

NORTHERN NEWS



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California Chapter
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Making Great Communities Happen

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JULY/AUGUST 2013

Local planners assist preservation efforts in Vietnam

By Stefan Pellegrini, AICP

This past March, I took seven Berkeley students of the College of Environmental Design to participate in a two-week design workshop in Huế, Vietnam. It was the latest in a long series of international workshops for me as a member of the Urban Design faculty at Berkeley.

The workshop was the result of collaboration between the City of Huế and five universities, including Huế University of Sciences (Vietnam), Waseda University (Japan), Grenoble School of Architecture and the National University of Landscape of Versailles (France), and the University of California, Berkeley. Our colleagues at Waseda, who have been active working in Huế for over a decade to promote good planning and design, invited us to participate.

Huế is located in central Vietnam and was the capital of the Nguyen Dynasty for nearly 150 years in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Built following *Shan-Shui* (<http://bit.ly/12F7xXq>) Chinese planning principles, it possesses a collection of monuments along the Huong (Perfume) River that is unparalleled in the Asian world, receiving World Heritage designation from UNESCO in 1993. City officials at the Huế Monuments Conservation Center (HMCC, <http://bit.ly/17t1tBh>) work to preserve these monuments, including the Citadel at the city's core, the Purple Forbidden City palace complex within, and the collection of imperial tombs upstream along the Huong River.

The Citadel has changed little since it was constructed in the 1830s. With a patchwork of leafy parks, tree-lined streets, and a sophisticated network of canals and moats, it provides an incredible backdrop for the daily lives of some 60,000 residents within its walls. A very high level of activity continues to occur out in the open, along streets and in public places, from morning badminton matches and cheerful banter at sidewalk cafes, to fishermen drawing in their nets and farmers tending their gardens.

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Huế's Modern Skyline. Photo by author

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By Stefan Pellegrini, AICP

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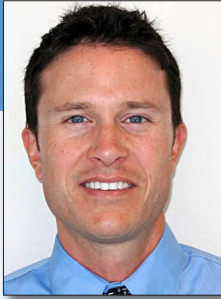
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Find JOBS and EVENTS CALENDAR at
norcalapa.org



Director's note

By Jeff Baker

Annual APA California Chapter Conference

The 2013 APA California Chapter Conference is just around the corner and registration is now

open! This year, the conference will be held in Visalia on October 6–9, and early registration ends on August 2. The host committee has put together what should be another fun and informative conference with a variety of sessions, mobile workshops, and speakers. The “Conference-at-a-Glance” document on the Chapter’s website highlights many of these great sessions and events.

Welcome New Board Members!

I am pleased to announce that the Northern Section Board appointed two new members — **Amanda Becker** as the San Jose State University Student Representative, and **Jennifer Piozet** as an Associate Editor, *Northern News* — at our July meeting. I would also like to thank several outgoing members for their hard work and dedication, including former SJSU Student Representative **Juliana Flores**, and **Emy Mendoza**, who recently stepped down as the University Liaison.

The Northern Section Board is currently seeking candidates for the University Liaison position. To find out more about this position please review our by-laws, pages 9 and 10, at <http://bit.ly/1dHJaKf>. Please contact me at jeff.baker@dublin.ca.gov if you are interested in serving as the University Liaison.

2015 Annual Conference

As many of you have already heard, in two years, the 2015 APA California Chapter Conference will be held in Oakland. **Erik Balsley, AICP**, and **Hing Wong, AICP**, have graciously volunteered to lead the conference organization committee as conference co-chairs. Serving on the conference committee provides a great opportunity to network your colleagues while having fun and giving back to the profession. Please read the announcement for the first informational and organizational meeting for the conference on [page 12](#) in this edition of the *Northern News*. Please consider volunteering your time to help ensure we host a successful and excellent conference.

Upcoming Events

Be sure to visit the Northern Section Calendar for a listing of events taking place near you! ■

Northern Section welcomes 14 new AICP members

The fourteen Northern Section planners listed passed the May 2013 AICP exam. These planners represent over a third of the 38 new AICP members in California. Nine of the 14 new AICP members attended the Northern Section-sponsored exam-prep workshops at San José State University.

Please join the Northern Section Board of Directors in congratulating our newest AICP members:

Jin Zhao
Bradley J. Musinski*
Heather Greg Bradley
Rosalind L. Litzky*
David D. Barry*
Allison N. Albericci*
Michael D. Nelson*
Ryan A. Wells
Keith Orlesky
Piu Ghosh
Tina Garg*
Sheldon S. A. H. Sing*
Alicia T. Parker*
Jennifer Gogan*

* Attended the SJSU workshops. ■



Inside the Citadel. Photo by author

But modern Hué is much more than just the picturesque Citadel and its monuments — it is a living and breathing city of 350,000 that is rapidly changing, and much of this change is putting its historic resources at risk as development pressure increases. Just outside the Citadel, new buildings — nine or 10 stories tall — are under construction along wide avenues, in stark contrast to the more traditional shop and garden houses within. Scooters and motorcycles have taken over streets en masse, whereas just a few years ago bicycles remained the vehicles of choice. Over 1.5 million tourists visit every year, placing additional demands on Hué’s infrastructure. A series of planning amendments to the city’s Management Plan have recently been proposed that would double its land area and accommodate hundreds of thousands of new residents.



Morning Commuters. Photo by author

Hué is also extremely prone to flooding as it sits at the mouth of a large lagoon and tidal estuary, with most of the city not much more than a meter above sea level. Historically, semi-annual monsoon rains have supported two crops of rice each year and a lagoon teeming with fish and shellfish. While this pattern has been central to life in Hué for centuries, the monsoon season has become less predictable, bringing more frequent, heavier rainfalls and larger floods, while the lagoon has become more susceptible to storm surges and tidal waves. In 1999, Tropical Storm “Eve” brought just such an event, with a simultaneous cascade of rainfall that quickly overflowed the Huong River’s banks and a storm surge that overran the lagoon. In a matter of hours, floodwaters reached heights of up to 7 meters, bringing considerable destruction and loss of life.

Climate change models suggest that these kinds of storms will happen with greater frequency and severity, and scientists are projecting mean high tide water levels to increase by up to a meter by the end of the century, endangering the lagoon environment and increasing susceptibility to storm surge.

With these larger issues of heritage and environmental preservation in mind, we led six interdisciplinary and international urban design teams of students and young professionals throughout the city. With representation from 11 countries, this was a spirited and exciting process that unfolded over a month-long period in many languages! Two teams looked at the larger region and the Huong River, while four teams focused on local planning areas — each with their own historic value — that face significant pressure to change. These ranged from rural villages in the vicinity of the historic imperial tombs upstream from the Citadel, to depressed inner-city neighborhoods in need of infrastructure upgrades in the midstream area, to fishing and farming settlements ringing the lagoon.

