

Collaboration Is Key!
Panel and Networking Event

American Planning Association's Latinos and Planning Division
and Planners Network San Diego/Tijuana

The Latinos and Planning Division of the American Planning Association (APA) and the Planners Network San Diego/Tijuana held an exciting panel and networking event on October 18, 2007 in San Ysidro at "The Front"-- Casa Familiar's recent building rehabilitation project and an historical property originally designed by San Diego Architect Irving J. Gill. The event centered on the collaborative efforts between organizations that strive to make a difference within Latino communities in San Diego. The event's panel included planners from the nonprofit, private, and public sectors focusing on their perspectives and experiences in the process and implementation of planning projects and how our region can better respond to the needs of the Latino community.

Danny Serrano, (Jones and Stokes) and Connery Cepeda (Caltrans) were the organizers as well as the moderators for this event and are looking to create a stronger presence of the Latinos and Planning Division and the Planners Network (respectively) within the San Diego region. Chantelle Swaby (San Diego APA Board Member and Diversity Director), Juan Antonio Ramirez (City Heights CDC), and David Flores (Casa Familiar) also played a major role in organizing this event. The Casa Familiar location, which formally opened their doors on October 17th, was the perfect location for this event which came complete with a Mexican taqueria that was brought in from within the community, which provided delicious food prepared on-site and set the mood for the event.

The seven panelists involved in this groundbreaking event included: Teddy Cruz - Principal, Estudio Teddy Cruz; David Flores - Community Design and Development Officer, Casa Familiar; Carlos B. Graizbord - Former Director, Tijuana Municipal Planning Institute; Sergio Pallares - International Border Studies Chief, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans); Ron Saenz - Binational Planner, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); Kerry Sheldon - Assistant Program Officer, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC); and Diane Takvorian - Executive Director/Founder, Environmental Health Coalition;

Each panelist was given time to discuss three questions: **1)** From your perspective, what are the top planning related issues facing Latino communities in our region? **2)** Discuss an example of a successful planning project in a Latino community that you have had experience with. Why was the project successful and what were the major challenges? **3)** What are possible projects in Latino communities of San Diego that interested members of the community and planning professionals can become a part of?

The event was particularly interesting due to the variety and depth of knowledge communicated by the panelists. It was clear from the discussion that strong community

planning should identify, value, and utilize the capacities of local residents mobilizing their skills, knowledge and talents within a collaborative process. The panel discussion was able to provide a greater understanding of the planning challenges and weaknesses that can be faced and how we as planners should maintain a critical perspective when working with these communities in the future.

The Planners Network San Diego/Tijuana is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas that promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems and are working to establish a local chapter in San Diego to amplify an independent voice for progressive planning, social equity, and environmental justice. The development of this section is still in its early phase, but for more information, contact Connery Cepeda at connery_cepeda@dot.ca.gov .

Additional Latinos and Planning and Planners Network events will be held in the future. For full information about the recent panel discussion, and to find out how you can get involved in current Latino-based projects in and around San Diego County, please visit the San Diego APA website at www.sdapa.org and view the Section on Diversity. An introductory panel will also be developed to also explore the Black community in San Diego County. Anyone with interest in participating in the development or execution of these future diversity panels/networking events should contact Danny Serrano- Latino and Planning Division at dserrano@jsanet.com or Chantelle Swaby, Black Planning Division Member and San Diego Diversity Inclusion Director at Chantelle.Swaby@sdcounty.ca.gov .

Chantelle S. Swaby