
Livable Los Angeles

PETER DREIER DECEMBER 18, 2006

In 2000, a group of environmentalists and housing advocates founded Livable Places to promote new housing construction in neighborhoods with good transit as an antidote to continuing sprawl. With more than 150 nonprofits building affordable housing in Southern California, **Livable Places** is unique in its dual strategy of both advocating and developing housing using a smart-growth model. Livable Places both talks the talk and walks the walk.

One of its developments, Olive Court, with 58 new residences for owner-occupants currently under construction, is located one block from a light rail station in Long Beach. Another, Fuller Lofts, where a 1920s industrial building is being recycled into 102 condominiums, is just three blocks from a light rail station in Los Angeles. Both have great bus service and are close to downtown jobs.

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Livable neighborhoods mean communities that are safer and pleasant for people to walk. At Olive Court, Livable Places has placed the parking at the rear, with front doors and windows facing the street to help create a more pedestrian-friendly street. Landscaping includes shade trees -- welcome additions for pedestrians in the summer -- and drought-tolerant plants to reduce water usage. Other green features: formaldehyde-free insulation,

double-glazed windows, ceiling fans, skylights that open for natural cooling in the summer, hydronic heating, fluorescent lighting, Energy Star appliances, low-flow showerheads and toilets, low-voc (volatile organic compounds) interior paint, and LEED-compliant cabinets and countertops.

Working with acorn and Housing LA, Livable Places advocates supportive local policies such as building near transit, at urban densities, using a mixed-income model. Livable Places reaches out to educate neighborhood groups on the benefits of increased density. This coalition of groups uses every available tool to promote affordable communities: mixed-income housing requirements, protection of rent-controlled apartments from condominium conversion, protection of residential hotels from conversion to luxury lofts, and local housing trust funds to build more affordable apartments

Beth Steckler lives, works, and rides the bus in Los Angeles where she advocates policies that support mixed-income communities and transit oriented development on behalf of Livable Places.

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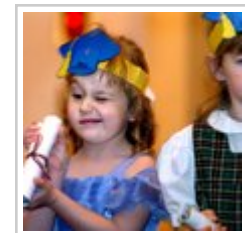
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