The HMCC planners asked us to assist with establishing policies for lands surrounding Hue’s historic monuments. Around each, they work to establish a “buffer zone” where natural resources, tourist access, and local activities are balanced. While protection of the monuments is very straightforward, it’s hardly ever clear exactly how the buffer zone should be delineated, or what exactly should be allowed or encouraged to occur within it. The four local teams focused on improving these policies in light of the proposed amendments to the Management Plan.

(continued on next page)

Local planners assist preservation efforts in Vietnam *(continued from previous page)*

The final two groups took a more regional view, looking at the Huong River, how context-sensitive public access and connectivity could be improved, and how anticipated land use changes might impact the watershed as a whole.

The teams concluded that the watershed should serve as the appropriate “buffer zone” for the world heritage monuments, and recommended that policies be established that limit development of sensitive environmental lands, preserve cultural heritage, and maintain public access to the monuments, Huong River, and shoreline. As here in the San Francisco Bay Area, a special planning board could be given jurisdiction to facilitate discussion regarding the nature and extent of development proposals within this zone.

We presented our ideas to a group of local officials and experts that convened in the beautiful 19th century Royal Theater to discuss the project proposals, recommending a cautious approach towards new development. This seemed to resonate, as many were skeptical regarding proposed amendments to the Management Plan mentioned earlier. At the same time, the officials were eager to see economic development in Huế on par with its regional competitors, and were wary of limitations on future development, not to mention stronger controls on private property. They urged a continued discussion of our team’s findings in the context of the Management Plan updates, as well as sustained community involvement and transparency in decision-making.

As Huế continues to rapidly modernize, it’s hoped that the workshop will have a lasting effect. Perhaps the legacy



Final presentation. Photo by author

of conservation and regional planning in our own Bay Area can serve as a useful precedent. In the end, the workshop opened a very important dialogue with stakeholders in the city who may want to advocate for a similar, long-ranged approach. The exchange of ideas between young urban design and planning professionals and citizens of Huế helped to bring these issues to light.

Stefan Pellegrini, AICP, is a principal at Opticos Design, Inc. He has lectured in Urban Design at the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley since 2005 and has conducted several international workshops with his colleague Professor Peter Bosselmann. This article was adapted from a series of blog posts originally featured on the Opticos Design blog that can be read at www.opticosdesign.com/news/. Stefan can be reached at stefan.pellegrini@opticosdesign.com ■

Twelve rules for new grads. “Advice [for] new college graduates about launching themselves into the workforce: [Number] 2. Be someone that your colleagues want to work with. 4. From the very first moment, remember you are creating an impression. 5. Do what’s required, from the menial to the extraordinary, to get the job done. 9. Don’t learn the tricks of the trade, learn the trade. 12. Don’t lose yourself trying to be what you think others want you to be.” See all 12, fleshed out by Michael Watkins, *HBR Blog Network*, <http://bit.ly/17DDLWX>

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Eleven percent of US counties are now majority-minority. I.e., more than 50 percent of the county's population is other than non-Hispanic White alone. See US Census, June 14, 2013, <http://1.usa.gov/1dHG6Og>

Meet a local planner

Fifth in a series of interviews by Tania Sheyner, AICP



Kim Jordan is a Senior Planner with the City of Ukiah, where she has worked for about four and a half years.

How did you become interested in planning?

I was an Economics major at Santa Rosa Junior College and found it frustrating that whenever something didn't work, it was called an externality and essentially disregarded. In my sophomore year, I took an environmental studies class, where we discussed ecological economics and the planning process as a whole. That class piqued my curiosity. When I transferred to Sonoma State, I changed my major to Environmental Studies and Economics. While studying planning, I was a planning intern with the City of Petaluma. After graduation, I worked for the City of Petaluma for 8 years, first as an intern and, by the time I left, as an associate planner. Then I left to become a Senior Planner with the City of Ukiah, where I have been four and a half years.

Tell me more about what planning is like in Ukiah

Ukiah is a small rural community that is almost entirely built out, so we deal primarily with infill development. It's really an interesting community — some people are very progressive and interested in sustainable development and the role the government can play in that, and others believe problems are best solved without government intervention. Both are very vocal in the planning process.

Two of our most notable projects in the last 15 years are the Walmart expansion and Costco. Ukiah has had a Walmart since the 1990s that wanted to expand. It was a very controversial project and was ultimately denied. Now Costco wants to build a store. Many in the community view Costco differently in that it provides better wages and benefits for its employees and, therefore, better jobs. So it's being received very differently by the community.

We also recently finished a form-based code for our downtown and one of the main gateway corridors into downtown. The new code is one of the most progressive planning projects in Ukiah in some time. It has stringent architectural standards built into it, but also regulates by use in order to create the mix of uses needed for a more active and vibrant downtown. We look forward to implementing the new code and believe it has the potential to revitalize our downtown.

How is the City dealing with climate change?

Ukiah has a collaborative Sustainable Communities Grant with Mendocino County and Fort Bragg. We just finished our greenhouse

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Meet a local planner (continued from previous page)

gas inventory, and a consultant is preparing the Climate Action Plan. Fortunately, the City of Ukiah has its own electric utility with a variety of programs and rebates to reduce energy use. As a result, Ukiah has seen a big reduction in energy use and emissions over the past five years.

What are some of the most important skills a planner should have?

A planner should have good analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, which come into play every day. Along with these skills, a planner needs to be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. If you can't get the message across, you aren't as effective. The combination of skills is crucial.



Interviewer Tania Sheyner, AICP, is Northern Section's Professional Development Director. You can reach her at tsheyner@gmail.com

Where in the world?



Unabandoned buildings.

"Putting a family in an abandoned building, ridding an area of blight, if that's not beautifying, I don't know what it is." —Lawyer Edward Voci as quoted by Ben Austen in "The Death and Life of Chicago," <http://nyti.ms/16svR2s>

Photo by Caroline Teng. (Answer on [page 9](#))

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Who's where



Amanda Becker is now the San Jose State University student representative to the Northern Section Board. Amanda has a BA in History from Sonoma State University and a GIS Certificate from American River College. Currently enrolled at SJSU, Amanda expects to receive a Master of Urban Planning in 2014.



Regan Miller, P.E., recently joined the Monterey Bay office of RBF Consulting, where she is responsible for leading transportation planning and public works projects. She began her career with Michael Baker Corporation, and most recently worked as a traffic designer and planner with McCormick & Taylor. Her West Coast experience includes the Highway

156 Corridor for the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). Regan holds a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from Rutgers University.



