

# InfrastructureUSA

## Guest on THE INFRA BLOG

**Richard M. Daley, Former Mayor of Chicago**

**Conversation with Steve Anderson, Managing Director, InfrastructureUSA**

### **Getting Together to Talk Sustainability**

I believe in sustainability, and as mayor for 22 years I always thought you lead by example. As a city in building all the projects, schools, parks, anything we did, we started looking at sustainability and we had to lead by example and find out what works and what doesn't work. Here in Chicago, we looked at climate change and we had the public, the private, not-for-profit, MacArthur Foundation, everybody ran that. We came up with kind of an agenda for all governments in the private sector and outside reviewing how well we are doing, like a score card, and what you're doing right, what you're not doing. So it's a good concept and everybody worked together, and there'll be differences in opinion so I always thought sustainability was one thing that everybody could help in.

### **The Sustainability Exchange: Building United Cities**

The concept is developing united cities to look at sustainability, so if individual cities try to do it, especially the medium, smaller cities, it's very difficult. The idea is to identify the best practices of energy efficiency, water, waste management, or transportation, so we're identifying those areas. There is a move to a cleaner, more sustainable future: what is it? What is the return on it? So the problem is adoption. How do cities know where to turn to, whom to trust, how to get the projects done, how to make the process easier, more efficient? What we're doing is we are partnering with cities every step of the adoption process. One of the problems, if they have smaller communities, you can't just say, "Ok this community is going to do it," you have to look at a holistic approach. It's much better for them if 20 small suburban areas or 30 or 40 got together in a region, or more, and said, "Here, lets look at this. Lets look at identifying a project." Say you want to do LED lighting: okay, why do you do it in one suburb and not the other suburb? You identify projects, then you start developing projects, then talk about financing. What's your procurement process when you have each one of them? What's your implementation? How do you monitor and have oversight on it? And so it's better to bring more suburban areas and governments together and so what we do is we have experts in sustainability, engineering, public affairs, legal, & project financing. How we differ is first we look at all cities. It doesn't matter what size the city, you know, usually the bigger cities, New York, Chicago, LA, they are pretty independent in what they can do. So secondly we focus on sharing information. We think there should be a platform where every city looks at platforms and says, "Ok what are we doing with sustainability, what is the platform and how do you get the projects thought about? How do you get them done? Who helps you in the whole process?" Because if no one's helping you through the whole process, then it costs you more and more money in the end,

unfortunately. Thirdly, we focus strictly on water, energy efficiency, waste management, and transportation. We don't do policy. We're not into policy on these infrastructure projects. And so everybody says, "Well what companies are going to participate?" It's an open process; anyone can participate. We think we can bring experts in regards to those four areas. We don't control any of the process, we just bring in the resources they need.

### **Think Long-Term or Waste Money**

The bridge to nowhere has hurt all infrastructure, you know, this idea of infrastructure. Some say "Ready shovel, hurry up, let's get rid of the money." No, this has to be a process. You can't say "Okay, we have X amount of money, go do something. You have to spend it within a year." I think the debate got caught up into not looking at long-range infrastructure projects that are sustainable and allow a much more efficient operation dealing with sustainability of businesses using the infrastructure or the private sector. I think that's what the debate got in. Now infrastructure is a bad word; you hear it all over. The government doesn't have enough money, and I've always viewed that the private sector, yes, we'll make some money, there's nothing wrong with that, but as long as everything is set up and people understand what private money can do – Canada has one of the best infrastructure projects with private money going into it, so they have been very fortunate. America has to get back because it's not just the roads, it's the water systems, it's the energy systems, it's transportation, its looking at things and how, with sustainability, we can be more efficient. That includes private utility companies, too. I believe that's another area that we've never concentrated on. But with ours, it's sustainability to help smaller communities. I mean, we are talking to a number of cities like Phoenix, New Orleans, Atlanta, South Bend, Newton, Summersville, Carmel, Ohio. So we're trying to get a combination of kind of big cities, mid-sized cities and smaller cities to look at this.

### **Mayors Can Learn from Each Other**

A number of years ago I put together a metropolitan mayors conference, about 200-300 mayors around the metropolitan area all coming together, and as a big city mayor I said "Wait, you're going to treat me the same as any other mayor. I'm going to sit at your table, I'm going to listen to you, I'm not going to be running meetings." I have found out that smaller mayors have great ideas; some are not full-time, some are part-time. I found out great ideas came from them. They dealt with an issue that I didn't see how they dealt with it and they are very accomplished on the issue. From my viewpoint it's like passion, it isn't about making money, it's basically about helping the communities. That's what I like about this exchange: that you're really trying to help communities to deal with some of these issues. Instead of being mandated by the government, you know the government comes out and mandates the justice department and says you have to do this, then they do it. It has nothing to do with sustainability; it's just a project that the federal government wanted and somehow they squeeze it in there. So from my viewpoint, listen to those citizens of the community and the elected mayor or whomever it is, just really work with them and be able to accomplish some of the things that I think

we can accomplish and lead the world. At the same time build a nucleus of experts in the United States and be able to go around the world creating jobs here, and creating jobs wherever they are, and to make a better world in the long run. Because the environment is not just located in one community.

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