

# Housing Authority to handle RDA projects

## County grapples with aftermath of Redevelopment Agency's end

City News Service

RIVERSIDE — The Board of Supervisors Tuesday designated the county Housing Authority to manage publicly funded affordable housing projects initiated by the Redevelopment Agency, which was eliminated by state legislation last year along with nearly 400 other RDAs throughout California.

In a 4-0 vote — with board Chairman John Tavaglione absent — the supervisors named the Housing Authority as “successor agency” to the county RDA in all housing-related matters.

The county's Economic Development Agency was



Buster



Stone

designated in March as the principal successor agency, overseeing all revitalization projects not connected to housing.

There are several dozen RDA projects on tap countywide, though the exact number of low- to moderate-income housing projects could not be immediately confirmed.

“The critical issue for the county is creating more

jobs,” said Supervisor Bob Buster. “Infrastructure improvements and redevelopment contribute to that.”

He expressed concerns about securing funding to complete remaining and future RDA projects as doubts linger about how to pay for them.

The board will hold a workshop on redevelopment during its Jan. 24 meeting.

In June, Gov. Jerry Brown signed Assembly bills 1x26 and 1x27, which mandated phasing out RDAs statewide and provided for an alternate program under which revitalization projects would be allowed to continue.

Supporters of the legislation argued that redevelopment dollars — gleaned from higher property tax receipts that result from pro-

jects — would be better used to fund schools and other municipal functions during the current tight budgetary times.

Opponents, including Riverside County, countered that RDA projects provided localized economic stimulus, creating construction jobs, eradicating blight and raising commercial and residential property values.

The League of California Cities and the California Redevelopment Association filed a lawsuit challenging the changes to redevelopment.

The California Supreme Court heard arguments in the matter and handed down a Dec. 29 ruling upholding the legislation ending redevelopment but striking down a law requiring counties and cities to fork over

roughly \$1.7 billion by mid-January and make aggregate annual payments of \$400 million to fund grade schools, community colleges, fire districts and transit districts under the “Alternative Voluntary Redevelopment Program.”

Despite the decision, entities that wish to continue their redevelopment programs using successor agencies will be required, under AB 1x26, to share revenues derived from projects.

According to the statute, funds not used to cover RDA debt and overhead costs will be “remitted to (a county's) auditor-controller for (proportional) distribution to cities, the county, special districts and school districts.”

“The legislation that abolished RDAs and funding

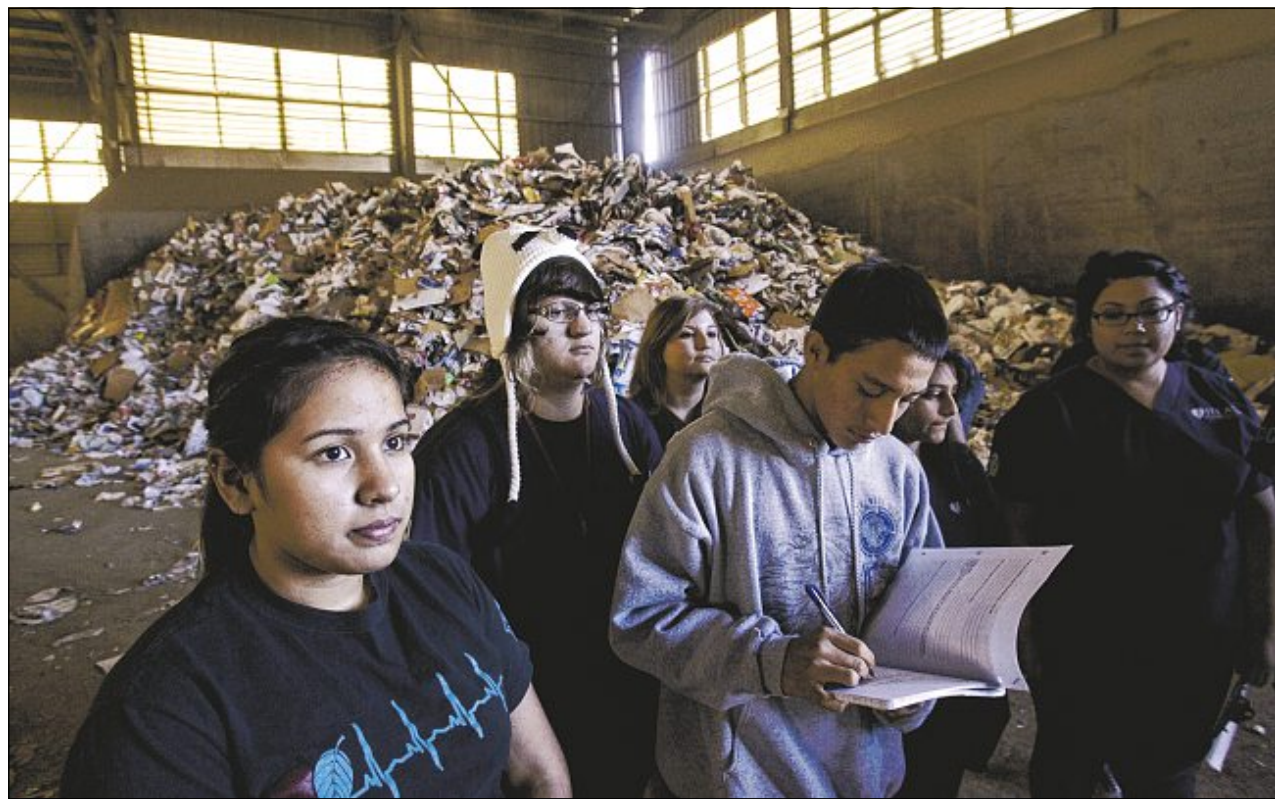
that had been available will now go back to the black hole of Sacramento,” Supervisor Jeff Stone said Tuesday. “The state is balancing its books on the backs of local governments. It's a shame.”