Kieulan Pham recently joined David J. Powers & Associates in San José as an Assistant Project Manager, preparing environmental review reports for projects throughout the South Bay. Pham most recently held a Graduate Internship in *Watershed Protection: Urban Runoff* with the City of San Jose. She holds a Master of Urban and Regional Planning/Environmental

Planning from San Jose State University and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, Sustainable Urban Design/Natural Design Restoration from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.



Jennifer Piozet recently joined the APA California *Northern News* team as an Associate Editor. She holds a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University and a BA in Art, also from SJSU. Piozet is interning with SPUR San Jose.

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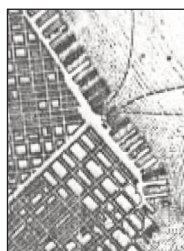
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Answer to "Where in the world?" (Page 7)

View from Patuxai Arch in Vientiane, Laos.
Photo by Caroline Teng.

Who's where (continued from previous page)



Michele Rodriguez, AICP, is San Pablo's new Development Services Manager, responsible for overseeing the city's building and planning divisions. Among previous positions, Rodriguez was with Bevilacqua-Knight, Inc. (BK) as Technical Program Manager for Energy Upgrade California, Regional Building Retrofit, 2009–2012. She also was principal and section manager for the Marin Countywide Plan, 2000–2006. Rodriguez is a former member of national APA's Diversity Committee, and was Membership Inclusion Director for Northern Section and for APA California. She holds both master and bachelor degrees in Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University.



Nathan Schmidt, AICP, a transportation planner with RBF Consulting, Monterey Bay office, has been promoted to Project Manager. Formerly a project planner with the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Nathan has over seven years of experience on complex projects in the Monterey Bay area and Salinas Valley. He holds a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Indiana University and a Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.



John Steere, AICP, is now Environmental Services Group Manager at GHD, Santa Rosa. He remains a managing partner in Green Planning Collaborative, Berkeley, and previously was a senior environmental planner at Cardno Entrix (Concord). Steere holds a joint master's degree in city planning and landscape architecture from UC Berkeley and a bachelor's degree from Harvard.



Allen Tai, AICP, has returned to the City of Alameda as Supervising Planner, where he is responsible for current planning activities and overseeing planning functions in the permit center. He had been a planner with Alameda from 2002 to 2006. For the next seven-plus years, Allen worked at the City of San Jose in a variety of significant planning positions. He served on the APA California – Northern Section board for four years (2008–2012) as Administrative Director and Director-Elect. Allen holds a Master in Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University ■

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Happy 20th birthday to the Housing Action Coalition *By Shiloh Ballard*

Twenty years ago, Santa Clara County housing leaders came together to address three key problems — affordability, availability, and attainability. Housing need outpaced the available supply. Yet getting approval to build more homes was — and still is — a harrowing task.

To identify and support worthy housing proposals at the project level, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, Santa Clara County, and the Greenbelt Alliance created the Housing Action Coalition (HAC).

The HAC was intentionally broad-based, bringing together labor, business, and environmentalists — constituencies that do not typically work together — to organize wide support for projects that addressed housing affordability. Over the past two decades, the HAC has organized housing tours, educational forums, and project level advocacy. The Coalition has —

- endorsed the construction of 64,000 housing units;
- been responsible for spurring cities to voluntarily set aside more redevelopment money for housing;
- helped to quash anti-housing measures in Cupertino and Saratoga; and
- helped provide a safe climate for city council members to approve rather than reject housing developments.

Unfortunately, while HAC has had considerable successes to celebrate, the same housing challenges persist to keep the coalition members and staff very busy.

Shiloh Ballard is Vice President of Housing and Community Development at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. You can read more about HAC's work and challenges at hacsc.org

Challenges are opportunities. “We have challenges in Chicago. We can’t wish them away.” But every neighborhood had strengths, he explained, and he would take those strengths and make them work for the people of Englewood and elsewhere. “Every challenge offers an opportunity. ... My real goal is that — regardless of where they live in the city, I want children in Chicago to see downtown, the central business district, and envision themselves as part of this dynamic city — the city of energy and opportunity, the city that’s on the move. ... If you have the best trained workforce, that’s the best insurance policy you can buy for the future of your city.” — Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel as quoted by Ben Austen in “The Death and Life of Chicago,” <http://nyti.ms/16svR2s>

Resiliency and adaptation: Joint Policy Committee plans for climate change

By Michele Rodriguez, AICP

Individuals, families, businesses, communities, and local governments are beginning to assess their vulnerabilities, devise strategies for improving resilience, identify tools and resources, and develop and implement adaptation plans to deal with localized environmental impacts of climate change. The 12-Month Climate Resilience Action Plan funded by the Kresge Foundation and the Bay Area Joint Policy Committee is an ambitious effort to accelerate and strengthen adaptation planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. The plan provides support to major initiatives (such as the Resilient Shorelines Project that addresses sea-level rise and earthquake impacts), brings organizations together to collaborate on joint adaptation actions, establishes formal relationships with State and other metropolitan adaptation programs, and links Bay Area programs to those of other major cities across the country.

Under California statute (CA Code § 66536.1), the Bay Area Joint Policy Committee (JPC) is the regional policy coordinating body to improve the quality of land use, transportation, and air quality planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. It coordinates the development and drafting of major planning documents by the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG), the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). ABAG serves as the JPC's coordinating body, and provides consulting staff to guide its work plan. In addition to the Climate Resilience Action Plan, the JPC's other major work products focus on sustainable communities (Plan Bay Area), renewable energy, regional economic development, and climate change adaptation.

As part of the Climate Resilience Action Plan, the JPC recently held a conference on "Adaptation & Resilience in the Real World" that was extremely well attended by a variety of experts on climate change and adaptation. Local government representatives from Washington, DC and Fort Lauderdale explained how they prepare for extreme weather events. Science experts described nature-based climate adaptations that mitigate climate change impacts. The income, class, ethnicity, age, disability, and health demographics of vulnerable communities were discussed, as were the climate change impacts on these populations. Attendees also discussed how to mainstream adaptation planning into local hazard mitigation plans, general plans, zoning, climate action plans, capital improvement programs, and other existing planning processes.

At the local government panel, Susanne Torriente, Fort Lauderdale's assistant city manager, explained how the city is successfully addressing climate change in its adaptation planning through a four-county compact and a Mayors' Pledge. A local steering committee completed a visioning process and a five-year strategic plan that links local capital improvement programs and storm water management plans with the regional sustainability plan. The strategic plan forms the basis for subsequent infrastructure funding decisions. Fort Lauderdale found it extremely beneficial to collaborate and share best management practices during this process, and several partnerships formed as a result. NOAA, EPA, and HUD provided climate adaptation training during the process, which included an event on climate change risks with panelists from the banking, insurance, and the development industry. Neighborhood level summits were then completed to mobilize local action.

