Houston does not have zoning, there are a lot of regulations. They have regulations that cities with zoning are getting rid of,” said Park. “Houston has been going along without a plan, and people ask, ‘Why do you need a plan?’ but the past approaches of building highways and annexing is not a growth pattern and won’t serve the city in the long run.”

This historic approach of meeting challenges as they come has created a reactive state and Park believes it is not a viable approach. “How can you have a broader conversation of coordinating growth and land use and regeneration, transit-oriented development, and zoning code reform. His research and work focuses on the link between leading innovation for quality design and practical implementation strategies for communities. Blueprint also held three citizens’ campaigns over the years to collect visions of what citizens wanted their city to be. “We compiled all that and gave it to Peter Park,” said Martha Murphree, Blueprint’s executive director.

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This historic approach of meeting challenges as they come has created a reactive state and Park believes it is not a viable approach. “How can you have a broader conversation of coordinating growth and land use and regeneration, transit-oriented development, and zoning code reform. His research and work focuses on the link between leading innovation for quality design and practical implementation strategies for communities. Blueprint also held three citizens’ campaigns over the years to collect visions of what citizens wanted their city to be. “We compiled all that and gave it to Peter Park,” said Martha Murphree, Blueprint’s executive director.

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the city and wanting a walkable urban city. It hasn’t been a priority. [Walkable areas are] not going to be everywhere, but it ought to be easier to do in Houston and the next generation of people who inherit the city are interested in these urban walkable places. Where people go and want to be there is a high priority on the human scale and activities for people. American cities prioritize the automobile at the expense of other things: freeways cut through underrepresented neighborhoods or high parking requirements result in objects in a big surface parking lot. High parking requirements and wider roads have not made it easy to create walkable urban areas but I think that is changing."

Park cited Houston’s Complete Streets policy is plan to make streets safer and more accessible, that Mayor Parker issued an executive order for in 2013 as one of the major initiatives that would fall under this broader umbrella vision for the city to grow, protect established neighborhoods, and find ways to direct growth and investment where it is most beneficial.

He also spoke about Houston’s light rail system, MetroRail. The system opened its first line in 2004 and has five new lines in different stages of planning and construction. "I have heard people criticize the light rail and it’s ridiculous," said Park. "The corridors are going to become enormously successful and will be able to demonstrate to other cities what capitalized transit investment looks like."

Park also addressed the city’s tradition of freewheeling, speculative development. With good planning in place, he said, the risks associated with this type of uncontrolled urban growth can be mitigated. "More clarity can be broadcast from the city as a signal to the investment community," he said. "[Planning can] coordinate major tax breaks, increase jobs, and distribute density in a smart way to concentrate it on the transit corridors." He added that smart planning is also about adding density, more affordability, and greater mobility without more and more cars on the road.

"It’s the nature of success that brings people together," said Park. "If you aspire to make great places, people will want to experience them."

THE PLANNING DIRECTOR

In March 2014, Mayor Parker and City Council installed Pat Walsh as Houston’s top planning and development official. Walsh is a trained civil engineer from Carnegie Mellon and the University of Texas, Austin, and former director of transportation and long-range planning for the City of Sugar Land. "We have made great progress in developing the plan," said Walsh. "We are wrapping up the vision and goal statement and then we will add more meat to the bone."

He also pointed to a planning and coordination tool, an interactive map available online, with layers of project information on it from various groups such as Buffalo Bayou Partnership, METRO, TxDOT, management districts, TIRZ (a Texas version of tax-increment financing), and the parks department. The city has been asking for voluntary participation from these organizations. The map will be on the city website and powered by its geographic information system.

The plan, as Walsh described it, is being created in a compressed timeline of 10 months. It will be at a higher level as a planning document and is an opportunity to assess whether or not the city has the right tools and if it is using them in an efficient and right way. "We have to do a better job of coordinating with the amazing numbers of entities who do planning in the city, and we have got to work in a more strategic way to work with our development community to utilize our land in the most effective way possible," said Walsh. "We want our development community to be successful and we want to support them. And we know there are ways we can work together to mutually benefit. Houston is very successful in many ways without zoning. But we regulate development with subdivisions, landscape ordinances, dedication of right of way, drainage, and parking. We do have a lot of deed restriction-like zoning protections. We do not expect zoning to be an outcome of this. This is about making sure we are effective as possible at creating and enhancing the city."

