

“Transforming Riverside into a Model City for Sustainable and Local/Urban Agriculture”

Grow Riverside: Citrus and Beyond
March 20, 2014

--Good morning

Yesterday was a remarkable first day.

Thank you to Chris MacArthur. Without Chris, there is no Grow Riverside.

Thank you to Robert Puro from Seedstock. You brought a “world” class focus to this Conference.

Thank you to the organizers...it was not planned on the back of an envelope. It ranks among the best city summits that I have ever attended. The Meetings of the Minds set the table. Thanks to the excellent staff work of Erin Gettis. Kudos to the magic of Al Zelinka

Thank you to the sponsors...you have stepped up!

Thank you to those who voted with your feet. You are here! It is the marker of interest in local politics.

Before beginning my remarks this morning, let me return to ten themes and ideas from yesterday--I was here from 8:30 to 11:45 and at the dinner at the Sunkist Center in the Citrus Park.

1) There was an audacious goal: make the greenbelt green. Chris MacArthur made the call....

I remember a previous call: make evergreen cemetery green. Picture what it was before and now. It is a success story. There was a community focus and there was community support.

Making the greenbelt green is obviously both more complex and more important.

2) Any plan must be comprehensive...it must be collaborative. And it must be creative.

3) For Measures R & C to work in Arlington Heights, there must be a plan of action. While growth has been limited, the passive or let the market do its thing has not worked, except for nurseries and the cutting down of citrus groves.

4) See the CURE Challenge...It is a compelling call--transforming the future of agriculture in Riverside by revitalizing the Arlington Heights Greenbelt. See the CURE's superb map of Arlington Heights. Kudos to the exceptional work of Melissa Hathaway McKeith.

5) There is a national movement taking form. You heard many of these success stories yesterday morning. Local/urban agriculture is no longer a voice in the wilderness.

6) Wednesday's keynote speaker, Dr. Glenda Humiston, made clear that there are hundreds of different initiatives. Information is available, whether by web or in reports. Also Humiston called out the CA Community Capital Collaborative for its varied sources of financing. And perhaps most importantly, she said that there is a good opportunity to make money.

7) Riverside does not need to reinvent the wheel. There are best practices regarding local/urban agriculture for the City of Riverside to adapt and/or adopt. We should learn from others.

8) I like the invitation: buy local. Invest local. We have called it by a different name, Shop Riverside.

9) Is all this possible. Yes it is. As explained by Richard Conlin last night at the Sunkist Center, it works in Seattle. It can work here!

10) Finally, success depends on the political will of the community. Can the call for the transformation of Arlington Heights be answered? Can we go from rhetoric to action, from ideas to defining and making a new vision happen.

This morning, I will address this last point in my keynote remarks.

--*Governing* magazine is the best general editorial magazine covering states and localities. In its March, 2014 edition, there is an important article by Aaron Renn titled, "How to Harvest Good Ideas." His argument is that there are many good ideas. However, the important task before us is to make them happen. In Renn's words, "It matters...that we can get things done."

This morning my objective is to point to pathways, both to innovation, and more importantly, to implementation. How can Riverside become a Model City for Sustainable and Local/Urban Agriculture?

--It is a defining time. The local/urban agriculture movement is alive and well, and taking different forms across this country.

Why Riverside? Three factors--first, Riverside has an extraordinary agricultural history. Second, Riverside has land. It has water. It has soil. And it has a good climate. What a combination! And third, Riverside has Measures R & C in Arlington Heights, an area of approximately 4,600 acres that is limited by voter initiative to no more than one house per five acres. I will return later to these three factors.

--Riverside has competed, and excelled, as a model city for CA and for the nation. Two examples can illustrate.

Riverside is a Green City, CA's first Emerald City. In regional and even in national competition, Riverside has demonstrated that it is a sustainable community. I encourage you to review Riverside's Green Action Plan, and its successful implementation strategies.

Riverside is a smart city. The City was selected by the Intelligent Community Forum, a think tank in New York City, as 2012 Intelligent City of the Year. We competed with over 400 cities across the world. The final seven cities were three in Canada, one in Finland, one in Taiwan, and Austin, Texas. Noteworthy, Riverside was the first U.S. city ever selected!

--What are the steps to becoming a model city for local/urban agriculture?

As Director of the Center for Sustainable Suburban Development at UCR (or CSSD), my favorite book for 2014 is Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley's *The Metropolitan Revolution*. It is subtitled, *How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy*.

