

Mayor Eric Garcetti

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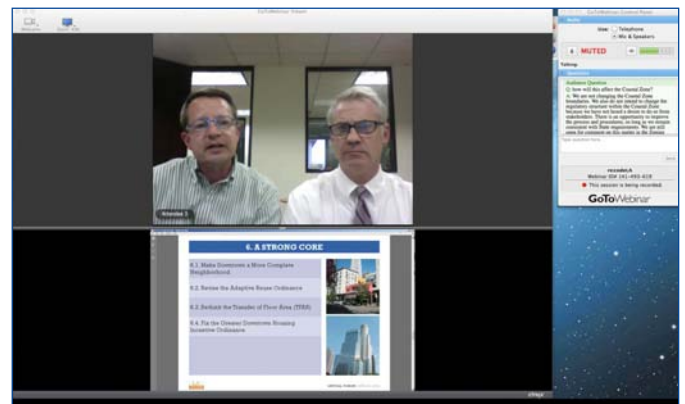
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The Past, Present, and Future of Technology in the Department of City Planning

by Priya Mehendale - City Planning Associate and Shannon Ryan - Planning Assistant

The year is 1984, and you want to research a vacant parcel in your neighborhood. How do you gather the information? After getting in your car, driving to the Planning Counter, and waiting in line, you meet with a planner who, using a catalog system, sorts through thousands of maps to find the one that includes your property. The map is on vellum and cloth with layers of ink — evidence of the manual revisions and updates that were painstakingly made by hand over the years in order to keep the map up-to-date with new regulations.



The re:Code LA team held a Virtual Forum in April, allowing stakeholder participation from the comfort of home.

Fast forward to 2014, and the same zoning information is available online. The process of accessing data for properties within the City has changed drastically over the past 30 years, transforming our previous tactile experience into a future of open source data and digital mapping systems. (continued on p.4)

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Los Angeles
Department
of City Planning





A Message From the Director

This issue of pLAnning focuses on data and technology, and explores how these elements frame the way the Planning Department functions. Often working behind the scenes, GIS, Systems, and Graphics staff play an integral role in helping the Department meet its goals and keeping it technologically advanced.

Earlier this year, Mayor Garcetti announced a new initiative for developing an open government plan for the City, which will include a range of programs aimed at increasing transparency and public participation using online and mobile technologies. The Department is already participating in this initiative.

Earlier this year, re:Code LA introduced a “MapIt” tool, also available as a mobile app, that allows stakeholders to add their feedback, including text and images, to specific map locations. In addition to the apps highlighted in this issue, the Department’s Systems and GIS section is currently developing additional user-friendly tools to help navigate the Planning Department and access important data.

In this issue, we spotlight David Terukina, one of the brains behind ZIMAS – an invaluable tool to planners and stakeholders alike.

Sincerely,

Michael J. LoGrande
Director of Planning

Data Analysis Team: Using Metrics to Inform Planning Policies

by **Claire Bowin** - Senior City Planner and **Matt Glesne** - City Planning Associate

In keeping with Mayor Eric Garcetti’s focus on using data to shape City policy, the Department is excited to announce the establishment of a new Data Analysis Team. This Team will help measure the effectiveness of our long-range plans and policies while also evaluating demographic and development data. Such data will guide the Department, as well as the City, in making resource allocation decisions and setting planning priorities. The new team will be comprised of existing staff from the Citywide Unit along with Systems and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff including Demographics and Graphic Services. The team will also regularly seek input from staff working on Community Plans and other long-range planning efforts.



Data Analysis Team (l to r): Jack Tsao, Matt Glesne, David Somers, John Butcher, and Claire Bowin

Not pictured: Robert Flores, Elvia Hernandez, Eva Sun, and My La

The Team will serve as the Department’s clearinghouse for analyzing and preparing reports on general demographic and development trends, population projections, housing starts and transportation.

Much of the work will focus on collecting, analyzing and reporting statistics on the following three policy-related metrics:

- **Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)** - Reduce vehicle miles traveled per capita.
- **Affordable Housing** - Increase the ratio of affordable housing units entitled and permitted to market rate housing units entitled and permitted.
- **Targeted Growth Areas** - Increase the percentage of total residential and non-residential development entitled and permitted in targeted growth areas, as identified in the City’s General Plan.

These three metrics will not only provide information about the effectiveness of our ordinances, plans, and policies, but will identify areas within the City experiencing demographic, population, or employment shifts. As part of the effort to move to open data, the information produced by the Team will be available to the public.

The Team looks forward to working with a variety of Planning staff as well as collaborating with other City departments to build a comprehensive database to understand and respond to population and employment trends, all towards creating a more sustainable, livable and vibrant city. ♣



Staff joined thousands of others in enjoying one of Los Angeles’ Great Streets, Wilshire Boulevard, during CicLAvia in April.

New Technology Initiatives: Improving Access to Department Information

by Jan Zatorski - Deputy Director of Planning and David Terukina - Senior Systems Analyst II

The Planning Department has embarked on an innovative digital modernization initiative to enhance its technology assets and broaden its public use. The plan emphasizes the development of technology solutions and the promotion of online information in order to improve access to government services. In the coming months, the Department anticipates the release of the following information and communication systems to further facilitate public involvement in the planning process.