One of the ordinances to be examined relates to parking. Walsh said the city would revisit its parking policies to encourage vibrant walkable areas where people can visit their local restaurants and shops by foot, on a bike, or using transit. "Or it could be thinking more systematically about parking," he said. "There are opposing interests with parking, there is a balance to be struck."

One of Walsh’s goals is to gain a maximum degree of community support for the plan by being transparent and soliciting community input so that any future mayor will also have interest in supporting the needs of the people. "I am cautiously optimistic that this plan is going to offer valuable insight into how Houston can achieve good governance," said Walsh.

That is a sentiment echoed by Park. "If a plan reflects what people wanted then it’s more likely to be adopted and taken," he said.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

On January 8, Jennifer Ostlind, division manager of Houston’s planning commission presented the draft vision statement for the General Plan. “Houston offers opportunity for all. We celebrate our diversity of people, ideas, economy, culture, and place. We promote healthy and resilient communities through smart civic investments, dynamic partnerships, education, and innovation. Houston is the place where anyone can prosper and feel at home."

The plan is uniting major stakeholders from METRO, the Texas Medical Center, Greater Houston Partnership, Greater Houston Builders Association, Urban Land Institute, Houston Independent School District, The Kinder Foundation, TxDOT, and Harris County to churches, neighborhoods, management groups, and professional groups to coordinate, collaborate, and focus their efforts on strategies to deal with a host of future growth and investment issues: infrastructure maintenance, growing the tax base, efficient spending of tax dollars by City Council decisions, and streamlining the planning and permitting procedures.

"It’s a business plan," said Webb. "A set of guiding principles and strategies based on what the citizens said about goals and priorities."

The city will inform and engage the public in the coming months by conducting a series of outreach strategies before the framework plan is presented publicly to City Council for adoption in late summer/early fall 2015. If successful, the General Plan could transform Houston from a model of automobile-enabled urban sprawl into a paradigm for how post-war American cities might reinvent themselves in the 21st century.

Florence Tang is a design professional and journalist based in Houston.
CALENDAR

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2015

EVENT WEDNESDAY 25
REAL 2015: Capture, Compute, Create
Annenberg Space for Photography
8:00 a.m.
Fort Mason Center
2 Marina Blvd., San Francisco
fortmason.org

E X H I B I T I O N C L O S I N G
2014 Fellows: John K. Branner 2014 Fellowship
UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design
Berkeley, CA
ced.berkeley.edu

LECTURE TUESDAY 3
Seismic Protection of Nonstructural Components:
Six Months Since Napa
9:30 a.m.
AIA East Bay
1405 Clay St., Oakland, CA
aiaeb.org

THURSDAY 5
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Sink or Swim: Designing for a Sea Change
121 Wurster Hall
UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design
Berkeley, CA
ced.berkeley.edu

LECTURE MONDAY 9
Sustainable Urban Affordable Housing Models
8:00 a.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 11
Adapt, Flee or Perish: California’s Water Sector
10:00 a.m.
UC Berkeley College of Design
315A Wurster Hall
Berkeley, CA
ced.berkeley.edu

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 15
Eric Owen Moss: Not Farewell but Fare Forward
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

EVENT FRIDAY 20
Iconic LA Tour: A. Quincy Jones, Smalley Residence
11:00 a.m.
Brooklawn Residence
8000 SF, Beverly Hills, CA
aialosangeles.org

LECTURE FRIDAY 27
Seismic Protection of Nonstructural Components:
Six Months Since Napa
6:00 p.m.
AIA East Bay
1405 Clay St., Oakland, CA
aiaeb.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Urban Cartography
6:00 p.m.
SPUR San Jose
76 South First St., San Jose, CA
spur.org

LECTURE SATURDAY 1
Craig Dykers: Snøhetta Works
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE MONDAY 2
Eric Owen Moss + Frank Gehry:
You Can’t Rehearse Something You Haven’t Invented Yet
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE TUESDAY 3
AIA|LA and DCP Urban Design Review Sessions
10:00 a.m.
Los Angeles City Hall
Conference Room 501
Los Angeles
aialosangeles.org

LECTURE FRIDAY 6
Eric Owen Moss - Not Farewell but Fare Forward
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE SATURDAY 7
Sustainable Urban Affordable Housing Models
12:00 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St., San Francisco
aia.sf.org