Riverside County's redevelopment agency, with about \$100 million in annual revenue, is the state's seventh-largest. A total of 625 redevelopment projects have been completed in the county.

There are 37 projects in the pipeline, including road improvements, parks, libraries, affordable housing complexes and public safety facilities, county officials said.

Stone said one of the points of discussion at the board's Jan. 24 meeting should be downsizing staff in the county's now-defunct Redevelopment Agency.

## Students learn about career possibilities



Arvin Campo (center) takes notes during a tour of Burrtec Waste Management's Edom Hill Transfer Station in Cathedral City as part of a job shadow day for Cathedral City High School students. OMAR ORNELAS/THE DESERT SUN

Students from Cathedral City High School swarmed medical and environmental businesses across the Coachella Valley on Tuesday as part of a job shadow day.

The students are participating in the school's Health and Environmental Academy of Learning (HEAL), which is

designed to connect high school curricula to career possibilities.

The academy, one of 15 in Coachella Valley high schools, partners with local businesses and the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership to offer job shadowing, internships and industry experts.

Businesses the students visited Tues-

day include a Coachella Valley Mosquito & Vector Control facility in Indio, California BioMass in Thermal, Burrtec Waste Management's Edom Hill Transfer Station in Cathedral City and John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Indio, where they observed surgery.

— Michelle Mitchell

## Annual Fashion Week El Paseo to feature 'Project Runway' alumni

City News Service

PALM DESERT — The seventh annual Fashion Week El Paseo, which runs March 17-27, will feature contestants and winners from the television show “Project Runway.”

The March 21 “Stars of Project Runway” event will feature eight show winners and all-stars, some of whom appear in the current season, said Susan Stein, co-producer of the event and fashion editor of Palm Springs Life magazine.

The following day, creations from the eight designers, including Palm Springs-based Michael Costello and Mondo Guerra, will be featured at a trunk show.

Costello and Guerra

helped set an event attendance record with their appearance at Fashion Week last year.

Other designers in the “Stars of Project Runway” are Mila Hermanovski, Michael Drummond, Kara Janx, Joshua Christensen, Seth Aaron Henderson and Gordana Gehlhausen.

Fashion Week El Paseo is held in the El Paseo shopping district and features nightly runway shows, trunk shows, receptions, in-store events and programs to benefit local charities.

The event showcases new designs from established designers and designers from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles.

Events include a canine fashion day and a runway show featuring more than 15 El Paseo retailers.

For information and tickets, visit [www.fashionweekelpaseo.com](http://www.fashionweekelpaseo.com).

Have an idea for a community story? Please send an email to [localnews@thedesertsun.com](mailto:localnews@thedesertsun.com)

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