Another speaker at the conference, Ellie Cohen, executive director of Blue Point Conservation Science, described adaptive strategies for natural watershed-based approaches to mitigating climate change. Her natural "climate smart" restoration approach emphasizes ideas like restoring meadows to store, purify, and slowly release water after a storm event. Her firm has identified plant species that are drought and flood-tolerant so wildlife can find food during migrations. In short, extensive modeling of ecosystems can help identify those characteristics best suited to help us adapt to future changes.

Climate risk is also a function of a community's exposure to climate change impacts, vulnerability to them, and ability to adapt. During the conference, Kirsten Schwind of Bay Localize, and Nile Malloy of Communities for Better Environment, noted that climate adaptation planners need to understand which climate impacts will be felt locally; who is most vulnerable to those impacts; and how best to reach and serve vulnerable residents. Some people are at greater risk than others, as their age, race, or income can affect their ability to prepare, respond, and recover from a natural disaster or other climate impacts. Communities for Better Environment recommends working with organizations in highly vulnerable communities to learn the best way to identify, reach, and serve people who are most likely to be hardest hurt by climate impacts. Pre-existing networks of communication can be critical in emergency planning and implementation.

(continued on next page)

Resiliency and adaptation: Joint Policy Committee plans for climate change

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There is no single planning structure to address adaptation and resiliency. Planners can draw on a range of tools to address carbon reduction, adaptation, and resiliency planning for climate change. However, a Climate Action Plan (CAP) continues to be a foundational document to establish baseline conditions, set targets for carbon reduction, and capture and measure data. Bruce Riordan, a consultant to the JPC, created a matrix showing the impacts from climate change (e.g., wildfire, energy disruptions, flooding, extreme storm events, sea level rise, extreme heat days, ocean acidification, and food price increases), and the large number of stakeholders needed to prepare CAPs and implement climate mitigation. The table clearly shows that climate change adaptation and resiliency planning is a very collaborative and complex effort.

The JPC is on the right track with their current approach, and the timing couldn't be better, as we experience an increasing number of extreme weather events. A handful of Bay Area jurisdictions are working on local pilot programs, including Silicon Valley 2.0 led by Demetra McBride of Santa Clara County, and the Marin County Adaptation pilot led by Board Member Kate Sears.

Michele Rodriguez, AICP, LEED AP, is the Community Development Director for the City of San Pablo. ■

Call for interest and volunteers

Want to become involved with APA California – Northern Section? Two events are coming up that offer opportunities to help plan important Section events.

International planning tour meeting

Planning for the Section's next international planning tour to Eastern Europe in 2014 is underway. If you are interested in learning more about, participating in, or organizing the tour, please attend our second organizational meeting from 7 – 9 PM at 101 Eighth Street (the MetroCenter) in Oakland, August 8. A light dinner will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, contact **Hing Wong, AICP**, at hingw@abag.ca.gov

APA California 2015 Conference Planning meeting

As announced in June's *Northern News*, the 2015 California APA conference will be held in Oakland and will be hosted by the Northern Section. We are seeking volunteers to help plan and organize the many components of the conference. Our first planning meeting will be Saturday, September 14, from 10 AM to noon at the MetroCenter in Oakland. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to **Erik Balsley, AICP**, at erik.balsley@gmail.com or **Hing Wong, AICP**, at hingw@abag.ca.gov. If you would like to be involved but can't attend, please contact Erik or Hing to indicate your interest and learn about the efforts required and the committees that will be formed. ■

LETTERS

I found the latest issue of *Northern News* to be particularly interesting and informative. I love the online format too. Thank you for providing this service!

Victoria Eisen

The online *Northern News* format is so much fun to explore! Your team has been doing great work setting that up.

Connie Galambos Malloy ■

Unfriend. The verb unfriend, though it has gained widespread currency as the ultimate act of social severance in social media, dates back to 1659, according to current Oxford English Dictionary findings. It existed even earlier as a noun — as far back as 1275 — a use briefly revived in the 19th century by the Scottish novelist Walter Scott. —Oxford Dictionaries, <http://bit.ly/18hNzpi>



Norcal roundup

Assembled by Erik S. Balsley, AICP, associate editor

Plan Bay Area continues to roil Marin County

<http://bit.ly/1YYdPM>

"Plan Bay Area comes to a final vote on July 18 in Oakland, and a busload of the plan's fiercest opponents in Marin County plan on attending. 'So far, more than 30 people have signed up,' said Susan Kirsch of Mill Valley, a co-founder of Citizen Marin, which chartered a 48-seat Marin Airporter bus to shuttle plan opponents to the meeting. Opponents of the plan, such as Citizen Marin, assert that it robs counties and cities of their control over land-use decisions and will result in high-density apartment developments that will degrade Marin's pristine environment and erode its small-town character. Time will be provided at the meeting for public comment. Kirsch said, however, since most opponents expect the plan to be approved despite its flaws, public comment at this stage may not be the chief reason for attending." —Richard Halstead, "Busload of Plan Bay Area opponents heading to Oakland for final vote on plan," *Marin Independent Journal*, July 15, 2013. [Ed. Note: The plan was adopted.]

Bike sharing rolls out in the Bay Area

<http://onforb.es/12vryjo>

"San Francisco is the center of an enthusiastic transportation community, but it has been late to embrace bike sharing. That began to change when Bay Area Bike Share opened for memberships. The program, which is expected to launch next month, is broader than many other systems. For one thing, it's covering a wide geographic area of San Francisco, Redwood City, Mountain View, Palo Alto, and San Jose. Eventually, it will have 70 stations and 700 bikes. According to the system's Web site, the initial pilot phase is estimated to cost approximately \$7 million with \$1.4 million in funding provided by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, \$1.3 million from the local agency partners, and \$4.29 million from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission." —Micheline Maynard, "San Francisco prepares for bike sharing as more cities hop on," *Forbes*, July 13, 2013.

Modern standards improve safety on the new Bay Bridge

<http://bit.ly/13Q2tCo>

"While much of the talk in project status briefings on the new Bay Bridge will center on whether construction setbacks will delay the planned Sept. 3 opening, officials also asked for a side-by-side comparison between the two bridges. 'It's like comparing the safety features of a 1930s Model A Ford to a 2000 Volvo,' said Caltrans

principal bridge engineer Brian Maroney earlier this week during a two-hour preview. The clearest difference in the new bridge will be the roomy 12-foot-wide standard travel lanes. The new bridge also has shoulders where drivers can pull over. Motorists won't see the fundamental difference between the old and new bridges until they know whether it withstands the next Big One. The new bridge was designed to meet the most stringent earthquake standards in California: Open to traffic within a day or two after the strongest ground motions engineers expect in a 1,500-year period." —Lisa Vorderbrueggen, "Old Bay Bridge is Model A-era technology, says bridge engineer," *Contra Costa Times*, July 5, 2013.