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 11
Eric Owen Moss: Not Farewell but Fare Forward
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE SATURDAY 14
Craig Dykers: Snøhetta Works
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE SUNDAY 15
Sustainable Urban Affordable Housing Models
12:00 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St., San Francisco
aia.sf.org

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 18
Eric Owen Moss: Not Farewell but Fare Forward
7:00 p.m.
W.M. Keck Lecture Hall, SCI-Arc
355 South Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 25
Westweek 2015
Pacific Design Center
8687 Melrose Ave.
West Hollywood, CA
pacificdesigncenter.com

HÉLÈNE BINET: FRAGMENTS OF LIGHT
WUHO Gallery
6185 Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles
February 28–March 22
Accentuating the interplay between architectural design and natural light, veteran photographer Hélène Binet’s latest exhibition at Woodbury University’s Hollywood Gallery (WUHO) depicts various light sources dappling the work of iconic contemporary and historical architects. Binet’s photographs show how light glances off facades, interiors, and even perforated walls to unique effect. Curated by Binet and Emily Bills, the exhibition spans the photographer’s 25-year career photographing landmark edifices, including Peter Zumthor’s Therme Vals hotel and spa in Switzerland and Zaha Hadid’s Phaeno Science Center in Wolfsburg, Germany.

“The sense of light, the sense of coming out of the dark, it’s something that stays very much in the way I photograph,” said Binet. She is also the recipient of the 2015 Julius Shulman Institute Excellence in Photography Award.
Instead of promoting an architectural legacy and providing meaningful insight, California Moderne and the Mid-Century Dream: The Architecture of Edward H. Fickett by Richard Rapaport, creates a disservice to the architect. Fickett, an AIA Fellow, designed large housing tracts, apartment buildings, and high-end residences in Southern California during the 1950s and 1960s. He also built housing for the government, commercial buildings, and public spaces.

The book contains dozens of errors that could easily have been avoided with more research, fact checking, and interviews. The essential components typically found in publications about an architect are a list of selected built and planned projects, a selected bibliography, a selected biography, a list of sources, footnotes, and an index. These are all missing from the book. Fickett’s archive is fully intact and accessible at the University of Southern California, yet Claude Zachary, Associate University Librarian and Archivist, states Rapaport never contacted the archive. In multiple instances the book highlights work by Fickett that is easily proven to be the work of other architects. The book also contains missing photo credits, including the work of photographer Julius Shulman.

The most egregious error is Rapaport’s attributing the design and construction of the Ocotillo Lodge Hotel in Palm Springs to Fickett. Since the construction of the hotel in 1957 there has never been an issue of provenance because William Krisel with his partner Dan Palmer are the architects of record for the property. For nearly 60 years Ocotillo has been credited to Krisel. The original drawings and documentation for the project are in the archives at the Getty Research Institute. Whereas the Fickett archive at USC contains an empty letter folder with an Ocotillo file label, authenticity of Krisel’s leading role is further corroborated by many historical and current references, including the website for the Ocotillo Lodge. One of the more embarrassing contradictions is Rizzoli’s own oversight. In the publisher’s book, Julius Shulman: Palm Springs (2008) by Michael Stern and Alan Hess, the credit for Ocotillo is given to Palmer and Krisel, without any mention of Fickett. (Shulman’s archive held at the Getty Research Institute indicates his client for the project was Palmer & Krisel.) Ronald S. Dunas, the developer of Ocotillo and many other projects in Palm Springs involving Palmer and Krisel, states he was not contacted by Rapaport about the book, and expressed in a recent email how the book misrepresents both Dunas’ and Fickett’s association with the Ocotillo project.

The book also credits the design of the Janss House in Palm Springs to Fickett. This is another mistake. The house shown is the Jorgensen House designed by architect William Cody. Material related to the project is found in Cody’s archive at California Polytechnic State University. In one of several instances, the book presents a Fickett rendering without any indication of the project being built or not, such as the Las Vegas Riviera Hotel. On the subject of Trousdale Estates for which Fickett developed the master plan, Rapaport states the architect designed 38 houses. This inference, like others in the book, is Rizzoli’s own oversight. In the publisher’s book, Julius Shulman: Palm Springs (2008) by Michael Stern and Alan Hess, the credit for Trousdale was given to Palmer & Krisel. Ronald S. Dunas, the developer of Trousdale and many other projects in Palm Springs involving Palmer and Krisel, states he was not contacted by Rapaport about the book, and expressed in a recent email how the book misrepresents Trousdale Estates were built by Fickett, and one of them was an interior remodel.” Trousdale Estates resident Groucho Marx is among those listed as Fickett’s celebrity clientele. However, the Marx house was designed and built by Wallace Neff, which was widely documented in both the Wallace Neff and Maynard Parker archives at the Huntington Library. If Rapaport is looking to rewrite history he does not offer evidence for a counterpoint.

