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## **Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation**

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**PRESENTATION BY  
Mr. Ira Yellin, Senior V.P., So. Cal. Catellus Development Corporation  
Topic: Civic Center Authority and the Ten Minute Diamond  
March 4, 1998**

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Chairman Abel welcomed Mr. Yellin to the Commission. Mr. Yellin began by stating that between federal, state, county and city governments, within the next 10-15 years, there will be approximately 5 million feet of space in newly built or reconstructed structures in Los Angeles. This represents an investment of billions of public dollars. For example, the new federal courthouse alone is a half a billion dollar project. There is now an opportunity to have a world-class government center that is vibrant, inhabitable, and can be the incubator for creating the type of downtown area that this community desires. The 10 Minute Walking Diamond is a concept evolving with the Civic Center Authority and private sector to place each new structure in a matrix that will build on surrounding pieces. This concept will eventually serve as a focus in creating an inhabitable city. The issue is not how much money to spend, rather how to spend the money wisely in the creation of a great urban plan.

Mr. Yellin pointed out that the City Hall would be at the center of the diamond, with the diamond extending out a ten minute walk in all directions. Originally, Los Angeles was built on Los Angeles and Main Streets, at the foot of the Bunker Hill. Since Bunker Hill was an exceptionally steep street, everything was built north-south to effectively utilize a flat walking surface. The Civic Center was reoriented east-west when the Hollywood freeway was built. The original street names, Calle Primavera for Spring Street and Calle Principal for Main Street, would also be reinstated to more appropriately reflect the history of Los Angeles.

Currently, construction is taking place on the following:

- 1) Restoration of City Hall has committed one quarter of billion dollars,
- 2) Disney Hall is under construction and will bring enormous tourist revenues to the area,
- 3) The new state office building at 4th and Broadway, opening at the end of this year, is an important commitment by the Wilson Administration to restore an abandoned historic building rather than build new, and,
- 4) The beginning of the MTA's Angel Walk program will begin to unfold this year and will eventually continue through the Civic Center all the way through the Pueblo into the Union Station tourist hub.

New structures will be built to comply with seismic requirements, when it is deemed more cost effective to build rather than to retrofit. CalTrans, for example, will be building a new structure for this reason.

Within the next few months, the City of Los Angeles will be issuing a RFP for the restoration of the Los Angeles Mall. This is the subterranean mall that exists from City Hall to the bridge over the Hollywood Freeway. This will be the first opportunity to reconnect the Civic Center to its birthplace at the El Pueblo, which will be another major step in renewing the downtown Los Angeles area, thus, transforming it into a vibrant pedestrian environment. The Cathedral will also add significantly to the life of the area.

The next major piece of the puzzle is the restoration and relocation of Parker Center, the police department facility. Currently, the buildings are inadequate, but the Civic Center Authority supports the idea of a new facility in the same area, in a people friendly, community oriented environment that will create plazas and pedestrian connections in the eastern portion of the walking diamond, tying City Hall into the Japanese American National Museum and the Geffen Museum.

The site of the new Cathedral is on the western side of the diamond. Also on the west side, a potential new Los Angeles Unified School District building at Spring and Broadway. The top of the hill could be reserved for urban oriented private sector housing to bring a residential connection to the downtown community.

Catellus Development Corporation is restoring Union Station and creating pedestrian connections to the El Pueblo. Catellus is negotiating with the City of Los Angeles to restore the Pico-Garnier buildings in the Pueblo. The restoration of the Pueblo is comparable to what many cities have done with their historic birthplace.

Once the Disney Hall is completed there will be a plan to renew the Music Center buildings, and there are plans for making Grand Avenue a truly grand pedestrian street. Two big pieces within this area are the county buildings. There needs to be a process to investigate the actual status of these buildings and to analyze whether it would be more efficient to rebuild or restore and retrofit. If new buildings were constructed as a part of the walking diamond, the land mass that these buildings currently occupy could be used as part of the Civic Center plan.

One plan currently being examined would recreate the original civic center of Los Angeles on Main and Los Angeles Streets. This area would begin with the Pueblo, federal buildings would follow, then city buildings, and a new civic square which would be bounded by county buildings, the south lawn of City Hall, and Times Mirror Building. This runs right into the Regan State building. Other areas would be opened up to the private sector to create a residential community with homes, restaurants, nightlife, etc., that would breathe life into this area.

Mr. Yellin stated that the plan he outlined is not inflexible, all the specifics could change. What is important is the concept of using public money, that will be spent anyway, to create and reform an entire downtown area. The role of the EEC should be to monitor and mentor government in the wise conduct of this project.

Commissioner Philibosian asked about the plans for the old state building site. Mr. Yellin stated that currently there are many duplications of services in public buildings, such as, cafeterias, conference rooms, auditoriums, etc. Part of the 10 minute diamond plan would provide for the sharing of some of these services so they are not replicated in each building. This would free up additional space for other public needs.

Commissioner Buerk asked if Mr. Yellin knew of any other downtown residential plans outside of the 10 minute walking diamond. Mr. Yellin replied that the downtown rental residential area is doing very well. The loft district in the eastern part of downtown has hundreds of units with a typically zero vacancy.

Commissioner Lucente asked Mr. Yellin to comment on the widely held viewpoint that Los Angeles will not have a hub like other cities. Mr. Yellin stated that Los Angeles will not have one hub, but several, and that the downtown area is already and will remain the primary hub in this city. The downtown area is currently the second largest government center in the U.S. It has the largest concentration of office space, lawyers, accounting firms, etc.

There is also the largest concentration of infrastructure transit which comes through downtown. This transit system will continue to grow with almost 45,000 people and 1,500 buses going through Transit Plaza every day. Mr. Yellin added that a High Speed Train Commission has already been formed and the routing of the train, from San Diego to Los Angeles Union Station, through the central valley to San Francisco/Oakland, and Sacramento has already been established. The commute from San Diego to Los Angeles could be under

an hour and from Los Angeles to San Francisco under two hours. The effect this will have on downtown is unfathomable. Hundreds of thousands of people will come into downtown rather than LAX.

Commissioner Petak stated that traffic in downtown and Los Angeles in general has been an issue. The 10 minute walking diamond will increase traffic and he asked what plans were in place to deal with this type of problem. Mr. Yellin stated that there are plans to extend High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, but these plans have not been finalized. Another idea that is being considered is to complete the Glendale Freeway. Transit and transit reform have to be part of the answer. The population in the Los Angeles area is expected to grow by leaps and bounds and roads and freeways will not be able to accommodate all the people. He urged the EEC to consider these issues.

Chairman Abel thanked Mr. Yellin and asked Commission Farrar to report on the EEC's Real Asset Project. Commission Farrar stated that as a result of an EEC report, the County has initiated a comprehensive process for strategic real estate management. A draft report is expected in March. At this point Mr. Yellin suggested that the Real Asset Oversight Committee interface with the Civic Center to assist with the next steps in their effort.