Palo Alto park maintains controversial residency requirement

<http://bit.ly/1cEl5mY>

"This month, the pristine Foothills Park nature preserve observed the 48th anniversary of its founding on June 19, 1965. In that time, little has changed. And the park's residency requirement, which allows only Palo Alto residents and their guests to enter and has spurred waxing and waning debate for nearly five decades, is still enforced. The initiative to purchase the park did not include whether or not access to it should be limited to residents, a rule that was added by the council after it asked Portola Valley and Los Altos Hills to share the purchase. When the two cities refused, Palo Alto decided to limit park use to its residents, Greg Betts, director of Palo Alto's Community Services Department said. Just about the only change in recent history, though a significant one, has been the addition of a trail through the park that allows anybody to access the nature preserve from a back entrance." —Audra Sorman, "Foothills Park: Still (mostly) just for Palo Altans," *Palo Alto Weekly*, June 30, 2013.

Silicon Valley adjusts to future BART service

<http://bit.ly/12Uxyi7>

"After decades of debate, Silicon Valley is finally getting onboard Bay Area Rapid Transit. But can it really change the Valley's car culture? BART likely won't change the game overnight. After all, it took years to get to this point. In 1957, when the BART district was formed, Santa Clara County opted out, permanently changing the region's transportation ecosystem. Decades later, in 2000, Santa Clara County passed a 30-year tax to pay for operating a BART line in the South Bay. Financial challenges required voters to pass another tax in 2008 to keep the dream alive. The initial emphasis will be on park-and-ride: many passengers are expected

(continued on next page)

to arrive by car. A major question is whether the market will build the kind of very dense residential and office projects near stations that cities and planners say are needed.” —Nathan Donato-Weinstein, “BART to Silicon Valley: Will it get us out of our cars?” *Silicon Valley Business Journal*, June 28, 2013.

Environmental problems with marijuana grows increase <http://nyti.ms/14tSuO4>

“It took the death of a small, rare member of the weasel family to focus the attention of Northern California’s marijuana growers on the impact that their huge and expanding activities were having on the environment. The idea that the counterculture’s crop of choice is bad for the environment has gone down hard here. Marijuana is an economic staple, particularly in Humboldt County’s rural southern end, called SoHum. Jennifer Budwig, the vice president of a local bank, estimated last year that marijuana infused more than \$415 million into the county’s annual economic activity, one-quarter of the total. Given federal prohibitions against profiting from marijuana, county officials have a limited toolbox to address the problems. ‘We have land-use authority, that’s it,’ said Mark Lovelace, a Humboldt County supervisor. He chafes at the county’s inability to establish a system of permits, for fear of running afoul of federal law.” —Felicity Barringer, “Marijuana crops in California threaten forests and wildlife,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 2013.

Tiny homes sprout on the west coast <http://bit.ly/16luwi4>

“This summer, Mendocino College’s Sustainable Technology program is offering a summer course on Construction Fundamentals and Green Building. The course, taught by Mendocino County native and PhD. Jen Riddell, will attempt to build a Tiny House in 15 days. Such houses are often built onto the bed of a trailer, sized to comply with highway towing standards so that the structures then become a moveable, portable home. Riddell is currently constructing her own tiny house, perched atop a 22-foot long trailer. It is just over 8 feet wide and less than 13.5 feet tall, making the structure towable. Tiny House communities are beginning to sprout, particularly in urban areas. ‘There are three examples in the US: a San Francisco development, a project in New York where the houses are 300 square feet, and another in Washington, DC,’ says Riddell.” —Carole Brodsky, “Mendocino College offering house-building course, on a tiny scale,” *The Ukiah Daily Journal*, June 7, 2013.

Historic buildings in Vallejo get a second life <http://bit.ly/13tSZW5>

“The original Vallejo City Hall and adjacent Masonic Temple on Marin Street were real fixer-uppers and just plain old, only a couple of short years ago. Plus, Vallejo had designated the buildings as city historic landmarks. That meant they needed to be renovated to exacting standards to preserve their character. However, Meea Kang and her Domus Development decided to take on the project, working with Vallejo. The result is Temple Art Lofts, which offers nine studio residences, 11 one-bedroom residences, and eight two-bedroom residences. The lower floor is available for commercial uses. Consequently, these two Solano County historic buildings have escaped the wrecking ball and found new life. Next, the two buildings may become Solano County’s newest additions to the National Register of Historic Places. The state Historic Resources Commission approved the nomination May 1.” —Barry Eberling, “Vallejo’s old City Hall, Masonic Temple seek national historic status,” *The Daily Republic*, June 2, 2013.

San Francisco learns from Mexico City’s bus rapid-transit system <http://bit.ly/12LNNP5>

“What really stunned a 16-person delegation from San Francisco on a recent transportation study trip to Mexico City was that it took just three years, including eight months of construction, to turn the idea of building a bus line that runs like a subway into a thriving bus rapid-transit system service. But even given differences in governmental structures, processes, and cultural expectations, it begs the question: Why do transit projects take so long here? What’s wrong with San Francisco’s process, Supervisor Scott Wiener said, is threefold: City departments don’t work well together on projects that require collaboration; it takes the city too long to shepherd a project through the environmental review process; and the Municipal Transportation Agency’s design process on projects is too long and too cumbersome. Others, including planners and politicians, say the public involvement process has gotten out of control. Public comment and controversy can continue through the community outreach efforts, planning process, and environmental studies, all the way up until construction begins.” —Michael Cabanatuan, “Why do SF transit projects take so long?” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 2013. ■

LOL. The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates LOL for ‘laughing out loud’ as far back as 1989, and doesn’t include it as an abbreviation for ‘lots of love’; but as far back as 1960, LOL stood for ‘little old lady.’ —*Oxford Dictionaries*, <http://bit.ly/18hNzpi>

Other top stories

Downtown Las Vegas update

Northern News has twice covered Tony Hsieh's ambitious plans to revamp Las Vegas' original downtown — in our December 2012/January 2013 issue, page 25, <http://bit.ly/12i2nfa>; and our May 2013 issue, page 14, <http://bit.ly/12i1Zxn>. It's a fascinating story and challenge. Below are excerpts from yet another *New York Times* article on Hsieh and Zappos, July 5, 2013.