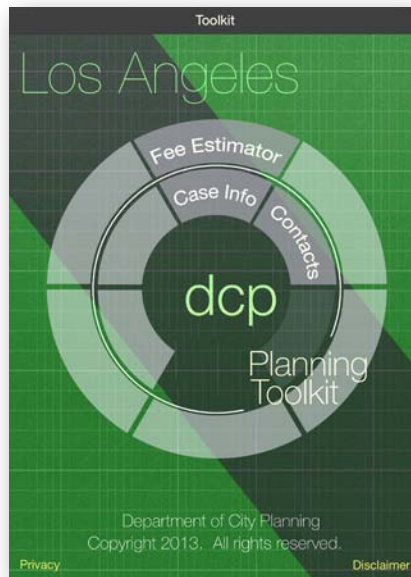
Mobile Devices: To provide information anytime, anywhere, on any device, the Department has rolled-out a mobile app called the “Planning Toolkit” that is available in the Google Play and Apple App stores. This app allows users to track Planning cases, estimate fees, and look up staff contact information in the Department’s directory from the convenience of their mobile devices. Future releases will include tools to make appointments and access ZIMAS.

Open Data: The Mayor’s Open Data initiative is an effort to promote transparency and accountability throughout the City of Los Angeles. Open Data will engage the public, business community, non-profits, and educational institutions in a public-private partnership to foster a culture of data sharing, while encouraging innovation in analyzing data to identify cost-effective solutions in operating City government. Planning will provide Geographic Information System (GIS) data and Case Tracking information to the Open Data initiative.

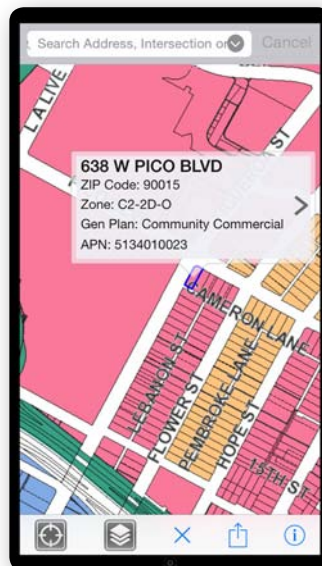
Geospatial Technologies: The Department has taken the simple Portable Document Format (PDF) file and enhanced the user experience by geo-referencing objects to regions in physical space. This technology allows users to view and manipulate GIS data, as well as information such as zoning, Council Districts, or General Plan land use, using Acrobat Reader.

BuildLA: The Planning Department is also involved in BuildLA, a citywide initiative that will improve the efficiency and predictability of the City’s development review process and eliminate inter-departmental case processing redundancies. The web-based system will accommodate electronic application submissions and plan review allowing multiple departments to access and comment on the same set of plans.

These technology initiatives will provide the Department with the resources to keep the public informed on new policies and procedures, while making accessing information much easier. ♣



The DCP Planning Toolkit is a free app available on both iOS and Android devices.



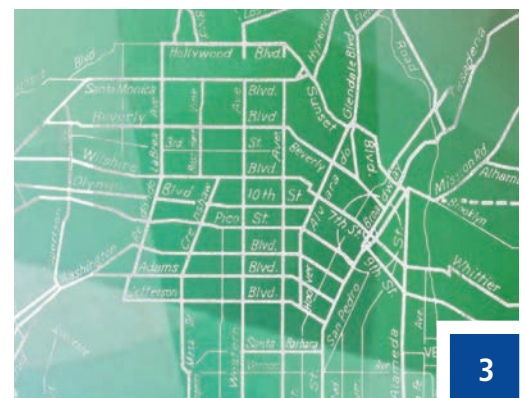
Soon, a mobile app will be available that provides immediate access to zoning information.

David Terukina Senior Systems Analyst II

As a Senior Systems Analyst II, David Terukina is responsible for many aspects of the Department’s public face, including ZIMAS, the Department website, the Planning Case Tracking System (PCTS), new mobile applications, and much more. David and the entire Systems staff work hard to ensure that the Department’s data is maintained and easily accessible.

