

Sessions on Sustainable Communities Garner Industry Attention at FAU



Keynote speaker Ron Sims, Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, is focused on partnering with other agencies.

The theme of this year's Federal Agency Update, "Sustainable Communities, Green Infrastructure and Transit Oriented Development," put our country's top public infrastructure priorities on stage during a time of unprecedented change.

Co-sponsored by IRWA and the Appraisal Institute, the three-day educational forum drew nearly 400 professionals from across the country. Held in Las Vegas, Nevada, the venue offered 30 interactive sessions presented by local, state and Federal agencies and other industry specialists. This was the second year that IRWA teamed up with the Appraisal Institute to present a body of knowledge and experience that cannot be found anywhere else.

"Our partnership with the Appraisal Institute has enabled us to offer the highest quality educational opportunities possible, while enhancing the value for members of both our organizations," noted IRWA President Sandy Grigg, SR/WA. "A meeting of this caliber is only made possible with the unflagging support of a forward-thinking planning committee, the dedication of association staff, and the generous support from our committed sponsors."

Educational sessions covered a diverse range of topics, including green building valuation, building the electric grid of the future, and core competency training tools for Federal projects. The informal workshop format enabled participants to interact with federal, state and local government representatives and hear updates from the FHWA, HUD, FTA, FAA and USACE, to name a few.



From the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Christina Baysinger, JD, PMP outlined initiatives currently underway for meeting military and national goals.



Planning efforts were led by FAU Task Force Co-Chairs, Randy Williams, MAI, SR/WA, FRICS of Integra Realty Resources Austin, and Eric K. Schwartz, MAI, SRA of CapitalSource Bank.



Appraisal Institute leadership attending the event, from left, AI Chief Executive Officer Fred Grubbe, AI President Leslie P. Sellers, MAI, SRA, Past President Jim Amorin, SR/WA, MAI, ARA and President-Elect Joe Magdziarz, MAI, SRA.

The event opened with keynote speaker, Ron Sims, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. Appointed in 2009 by President Obama, he spoke about our need to grow smarter so future generations can better compete in the new global economy. Since joining the agency, he has been instrumental in breaking down silos that impeded government functions, and HUD is now considered a catalyst for partnering with other agencies to ensure their efforts are collaborative and not duplicative. He noted, “Capital markets have changed, and it has become time for HUD to become more of a partner and less of a regulator.”

Featured speaker Gloria Shepherd from the Federal Highway Administration addressed highways and climate change. Witnessing what used to be 50 to 100 year weather events speeding up, she stressed our country’s need to adapt accordingly. Outlining two key strategies, mitigation and adaptation, she described how mitigation is a prospective impact, while adaptation deals with the impacts occurring today, such as storms and other extreme weather-related events. She expressed the need to use existing right of way to accommodate the growing population and minimize our carbon footprint, stating “It is easier to change technology than people’s behavior relative to mass transit. In other words, how can we retrofit our existing communities to be compatible with transit?” The fundamental questions she raised outlined what do people want, what is affordable, what is practical and sustainable.



Featured speaker Gloria Shepherd, Associate Administrator for Planning, Environment and Realty, Federal Highway Administration, outlined key strategies for addressing highways and climate change.



Speaking on Sustainable Communities Initiatives were panelists Joan Morgan from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Gerry Solomon from the Federal Highway Administration and Ed Chu of the Environmental Protection Agency.

A panel discussion was led by HUD, FHWA and the EPA, who are currently working together on Memorandums of Understanding to establish and evaluate the best community options. Instead of planning new roads so communities can commute easier, residents may be better served by additional resources entering the local community. Joan Morgan, HUD’s Director of Relocation and Real Estate Division, Office of Community Planning and Development addressed ways that HUD is actively improving the environment by cleaning up brownfields and getting federal funding to do more to address contaminated land and making it productive again. Ed Chu, Deputy Associate Director, outlined how the EPA is changing the way it works – seeking to view interagency partnerships as critical to innovation. The Agency has become increasingly focused on collaborating across all sectors. Addressing land use relative to population growth has become a key priority, considering that in the last few decades, the U.S. population has grown 4% while land use increased by 47%.

Gerry Solomon, FHWA’s Director of the Office of Real Estate Services, shared the Department of Transportation’s definition of sustainability as, “providing exceptional mobility and access that meets the development needs without compromising quality of life for future generations. A sustainable transportation system is safe, healthy, affordable, renewable and operates fairly and limits emissions and uses of new and nonrenewable sources.” Other FHWA initiatives currently include green streets, low impact development and context sensitive solutions.

Christina Baysinger, JD, PMP, Chief of Real Estate and Supervisor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, addressed how the Corps is focused on delivering sustainable solutions through collaboration with partners and stakeholders. As the world’s largest public engineering and development agency, they are responsible for managing projects on 24.5 million acres in the U.S. and around the globe.



FAU NETWORKING RECEPTION

The networking event held on Tuesday evening gave all attendees the opportunity to meet after hours. Networking stations were hosted by agencies, consulting companies and organizations, giving everyone a chance to connect after a full day of educational sessions.

Following the event, IRWA conducted an online survey among participants. More than 85% of the attendees rated the sessions as informative and felt that the content will assist them in advancing their career. More than 90% gave the caliber of speakers high rankings, and 95% said the event met or exceeded expectations.



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Survey comments included:

"The level of care exerted in the planning effort truly resulted in a top notch program. Coordination and active participation in event planning made all the difference. Keep up the great work."

"My only regret was the inability to attend various concurrent sessions because I couldn't be in two places at one time."



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