They identify five steps they say are to bring about a metropolitan revolution. These same steps are likewise a pathway for Riverside to become a model city for sustainable and local/urban agriculture.

The first step is to build your network. This Grow Riverside Conference has created such a network. Collaboration and network building are the most important foundations for transformative action.

The second step is to set your vision. This Conference is setting such a vision. In the words of Katz and Bradley, "Visions clarify. Visions inspire. Visions catalyze. Visions matter."

The third step is to find your game changer. This Conference offers such a framework. Katz and Bradley urge a vision to aim high. Real transformation comes from an integrated, focused approach. They say be multi-dimensional, integrated, and holistic.

The fourth step is to bankroll the revolution. Initiatives need resources, especially financial and organizational. Who is in charge? What zoning rules? What incentives? What marketing? We should look to the interplay of the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

And the fifth step is to sustain the gain. Full impact is achieved only over time. Stay the course. Katz and Bradley emphasize that success comes only with sustained attention, constant vigilance, and regular monitoring.

These five steps--build your network, vision, game changer, bankroll the revolution, and sustain the gain--offer a conceptual path to becoming a model local/urban agriculture city.

--What are the most important characteristics of a city? When asked, I emphasize three; they are size, history, and key assets.

Riverside is now a city of over 300,000 people, the 12th largest in CA and perhaps the 60th largest city in the United States. It is a city large enough to have significant resources and yet small enough for all of us to take part in its life and times, and most importantly, to make a difference.

As to history, Riverside grew citrus, and more precisely navel oranges. We were indeed the City in the Groves. Kevin Starr, perhaps the best living writer on CA, described Riverside as the "quintessential citrus town." For many years, more oranges were grown in Riverside than any other city in the nation. We grew, packed, and marketed citrus. UCR's early history was as a citrus experiment station.

Zona Gale published a book in 1938 titled *Frank Miller of Mission Inn*. Let me quote from one page: "Orange Day was proposed for the town--a day when everybody should buy oranges. Orange-girls in bright Spanish frocks, patrolled the Inn grounds and wandered about the streets, selling their wares. Great wicker baskets of oranges hung in the Inn and elsewhere for anyone to help himself. Automobiles filled with Spanish singers dashed about the town singing Spanish songs, tossing oranges into the crowd. All the packing houses, on that one day, sent express free all oranges shipped out of town.

Dramatize your resources, Frank Miller said. That's nothing but common sense."

As to assets, how can Riverside be distinguished from other cities in Southern CA, an extraordinary region that is home to nearly 19 million people and to almost 200 cities.

In the 21st Century, Riverside is a university community, with four important campuses, UCR, CBU, LSU, and RCC. We are also distinguished by a real downtown, anchored by the Mission Inn. And for our purposes today, unlike most cities in Southern CA, Riverside has a rich history. It is centered in the architecture, life style, and wealth of the citrus industry.

Yet one compelling question is: Why get off the freeways? Why come to visit Riverside? How can the City be distinguished from other places?

--In 33 years in office, I heard many talks. Perhaps the best was by James Rouse, a true American urban innovator, and visionary. His talk was to the National League of Cities' First Environmental Design Conference in October 1, 1981 in San Diego, CA. It was titled, "Design: The Key to Building Cities."

He makes any number of important points; they are as compelling in 2014 as they were in 1981. Here are several.

"For too long, we have accepted whatever our cities are as their destiny without raising up an awareness that we are responsible for them and that we have the opportunity within our hands to do enormously important things about them."

"Every city and town in this country has resources that are not being used to fulfill their potential."

"In too many cities in the West, they're going to awaken five, ten, fifteen years from now to a polluted, congested, deteriorating environment and wish that back in the sixties and seventies and in 1981 they had turned around and recognized that they had the capacity to manage growth in a way that would produce a beautiful, livable, humane, effective, prosperous city."

He offers a four point plan: 1st, identify the resources. 2nd, identify the needs and yearnings of the community. 3rd, set up a development program to put those resources to meet those needs and yearnings. And 4th, set up an organization adequate to manage the process. Often times, he says, "cities produce plans, hopes, and announce them, but there's really no process to carry them forward."

Rouse closes with this quote--listen carefully.

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness, concerning all acts of initiative and creation. There is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas in splendid plans, that the moment one definitely commits oneself then Providence moves too. All sort of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius power and magic in it."