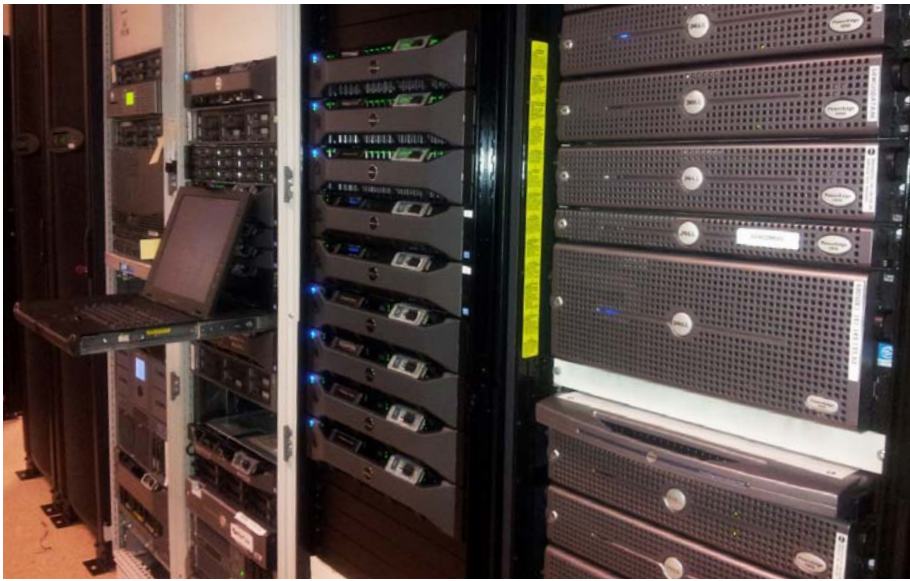
Appropriately referred to as “The Father of ZIMAS,” David was a key player in developing and implementing the Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS). He started with the Department in 1988 as a Student Professional Worker while studying Geography at Cal State Northridge. At the time, all zoning information was maintained by hand using traditional cartographic methods. After graduating college, David became a GIS Specialist and had an important role in converting the Department’s zoning data into a digital format, as well as establishing the Department’s Geographic Information System (GIS) Section. Today, David also oversees the Infrastructure Support team that keeps the Department’s computers, network, data center, and Help Desk up and running.

As technology continues to evolve, David manages to stay one step ahead. He is already hard at work exploring a cloud-based system that would allow cases to be submitted and processed electronically. ♣



The Past, Present, and Future of Technology

(continued from p.1)



The Department's current storage of over 60 million database records.

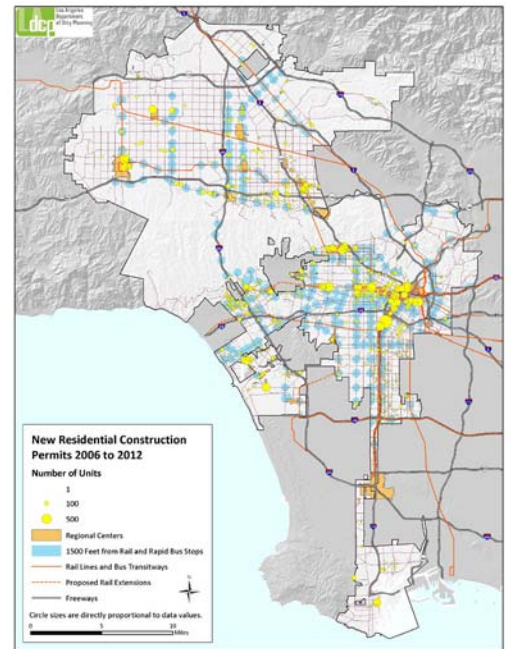
Long open to innovation, the Planning Department recognized the benefits of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) early on - the Department was the Environmental Systems Research Institute's (ESRI) twenty-fifth client - and Los Angeles was one of the first large cities to digitize maps and data using GIS. In 1985, the Department partnered with ESRI to automate the City's data sets and digitize its handmade maps. The result was the development of a map-based database pilot program that was the forerunner of the City's Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS). The program digitized zoning information for properties initially limited to the Northridge Community Plan area and was so successful it led to the automation of zoning maps for the entire city.

Once the automated maps were in place, layers of spatial data were eventually added to create a powerful tool that linked digital maps and zoning, land use, and record databases. By 1999, ZIMAS was available on the Department's Intranet, with limited availability to City staff, and three years later, in 2001, the online application became available to the public. Over time, ZIMAS evolved to link to other online applications at the parcel level, including building permits, demographic data, relevant economic development programs, County Assessor data, case information, and local jurisdictional information. Today, it is comprised of over 60 million database records, has over 70,000 users, and receives over 8 million hits, or web views, per month. ZIMAS and the newly launched mobile apps (see page 3) allow stakeholders to access a myriad of information about any property in the City at their own convenience, greatly improving customer service. New technology is not limited solely to information sharing; it also creates opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the civic process online. The Department has held online webinars, a platform that broadens the ease and appeal of participation, for a number of citywide plans such as the Bike Plan, Mobility Element, and re:Code LA.

What will the next 30 years look like? In addition to more mobile apps, expect to exchange your thick copy of the Zoning Code for a web-based zoning code that will generate relevant code provisions and provide general guidance based on a parcel's information or project type. The Department looks forward to another 30 years of new technologies to increase public participation and improve government transparency. ♣

Edited by: Priya Mehendale & Shannon Ryan • Los Angeles Department of City Planning Graphic Services Section, May 2014

As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability and, upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to its programs, services and activities.



our MISSION

To create and implement plans, policies and programs that realize a vision of Los Angeles as a collection of healthy and sustainable neighborhoods, each with a distinct sense of place, based on a foundation of mobility, economic vitality and improved quality of life for all residents.