Michael Kimmelman, <http://nyti.ms/12gnpuO>

"Tony Hsieh, a soft-spoken 39-year-old Internet billionaire who runs Zappos, the online clothing store, plans to do something transformative: build a version of the Mission district in San Francisco or the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn in downtown Vegas. The most fascinating aspect of this vision is the relocation of Zappos. Moving its headquarters downtown [from Henderson, 16 miles away] represents a pointed alternative to the multibillion-dollar suburban office parks that Google and Apple are building in Silicon Valley, notwithstanding that so many of their own employees want to live in, and commute from, San Francisco. Mr. Hsieh has bought into the solid notion that chance encounters on the street or at a club — urban collisions — spark innovation: cities, inherently, nurture the economy and culture.

"Short term, success depends on Mr. Hsieh's running the table, investment-wise. A range of business leaders, local converts to civic diversification, not just from the gambling industry, hopes he does. Long term, success will depend on a broader vision, which incorporates downtown casinos that have reinvested in themselves like the El Cortez, along with establishments that haven't. And new development will need to be integrated with existing schools, homeless shelters, and convenience stores, so the city doesn't simply end up with an isolated hipster office park."

California sprawls less

CP&DR, June 19, 2013

Bill Fulton, <http://bit.ly/1215rAe> • "According to the Census Bureau, California metros are densifying while their counterparts elsewhere are not. The Environmental Protection Agency has provided a compelling long-view look at density patterns in major metropolitan areas in the United States which reveals this pattern has held over the past 60 years. For the 39 largest metro areas that were delineated in 1950, population grew 2.5 times faster than population. And California? Nope, not sprawling. In fact, San Diego, LA-Orange County, the Inland Empire, and San Jose all saw their population grow faster than urbanized area. Overall, California metros added 240 percent to population and only 195 percent to land area. For the non-California metros among the 39 studied, population grew by 150 percent and land area grew by 455 percent."

CA high speed rail construction can begin without Fed approval

McClatchy, June 13, 2013

Michael Doyle, <http://bit.ly/18EGDDo> • "In a victory for a project that's faced repeated political obstacles, a divided [federal] Surface Transportation Board ruled 2-1 that the California High-Speed Rail Authority can begin construction on its own. The initial 65-mile stretch between Fresno and Merced will be exempt from the customary requirement that railway construction first obtain prior approval from the federal board. Gov. Jerry Brown, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengen, and several labor unions urged that the board exempt the project from the prior approval requirement."

Voting to exempt the project from STB review were "the board chairman, Daniel R. Elliott III, [who] formerly practiced as an attorney for the United Transportation Union, an Ohio-based organization that represents railroad workers; [and] Francis P. Mulvey, an economist who studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and formerly served as a Democratic aide on the House railroad subcommittee." In opposition was Vice Chairman Ann D. Begeman. She "formerly worked as a top aide to Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, and had previously joined high-speed rail skeptics in urging a longer public comment period on the issue."

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Fun with words and maps. There are traffic circles in America, but there also are roundabouts and rotaries. See "22 maps that show how Americans speak English totally differently from each other." Where do they say "soda" and where do they say "pop"; and in which states do they wear "sneakers" vs. gym shoes? <http://read.bi/15BIDrW>

The Sustainability Committee extends its reach

By Dave Javid, AICP

The Sustainability Committee recently sponsored two successful events to discuss and promote awareness of sustainable building techniques.

The Future of Livable Cities on the Pacific Rim

The Asia Society and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) hosted, and the Northern Section co-sponsored, this well attended event on May 28, 2013. Leading experts from Asia and the United States discussed how urban planners and designers from across the Pacific Rim are incorporating innovative planning tools and practices into developments in both urban cores and their peripheries. From transportation systems and green buildings to community networks and cultural spaces, the speakers explored how urbanization is influencing and shaping the future of the Pacific Rim.

The event featured keynote remarks by Thai-Ker Liu, Director of RSP Architects Planners & Engineers and the former Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Housing and Development Board, who spearheaded Singapore's public housing initiative and helped define the form of the city's urban development. Joining him were urban planning and analysis scholar Jennifer Wolch, Dean of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, and Lewis Knight, Senior Associate and Urban Designer at Gensler. Jeffrey Heller, President at Heller Manus Architects, moderated the event. He is a leader in the green movement and designer of some of the first sustainable architecture and large-scale planning projects in the US and China — including the first LEED Gold office towers in San Francisco and Shanghai.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Headquarters Walking Tour

The Committee also organized a fascinating behind the scenes tour of the new certified LEED Platinum Building that is headquarters to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) on June 18th. Brook Mehbrahtu, a Senior Project Manager with the SFPUC who managed the building's construction, led the tour along with Tyler Jue, the SFPUC's Communications Director.

The informative tour highlighted the unique sustainable features of the building including its onsite water treatment system, or "living machine," that reclaims and treats all of the building's waste water to satisfy 100 percent of the building's low-flow toilet and urinal water demands. Other sustainable elements included the use of green concrete made of environmentally friendly materials; "light shelves" that harvest and pull natural light into the space to reduce energy demand; operable windows and personal climate



Tour participants in front of the "living machine." Photo: Dave Javid, AICP

controls to reduce heating/cooling demand; and a beautiful hybrid solar and wind turbine array on the building's entry facade that generates up to 10 percent of the building's energy needs.

These features, and other facts about the building, are presented on an interactive wall-to-wall display in the building's cafe, which is open to the general public, to educate building users and visitors on how the building promotes sustainability. It also promotes friendly competition among building users to be greenest by presenting real time reporting of energy and water use by floor within the building.



The interactive display wall at the SFPUC. Photo: Dave Javid, AICP

Dave Javid, AICP, is the Sustainability Committee Co-Director for Northern Section. You can reach him at dave.javid@gmail.com ■

Photos from the Northern Section 2013 Planning Awards

The APA California – Northern Section 2013 Planning Awards were presented on May 17, 2013 at Scott's Seafood Restaurant in Oakland. Close to 90 planners attended and recognized the planning efforts and individuals receiving awards. The full list of award winners was published in the Director's Note in the May 2013 edition of *Northern News*, <http://bit.ly/13ie89X>.*



The awards jury: Emeritus Prof. Earl Bossard, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, San Jose State University; Lauren Ledbetter, AICP; Camela Campbell; John Cook, AICP; Erik Balsley, AICP (not pictured: Abe Leider, AICP CEP; Randy Tsuda, AICP).



The Innovations in Green Community Planning Award went to Santa Clara County for the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan.



Avalon Schultz, AICP, receives the Graduate Student Merit Award from Hilary Nixon, Assistant Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, San Jose State University. (Photo: Hing Wong, AICP)



Linda Mandolini, President, Eden Housing Inc, receives the Planning Project Award for the Emerald Vista Project, City of Dublin, from Northern Section Director.



