

RDA NEWS

RDA'S CIVIC FORUM— EARTH, FIRE AND WIND

On September 22, RDA's second Civic Forum in the series "Earth, Fire and Wind" assembled Joe Adams, chairman's special representative, Union Pacific Railroad Company; James T. Edmonds, chairman, Port Commission, Port of Houston Authority; Lee Hogan, chairman of the Mayor's Taskforce on Economic Development; and Andrew F. Icken, executive vice president, Texas Medical Center, to speak to the current economic engines driving Houston.

These fundamental engines not only drive our economy but also directly impact the growth and form of our city. The panelists set the stage for our discussion with background relating to their specific fields. Some of the interesting data follows. Adams: Rail carries only 33 percent of the heavy freight, while the trucking industry carries the remainder. Edmonds: While Houston is the second-largest port in the U.S. and first in foreign tonnage, 86 percent of the container tonnage stays in Texas. Hogan: In 1983, Houston's economy was 86 percent dependent upon oil. In 2003, it was only 48 percent dependent. Our gross regional production is \$250 billion—rivaling that of some small countries. The working list of drivers is best represented by the taskforces that make up the economic development group he leads: energy, biotechnology, aerospace, Latin America, and information technology. Icken: In a unique Federal Reserve study, the TMC has a \$13 billion impact on our economy, accommodates 25,000 students, has 30 million square feet of non-hospital building space, and represents 70 percent of the health care provided over the eight-county region.

The presentations were followed by questions from the audience. Our first question focused on how to establish the region mind-set. The responses varied: the need to create a structure that would allow the individual agencies to somehow share services, therefore creating economy for all; dealing with the sheer volume and multiplicity of agencies, governments, etc.; the need to establish management and planning protocols to deal with traffic flows (vehicular, freight, etc.); the need to support regional research competition plus the issue of terrorism; the need for a larger arsenal of incentives to attract research, industry, and development; and

last, the need to accommodate and support commuter rail. Other questions included how to accommodate growth. Long-range planning and coordination are seriously needed at both the local and regional levels. Also, How do we handle community issues? The answers revolved around how each agency is still learning how to do that very thing but that it is absolutely important to work with the community.

Our third and final Civic Forum was held Wednesday, December 1. Our topic: The larger forces coalescing that will ultimately reconfigure our region, including economic, environmental, and social conditions. — *Joe Douglas Webb, AIA, for the Civic Forums Committee*

CROSSING OVER: RDA TO VISIT MEXICO CITY AND SEATTLE/VICTORIA

Over the past four years RDA travelers have visited a variety of cities in the United States as part of the RDA Hometown Tours. In response to the many requests to expand our program, we are offering two international destinations in 2005: Mexico City and Seattle/Victoria.

Mexico City:
Metropolitan Life and Private Space
March 16–20, 2005; \$1,900 pp/dbl (add \$340 for single occupancy)

In 1519, when Hernan Cortes first arrived, Mexico City was already larger than any contemporary European city. It has remained the political, cultural, and social center of Mexico, and has been an architectural showcase for the better part of the millennium.

Our tour will include a survey of the city's Aztec and Spanish colonial heritages and its modern landmarks, as well as visits to a remarkable collection of homes and projects by architects such as Luis Barragan, Juan O'Gorman, Agustin Hernandez, Teodoro Gonzalez de Leun, Ricardo Legorreta, Enrique Norten, and Alberto Kalach.

We will be staying in Legorreta's masterpiece, the Camino Real Hotel, and complementing our architectural visits with a sample of the richest cuisine on the continent.



Gala night: Downtown Transit Center, 1900 Main Street (PGAL, 2004), welcomed RDA revelers on November 13.

Courtesy PGAL

Seattle/Victoria: Soak It Up!
June 15–19, 2005; \$1,900 pp/dbl (add \$430 for single occupancy)

Seattle, founded in 1851, occupies a hilly isthmus between Puget Sound and Lake Washington. With a population of 3.7 million, Seattle is home to such icons of contemporaneity as Microsoft, Amazon.com, and Starbucks.

Architecturally, Seattle is extraordinarily rich. Such new landmarks as the Seattle Public Library by Rem Koolhaas and OMA and Frank Gehry's Experience Music Project are complemented by the Seattle Art Museum by Venturi & Scott Brown (with a new addition by Allied Works of Portland) and Steven Holl's St. Ignatius Chapel at Seattle University.

We will be staying at the Hotel Alexis, a quiet boutique hotel located two blocks from the waterfront. To conclude our visit to the Pacific Northwest, we will travel by Clipper vessel to spend a day in Victoria, Canada, where we will have a private tour of Butchart Gardens and a walking tour of downtown and Parliament.

Through the vast RDA network, our tours provide the rare opportunity to

meet local architects, preservationists, and historians; visit private homes; and enjoy behind-the-scenes tours of public spaces. Please contact Lynn Kelly (713-256-3244) or the RDA office (713-348-4876) for additional information about either trip.

RDA GALA: MAN IN MOTION HONOREES: METRO AND ED WULFE

The new METRO Administration Building, designed by PGAL, was the venue for the annual RDA Gala on November 13. Gala chairs Anita and Gerald Smith greeted nearly one thousand guests, many of whom arrived at the party via Houston's new light rail system. The RDA honored METRO and developer Ed Wulfe. Wulfe helmed the effort that resulted in the successful passage of the referendum in favor of Houston's light rail development. Wulfe serves as chairman of the Main Street Coalition and has led the redevelopment of Houston's Main Street Corridor.

The new building, located at the Downtown Transit Center at 1900 Main Street, will open for business in January 2005. Look for party pictures in *Cite* 63.