--Let's look at our primary resource, Arlington Heights. Local/urban agriculture may occur elsewhere in the City; however, Arlington Heights is the key to building an urban agriculture future in Riverside.

Some facts about Arlington Heights. It is a large area--there are over 4,600 acres. Listen carefully to the inventory of land uses. In 2013, there were about 1,600 acres in citrus, 948 acres in other agriculture uses--primarily nurseries, with only 70 acres of farms, 836 acres in residential, and 867 acres vacant. Let me repeat....

Let me add that I do not consider nurseries as part of the local/urban agricultural scene. Unfortunately however, they are now the emerging use for many properties in Arlington Heights.

Noteworthy, nearly 75% of the land in Arlington Heights is recognized by the CA Department of Conservation as important farmland.

Arlington Heights is the historic center of citrus in Riverside. Leaving aside the difficult economic issues that growers face, It has been said that there is no better growing place for citrus in the world.

The Gage Canal brings water from the San Bernardino basin to Arlington Heights. It is the historic and most important source of water for the City in the Groves.

Arlington Heights is where the voters in the late 1970's and early 1980's voted by initiatives to rezone all land to no more than one house per five acres. I know of no major city in the country that has this kind of zoning on such large acreage.

Victoria Avenue is one of America's extraordinary roadways. It is an historic landmark that goes through Arlington Heights. A drive-through linear park, Victoria Avenue has over 4,000 trees and thousands of ragged robin roses. There are seven and a half miles of bike lanes. And kudos especially to Victoria Avenue Forever and to the Riverside Renaissance. The Avenue looks great!

In Arlington Heights, there is the 400-acre CA Citrus State Historic Park. It is a wonderful place that highlights the role that citrus played in Riverside, and in Southern CA. To quote from a State brochure, the expansion of citrus groves "sparked a second CA 'gold rush" and innovative methods of irrigation, fruit processing, advertising, cooperative marketing by growers, and railroad transportation, all of which helped to establish CA's image as the land of sunshine and opportunity.

The State Citrus Park is here in Riverside, and it has the potential, the promise to be a major draw for heritage tourism. Now mostly a place for weddings and school visits, this extraordinary resource needs our best thinking, and our best efforts to realize the Park's future as a major attraction for Arlington Heights, for the City of Riverside, and for the residents of Southern CA. One idea--I would strongly recommend we revisit the concept of the Orange Blossom Festival, and hold it annually at the Citrus Park. The high water mark for visitors to the Park was 191,000 people in 2002; unfortunately the annual attendance has been under 30,000 for the past three years. The number of people who now come to the Citrus Park is indeed disappointing, and I think unacceptable.

Finally, three more interesting sites in this extraordinary place called Arlington Heights.

The first is the Corona Farms on Madison Avenue, between Lincoln and Victoria. They sell much of what they raise at a major and successful fruit and vegetable stand. How many have gone? I should add that the name is a family name, not the "imperialistic" arrival of the City of Corona.

The second is the Arlington Heights Sports Park. It is a widely praised five star, 35-acre state-of-the-art sports park. There is agricultural heritage themed architecture, including farm house style restroom/concession buildings, shade structures, citrus estate entry monuments, and citrus tree plantings around the perimeter. And there are interpretative panels that include information on the Gage Canal, Mathew Gage, Victoria Avenue, John W. North, Tibbets, Navel Orange, and Arlington Heights. One reviewer emphasized that is a "great park for all your activities."

And the third is the Riverside Rancheros. On about 30 acres, the Rancheros is a respected iconic site for horse clubs. It has a great covered arena. A footnote--many political events have been held there.

In addition, there are three major natural arroyos; Mockingbird Canyon, Woodcrest, and Prenda. These arroyos are not just conduits for water, but rich and varied areas for animal and plant life. Strict guidelines preserve the significant features of these arroyos.

The point--Arlington Heights is an extraordinary asset, an extraordinary resource. It is a place that can host local/urban agriculture. It is a place that can make Riverside a model city for sustainable agriculture. It is a place that should be a destination for visitors.

--Why do we get off the freeway? Any reading of *Westways* or *Sunset* is full of destinations, places to go in Southern CA. This is a complicated question; however, let me point to three success stories to illustrate possible pathways.

Marsha and I vacation every summer in Mammoth. As we left last year to return home, I heard a radio advertisement talking about a nearby ten-acre site where you can go to pick a variety of fruit. It is apparently a major choice for visitors. Why not here in Arlington Heights?