Alexander Quinn, AECOM; Sarah Heard, AECOM; and Jon Swae, San Francisco Planning Department, receive the Focused Issue Award of Merit for Financing San Francisco's Urban Forest from Jeff Baker, Northern Section Director.



Matt Taecker, AICP; Vivian Kahn, FAICP; Dan Marks, AICP; and Wendy Cosin, AICP, receive the Best Practices Award for the City of Berkeley Downtown Area project from Jeff Baker, Northern Section Director.



EMC Planning Group receives Best Practices Merit Award for Fort Ord Reuse Plan Reassessment. Michael Groves, AICP, EMC Planning Group; Ellen Martin, Economic & Planning Systems; Michael Houlemard, Executive Officer Fort Ord Reuse Authority; Richard James, AICP, EMC Planning Group.



Charlie Bryant, AICP, City of Emeryville; Brooke Dubose, Fehr & Peers; Diana Keena, AICP; Robert Prinz, Emeryville Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee; and Deborah Diamond, AICP, Deborah Diamond Associates, receive the Focused Issue Award for the City of Emeryville Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan from Jeff Baker, Northern Section Director. (Not shown: Lauren Ledbetter, Alta Planning + Design)

*All photos, except where noted: Avalon Schultz, AICP

McMansions are back

The New York Times, Economix, June 4, 2013

Catherine Rampell, <http://nyti.ms/19FuCf2>

“Homes have been getting bigger. The Census Bureau recently released new data on the characteristics of homes built in 2012. For single-family homes, median size rose to 2,306 square feet in 2012, the highest median square-footage for single-family homes since the government began keeping track in 1973. And the number of bedrooms has gone up, too. In 2012, 41 percent of the new homes built had at least four bedrooms, the highest share on record. The median newly built house still had three bedrooms, though. The same trends don’t hold true for newly completed multifamily housing units. Units built for *sale* are getting bigger, but the median size of units being built for rent — which represent the vast majority of all multifamily construction — ticked downward from 2011 to 2012.” To read this along with five superb graphs, see the link above. And to see “Highlights of Annual 2012 Characteristics of New Housing, US Census Bureau,” go to <http://1.usa.gov/LvxKPE>

The rich get richer

The New York Times, Science, June 10, 2013

Andrew Gellman, <http://nyti.ms/170R7g1> • “1.8 is the ratio of average personal income in the richest state to that in the poorest state in 2012. Connecticut is the richest, with an income of \$59,000 per capita, followed by Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York; Mississippi is poorest, at \$33,000. In 1930, the ratio was 5.1. This means that the disparity between the richest and poorest states has shrunk by almost two-thirds in 80 years. Though the disparity has shrunk sharply, the rankings of rich and poor states have changed little. In 1929, the richest state was New York, at \$16,000 per capita (*in 2013 dollars*), followed by Delaware and Connecticut. In last place was South Carolina, at \$4,000, and Mississippi was next to last. In 1930, the top 1 percent of Americans received 17 percent of the nation’s total income. Their share declined steadily until 1975 — to a mere 8 percent. But since then, the number has been creeping back up, and it now stands again at 17 percent.

Can you top this (building)?

The New York Times, May 31, 2013

Thomas Leslie, <http://nyti.ms/16tOp27> • Unofficially, “the installation of the 408-foot spire atop One World Trade Center made it the tallest building in the United States [at 1,776 feet]. The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, the international organization of skyscraper engineers, designers, and builders that certifies a building’s height, will weigh in only when One World Trade Center is completed.

“The council has three categories for measuring the heights of tall buildings: height to ‘architectural top,’ ‘highest occupied floor,’ and ‘height to tip.’ The differences can be considerable. ‘Architectural top,’ the category the council uses to officially crown the tallest building, includes ‘spires,’ but not ‘antennas, signage, flag poles, or other functional-technical equipment.’ One World Trade Center’s ‘spire’ does not include any broadcast or cellular equipment — only lighting. It therefore avoids having the ‘functional technical equipment’ that disqualifies Chicago’s Willis Tower’s protrusions from being ‘architectural.’ Were its ‘spire’ to be reclassified as an ‘antenna,’ One World Trade Center’s official architectural height would be a far less evocative 1,368 feet — 83 feet shorter than Willis Tower.

“The most innovative design work in skyscrapers now focuses on climatic performance and energy efficiency, not on pure height. The intentionally function-free spire atop One World Trade represents a large investment in cost and materials that adds to the project’s carbon footprint while offering little aside from the potential record in return. As a Chicago partisan, I’m rooting for Willis Tower to come out ahead in the coming decision.”



Willis Tower, Chicago, currently America’s tallest building. (Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP)

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Are floating wind towers in store for California?

The New York Times, May 31, 2013

Matthew L. Wald, <http://nyti.ms/14fL7IY> • VoltturnUS 1:8, the first grid-connected offshore wind turbine to be deployed off the coast of North America, was recently launched in Brewer, Maine, by the University of Maine's Advanced Structures and Composites Center and its partners. The goal is to reduce the cost of offshore wind to compete with other forms of electricity generation with no subsidies." One reason offshore wind has not caught on in the US is the steep cost of erecting a tower in the water." VoltturnUS 1:8 "sits on three hollow concrete tubes." The 65-foot-tall turbine prototype is one-eighth the scale of a 6-megawatt, 423-foot diameter rotor design "the researchers hope to deploy in the next few years, with each blade as long as the wingspan of a Boeing 747."

"Onshore wind machines produce most of their energy at night, when it is least valuable to utilities, but this one will catch the predictable, strong breezes that come up every sunny summer afternoon, when the sun heats the land more than the sea, creating an onshore breeze. Offshore machines will produce 40 percent to 50 percent as much energy as those on shore, because winds offshore are stronger."

"The platform bears some resemblance to the ones the oil industry uses. The engineering, though, is tricky — the tip of the tower will swing back and forth on the waves. But the platform is designed to rock at a slower rate than the waves to lessen their impact. The project is one of seven sponsored by the Energy Department under a \$168 million program. Three are floating, four are fixed, and this is the first to be put into use."



Workers prepare to launch VoltturnUS 1:8.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

No, it's not another housing bubble

Columbia Journalism Review, May 30, 2013

Ryan Chittum, <http://bit.ly/10OyAyR> • "Double-digit home-price increases and bidding wars have led to a lot of 'bubble' talk lately. A flood of newly minted tech millionaires chasing after a constrained supply of higher-end homes is not a bubble. Real house prices are about 37 percent below 2006 levels and are just now returning to where they were 13 years ago. Bubble stories tend to focus on markets like Los Angeles and San Francisco. Both those markets are just now getting back to 2003 and 2000 prices, respectively. To get back to peak levels, San Francisco's home prices would have to jump 60 percent, using Case-Shiller data.

