

**CONTACT: Jeff Lustgarten 323/466-3445**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 24, 2007**



## **REGIONAL HOUSING SUMMIT LOOKS “BEYOND GRIDLOCK”**

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### **State, Local Leaders Present Strategies to More Closely Link Housing and Transportation Planning. SCAG Awards Numerous Communities for Innovative “Blueprint” Planning Efforts**

**LOS ANGELES** – More than 200 policymakers and housing leaders from across the region convened at the Southern California Association of Governments’ (SCAG) 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Housing Summit in an effort to identify and highlight new approaches to address the growing housing crisis. Expert panelists discussed how *Compass Blueprint*, SCAG’s growth visioning initiative, can provide cities and counties with the tools they need to accommodate housing demand by employing relatively small changes in land use planning decisions to garner significant results in housing availability and affordability. A number of local communities also received special Compass Awards to recognize their innovative planning efforts.

“A major goal of our summit is to foster a more concerted dialogue on critical land use, housing supply and affordability issues facing the region,” said San Bernardino County Supervisor and SCAG President Gary Ovitt. “We also spent considerable time today discussing the critical relationships between housing and transportation planning, and how changes we make to our planning efforts in those areas can reap tremendous benefits for the entire region.”

“For far too long, the cities and counties that make up the Southern California region gave insufficient attention to the critical relationships between our housing and transportation planning,” said El Centro City Councilmember and conference moderator Jon Edney. “But that is indeed changing, as cities across the region have been embarking upon ground-breaking new *Blueprint* planning efforts intended to more closely tie those critical planning functions together.”

According to the California Association of Realtors, the state experienced a 22 percent decline in housing sales in 2006, with sales leveling out during the first portion of 2007. The state continues to lag well behind the country in terms of homeownership rates. In Southern California, median housing prices saw around one to four percent declines, with the exception of Orange County’s two percent rise in prices. But the softness of the housing market was further demonstrated by the significant rise in delinquency and foreclosure rates in 2006.

The summit was also highlighted by a series of awards presentations to acknowledge a number of innovative planning initiatives taking place throughout the region which best support the principles outlined in SCAG’s *Compass Blueprint* program. Honorees included:

**- more -**

- **President's Award:** Downtown Specific Plan and Mobility Study – City of Glendale. The Downtown Specific Plan and Mobility Study represents a prime example of how communities can encourage mutually supportive land use decisions and transportation investments.
- **Excellence In Mobility:** Platinum Triangle – City of Anaheim. The plan illustrates SCAG's Compass Mobility Principle, which seeks to target future growth in key activity centers and transportation corridors, and encourages land use and growth patterns that complement the region's transportation investments.
- **Excellence In Livability:** San Dimas Grove Station – William Fox Homes and the City of San Dimas. The project illustrates the Compass Livability Principle by providing higher density housing close to job centers and transit-oriented development around the potential location of a future Gold Line Station.
- **Excellence In Prosperity:** Olive Court – Livable Cities and the City of Long Beach. This project is an example of the Compass Prosperity Principle by providing a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all income groups.
- **Excellence In Sustainability:** Valley Vision – City of San Gabriel. The Valley Boulevard Neighborhoods Sustainability Plan transforms the fundamental rules for development through initiatives grounded in sustaining the community's environmental resources, economy and social well-being.
- **Award for Distinguished Leadership:** Transit Oriented Development Project and Video - Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG). The WRCOG initiative highlights the organization's position as one of the region's leading voices and proponents of Compass Blueprint Principles for enhancing transportation and housing choices in Western Riverside County.

The Summit was highlighted by a dialogue among local elected officials that included El Centro City Councilmember Jon Edney, Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed Reyes, Ventura Mayor Carl Morehouse, and Huntington Beach Mayor Pro Tem Gil Coerper. The day's keynote speech was delivered by Staples Center-area and Portland Waterfront developer Homer Williams. Participants identified a number of legislative and land use strategies to address the regional housing crunch, including:

- Increasing housing development near transit. A federal study found that families who live in auto-dependent homes spend an average of five percent of their household budget on transportation, while families who live in transit-rich areas spend just nine percent.
- Implementing timely updates to local housing elements to take advantage of upcoming state bond funding allocations and to ensure that communities are prepared to accommodate projected growth of all income levels.
- Considering changes in municipal finance to allow local governments to retain greater property tax revenues and provide incentives for housing development.
- Engaging community residents and other stakeholders to better understand the relationship between housing development and affordability, as well as the need for increased density in certain communities.
- Supporting greater mixed-use and in-fill development, particularly in urban areas.

**(Editor's Note: For more information about the SCAG Regional Housing Summit, contact Jeff Lustgarten of Cerrell Associates at 323/466-3445. To get a complete listing of the SCAG Compass Award winners, go to the SCAG Web site at [www.scag.ca.gov](http://www.scag.ca.gov).)**