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Front Porch: News & notes about real estate

By [Roger Showley](#)
Union-Tribune Staff Writer

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Chit-chat at the Ivy

The third Pecha Kucha Night, sponsored by the San Diego Architectural Foundation, will kick off at 8:20 p.m. tomorrow at the Ivy Hotel, 600 F St. in downtown San Diego.

Derived from Japanese for chit-chat and pronounced pa-CHACH-ka, Pecha Kucha invites architects, graphic designers and others in the urban design field to share their wisdom and inspiration in 20 slides at 20-second intervals (hence the date and time – 20 minutes after the 20th hour on the 20th day of the month).

“It makes for stimulating, succinct and often striking presentations from the design, architecture, photography, art and creative fields,” the foundation says in its event announcement.

Similar sessions take place at dozens of places around the world.

To sign up as a presenter, call the foundation at (619) 232-1385 or go online to sdarchitecture.org.

– *ROGER SHOWLEY*

Reality check upcoming

The new chairman of the local chapter of the Urban Land Institute thinks San Diego needs a “reality check” and offers his 700 members as helpers on the path to great things.

Chris Morrow, senior vice president and planning director for Project Design Consultants, said his one-year term, begun July and renewable up to three years, will continue ULI's local efforts to brief area mayors, recognize smart-growth planning and hold monthly meetings on timely topics related to San Diego's development scene. He succeeded developer Tony Pauker.

But he said ULI locals are looking into a new program called “reality check.” Designed by ULI's leaders in Washington, it would involve the public and development industry stakeholders in a series of meetings and charrettes aimed at determining how best to achieve San Diego's many goals.

A similar visioning concept is under consideration by the San Diego Foundation, and its president, Bob Kelly, said he is meeting with ULI representatives to see if a common program can be launched.

“It's too easy to say no,” Morrow said, when it comes to proposed projects and plans for future growth, development and redevelopment.

He said his priorities for ULI investigation include ways to link public transit and new development and to promote renewable energy and water conservation.

He acknowledged that development-minded leaders need to gain the trust of residents and neighborhoods and suggested new forms of zoning might be necessary.

“People have to be responsible for what they say and do,” he said.

In a statement announcing his new post, Morrow said, “We also hope to participate in the transition from suburban forms of development to more urban and walkable types of development by working with development entities and local government, which I anticipate will be both one of our greatest challenges and opportunities.”

But in an interview, he said appealing to the lowest common denominator in public debate and building decisions is not his preference.

“We should aim big,” he said.

— *ROGER SHOWLEY*

Housing recovery will take time

Despite ongoing federal efforts to improve the economy and help distressed borrowers keep up with their mortgage payments, Americans should be prepared for a slow recovery of the housing market, according to a recent report by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

“Housing demand has withered under the weight of crushing job losses, house price deflation, and tighter credit standards,” according to the “State of the Nation's Housing 2009.”

Millions of homeowners are living in homes worth less than the amount they owe on their mortgages. With credit tight, first-time home buyers are struggling to meet tougher lending guidelines.

In San Diego County, median home prices have been trending upward since the start of 2009, according to the MDA DataQuick research firm. The overall median price hit bottom at \$280,000 in January. In May, it was \$295,000. The Harvard report said there are signs of stability in new construction and home sales nationally. The housing downturn has hit low-income minorities especially hard, however.

“With unemployment rates sharply higher among minorities, minority households are more likely than others to spend more than half of their incomes on housing,” the report said.

— *EMMET PIERCE*

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