The chapter called The Research Houses, intended to highlight Fickett’s advances in home design, is muddled. Rapaport indicates that the publication Architecture & Interiors selected Fickett to design its 1955 Research House. The title of this publication is unknown. Although it is not reported in the chapter, the Associated Architectural Publications was the sponsor of the 1955 house. The publication sponsored two identical research houses designed by Fickett, but these details do not appear in the text. The Los Angeles Times Home and House & Patio magazines along with Architectural Products were also sponsors of Fickett Research Houses, but these
space is made by the artist or architect; it is not found and packaged. it is made by thought.

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GOOGIE AND NORMS

The avalanche of support for Norm’s La Cienega, the Googie Modern coffee shop recently threatened with demolition, exposes an often overlooked fact: Modernism can be popular.

Many early modern architects sought to bring the fruits of the industrial age to the average person. Over time that goal was often blurred as modernism focused on custom homes and skyscrapers. Today modernism has been narrowed to a stripped-down, less-is-more aesthetic of white walls and spare furnishings, but back in the day there were many modernisms—including the vibrant, popular public architecture of Googie coffee shops that began in Los Angeles and spread nationwide.

In midcentury Southern California, the everyday life of the average citizen was filled with modern architecture: supermarkets, gas stations, banks, bowling alleys, drive-through laundries. Leading the list were the exuberant Googie-style coffee shops (not “diners”) that were prominent on the streets of Los Angeles. Besides a half dozen Norm’s by Armet and Davis, there were Tiny Naylor’s and Biff’s by Douglas Honnold, the Wich Stand and Pann’s by Armet and Davis, Ship’s by Martin Stern, Jr. in Westwood and Culver City, Bob’s Big Boys by Wayne McAllister, and many more. They helped define the urban character of the car-centric city. Most have been replaced, and always by buildings designed not nearly as well.

Googie, the name given to this ultra-modern roadside style, comes from the name of a 1949 restaurant on the Sunset Strip designed by master architect John Lautner, who studied with Frank Lloyd Wright. It exhibited the hallmarks of the style: outside, a boldly scaled roof to grab the attention of motorists driving by, with a neon sign integrated into the design. Inside, large glass windows gave views of the lively street scene, and the kitchen was open so customers could watch their food being made. True to modern principles, form followed function in Googie design, and the function was to draw in customers in their cars, and feed them in an appealing, exciting modern environment.

In Los Angeles, to be part of the modern age you didn’t need to hire A. Quincy Jones or Ed Killingworth to build you a Case Study house. For the price of a hamburger and coffee you could step into the modern world, anywhere in the city. In dozens of examples, Googie was excellent design—modern architects orchestrating modern materials, technology, and lifestyles into thoroughly modern spaces and structures. Step inside Norm’s today and the optimism, the openness, the innovation of its style is still striking.

Most establishment critics considered Googie the bastard child of modern architecture. Residential and institutional design was respectable; commercial design (especially coffee shops) was not. Googie’s flashy neon, exaggerated forms, and its appeal to the masses disqualified it as serious design. Plus it was from California. Modernists may have embraced the masses in theory, but the profession’s patrician heritage found popular architecture distasteful.

Paul Rudolph (perhaps with a touch of defensiveness) warned in 1952 about the lack of discipline he detected in Googie. Freedom in design was fine, but needed to be carefully guided. Then “one could unleash the imagination... without fear of producing ‘Googie’ architecture,” he lectured. The modernism heralded by Museum of Modern Art exhibits was elegant, tasteful, subdued. It did not need to shout. Googie did.

So successfully was Googie suppressed that to this day there are academics from the east coast who have never even heard of the term.

But Esther McCoy was right: “Googie was not a name forgotten in a year; it clung to us.” The support for Norm’s La Cienega proves Googie has stood the test of time.

Make no mistake, Googie is as Modern as a Craig Ellwood house. From now on when we think of Los Angeles Modernism, we must think of the public modernism of Googie as well as the private modernism of the Case Study houses. They’re two sides of the same coin.
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