LA would have to jump 66 percent, Phoenix 99 percent, Miami 105 percent, and Las Vegas 149 percent.

"The whole point of quantitative easing and extremely low interest rates is to fight the massive deflationary bias caused by trillions of dollars of bad debt incurred during the bubble. The economy can't get back on its feet until housing really starts moving again. A rise in interest rates in the next year or two and an increase in inventory as underwater homeowners are able to sell their houses without losing money will counterbalance the surge in prices. Home deals would have to pop 55 percent to reach peak bubble levels — roughly 3 million more deals a year. That's not happening anytime soon."

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CEQA reform. "Perhaps the biggest CEQA change called for in SB 731 is the creation of state significance thresholds for parking, transportation, and noise. The bill would allow local governments to create stricter standards — but one can imagine quite a battle at the Natural Resources Agency and the Office of Planning & Research over whether the state thresholds should be strong or weak. In addition, the bill would ditch aesthetics as a CEQA issue."

<http://bit.ly/15DXRw1>. See *Manatt*, May 23, 2013, for a good rundown of SB731: <http://bit.ly/1awqdZB>

NYC proposes to spend \$20b to fortify against climate change

The Washington Post, July 14, 2013

Lenny Bernstein, <http://wapo.st/1aHz3ZP> • “New York outlined plans to fortify itself not only against the next big storm but against seas that scientists say could rise two-and-a half feet by the 2050s, and other climate-related challenges, including heat waves. The 438-page plan, which involved a neighborhood-by-neighborhood survey of potential problems along 520 miles of coastline, vaults New York to the forefront of U.S. resilience planning. Many are waiting to see whether New York can and will follow through, whether the next mayor is as committed to resilience planning as Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and whether the city can find the remaining \$4.5 billion needed to carry out its plans. Under FEMA maps issued in 1983, 33 square miles of the city, or 11 percent of its land, were in danger of flooding in a 100-year storm. Preliminary 2013 maps increase that to 48 square miles. By the 2050s, 72 square miles, or 24 percent of the city, will face that danger because of sea-level rise. One thing the city won’t do, said Seth W. Pinsky, president of the New York City Economic Development Corp., is retreat from the waterfront, where hugely expensive structures exist.”

LA air pollution declining, losing sting

Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES), University of Colorado, Boulder, June 4, 2013

<http://bit.ly/10QKTun> • The cleanup of California’s tailpipe emissions over the last few decades has not only reduced ozone pollution in the Los Angeles area. It has also altered the pollution chemistry in the atmosphere, making the eye-stinging ‘organic nitrate’ component of air pollution plummet. Scientists analyzed new data from research aircraft along with archived data going back a half-century to produce a comprehensive study of air pollution in the Los Angeles region. Although the population in Southern California tripled between 1960 and 2010, and the number of vehicles increased by a similar factor, air pollution in the region has decreased as a result of policies and controls that were implemented to restrict emissions of NO_x and VOC ingredients that result in ozone and other secondary air pollutants. Understanding the past and present chemistry in the atmosphere that creates air pollution is critical to being able to estimate how much pollution will be formed in future years. The researchers hope that this new insight will provide useful information to the policy makers who will be crafting the next generation of policies aimed at improving air quality in the region.

Has the pace of global warming undergone a lasting slowdown?

The New York Times, June 11, 2013

Justin Gillis, <http://nyti.ms/1tOIRX> • “The rise in the planet’s surface temperature has been markedly slower over the last 15 years than in the 20 years before that — and that lull in warming has occurred even as greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere at a record pace — a circumstance that highlights how much is still unknown about the climate system. The basic theory that predicts a warming of the planet in response to human emissions does not suggest that warming should be smooth and continuous. But given how much is riding on the scientific forecast, the practitioners of climate science would like to understand exactly what is going on. The real question is where all that heat is going, if not to warm the surface. A prime suspect is the deep ocean, one of a half-dozen explanations that have been proffered for the warming plateau. If past is prologue, this current plateau will end at some point, and a new era of rapid global warming will begin. We might one day look back on the crazy weather of the 2010s with a deep yearning for those halcyon days.”

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America's first climate change refugees

The Guardian UK, May 13, 2013

Suzanne Goldenberg, <http://bit.ly/10IL0xd> • “The people of Newtok, on the west coast of Alaska, are living a slow-motion disaster that will end with the entire village being washed away. The Ninglick River [which] coils around Newtok on three sides, has steadily been eating away at the land at unusual speed because of climate change. Eventually all the villagers will have to leave.” The cost of moving to a “proposed new site for Newtok could run as high as \$130 million.”

“A report by the Corps of Engineers predicted that the highest point in the village could be underwater by 2017. If it cannot be moved in time, Newtok will disappear, its inhabitants scattered to the villages and towns of western Alaska. It’s a choice confronting more than 180 native communities in Alaska, which are flooding and losing land because of the ice melt that is part of the changing climate. Almost all native Alaskan villages are located along rivers and seacoasts, and almost all are facing similar peril. “Climate change remains a politically touchy subject in Alaska. The state has warmed twice as fast as the rest of the country over the past 60 years. Freeze-up occurs later, snow is wetter and heavier. Wildfires erupt on the tundra in the summer. Warmer temperatures are thawing the permafrost on which Newtok is built, and the land surface is no longer stable.”



Location of Newtok. Source: Google Maps

A climate action plan

The New York Times, June 26, 2013

Editorial, <http://nyti.ms/1aLQVjG> • President Obama has stepped forward with an impressive lineup of measures he can pursue — without Congressional consent — not only to reduce carbon emissions, but to strengthen the nation’s defenses against rising seas, more intense storms, drought, and other consequences of global warming. The most important of these is a proposal to use government’s authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate emissions from existing coal- and gas-fired power plants, which account for about 40 percent of the country’s carbon pollution. Other less problematical aspects of the plan call for more efficient appliances and buildings, but his chief obstacle may lie with the Office of Management and Budget, where a half-dozen energy efficiency standards have been languishing. ■

Thinking equitably. If California is to achieve equitable, effective, and efficient emissions reductions, targets must be sensitive to local conditions. An across-the-board 15 percent reduction in community emissions could lead Berkeley to reject new residents while Barstow would stop short of efficient implementation measures. Instead of uniform targets, the state should develop a fair-share emissions measurement and attribution framework that considers both the options available to local jurisdictions and possible conflicts among jurisdictions. —Juan Matute, UC Transportation Center, <http://bit.ly/18Y4Tj4>

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