Oak Glen is a place to go in the fall. It offers varied attractions, keyed on the appeal and sale of apples. Why not local/urban agriculture with the same appeal? Why not here in Arlington Heights?

Temecula is known as wine country. It is a destination for many. Why not local/urban agriculture as a different, and unique, destination? Why not here in Arlington Heights?

--The Fit, Fresh, and Fun initiative--a major emphasis of the Mayor-- also distinguishes Riverside from other cities. The City is taking many steps to "support a healthy environment which encourages residents to seek Fit, Fresh, and Fun alternatives for a healthy lifestyle."

The initiative includes this language about Fresh: "We want Riverside residents to have access to fresh produce. More residents are growing their own food, the school districts are offering our children more healthy breakfast and lunch options, and there are numerous Farmer's Markets which bring locally grown fruits and vegetables into our neighborhoods. We want more folks involved with making healthy food choices."

When I was Mayor, one objective was to have a Farmer's Market and Community Garden in each of the City's Seven Wards.

Becoming a Model City for Sustainable and Local/Urban Agriculture is certainly connected to a City that is Fit, Fresh, and Fun. It is also connected to being a model Green City and to being a model Intelligent City.

--OK. If now is the time for City of Riverside to connect with the urban agriculture movement, what next? What specific steps? How to we become a model city for agricultural sustainability?

How to make good things happen in Riverside was my quest for the past 50 years, and especially the 19 of which I was Mayor and the 14 as a Council member. The quest was/is also influenced by my perspective as a long-time political scientist at UCR who studied and taught urban politics and policies.

We need leave this two day Conference with a commitment to do good, to do big things, to have a vision for the future. Becoming a Model City for Sustainable and Local/Urban Agriculture is such an outcome.

We need a game plan. We need to collaborate and partner. We need a big table. We need to start. We need to continue to meet and monitor results. And we need to celebrate success stories.

Most immediately, the City needs to hire an accomplished, knowledgeable, and passionate staff person. It requires someone who worries about Riverside being a model local/agricultural city 24 hours a day, from the time he or she wakes up to the time he or she goes to bed. We would not be a model green city without Mike Bacich or the 2012 Intelligent Community of the Year without Steve Reneker.

In building partnerships, we should look to many of the participants in this conference. In my view, those sitting at the table should include representatives from the farming community, K-12 schools, restaurants, grocery stores, packing houses, and experts from UCR and the County.

I would recommend that Chris MacArthur introduce a Council report, with a resolution and a proposed task force that Chris would chair. It should be staffed by the Community Development Department, working closely with the Public Utility Department and the Mayor. There must be a Council report, say within 60 to 90 days, that identifies goals and strategies. Marketing must be one of the strategies. And there should be regular six-month reports to the Council.

I would recommend the Council report include such topics as incentives, zoning, marketing, contracting, financing, training, and you can add to the list.

Interestingly, the United States Department of Agriculture has made available more than \$1.4 million in loans and micro loans for young and/or beginning farmers.

I would recommend extended conversations with local farmers, particularly those who sell at the farmers markets in Riverside. Marsha and I go each Saturday to the downtown market. For these vendors, the commitment is not abstract or theoretical; it is personal and financial. They have been there and done that! They are local/urban entrepreneurs.

I would recommend a close working relationship with Alvord and RUSD. Emerson School, for example, has a major, and successful, community garden--it is worth a visit. A major step forward would be for the two school districts to purchase locally grown produce.

I would recommend that UCR be closely involved in the quest for agricultural sustainability. Cooperative Extension has been providing services to farmers across CA for nearly 100 years.

I would encourage local restaurants to buy locally, and to indicate local products on their menus. Sacramento has a highly successful week-long festival they call Farm to Fork--why not in Riverside? Perhaps the Riverside Downtown Partnership could take the lead.

Equally important, the staff and others must look for best practices across the country. We have much to learn from success stories about local/urban agriculture. And more immediately, we have much to learn from the best practices, and lessons, presented at this Conference.

In closing, Grow Riverside: Citrus and Beyond is much more than a few fruit and vegetable stands. It should be a new way of defining Riverside, for ourselves and for others. Unlike most other cities in the country, we have a history, land, water, soil, and climate. There is no better place than Arlington Heights.

The pathways are before us. Let's do it. God speed Grow Riverside! Let's green the greenbelt!