"Businesses shuttered by the pandemic are slowly reopening, but technology complexes are quiet, their workers carrying on from home indefinitely. The smoke-filled skies had started to clear, but new fires have arrived in a fierce wildfire season that shows the intensifying effects of climate change.

“If California is to continue leading the nation’s economy deep into the future, its leaders and residents will have to rethink where and how the state grows.

“Superficially, the forecasts for California are no better or worse than the nation’s, with some sectors, like tourism, badly hurt and others, like technology, barely touched. But between climate change and remote work, the state is facing questions that uniquely cut to the core of its economic identity.

“Despite the diversity of California’s vast economy, there is near-universal agreement on one barrier to growth: the exorbitant cost of housing.

“Economists and planners have long counseled that the best way to relieve this pressure is to build more housing near the coastal job centers, but California has continued to sprawl, a pattern that has undermined the state’s own emission-reduction goals by encouraging longer commutes, while placing more homes in fire zones. In 2010, the last year with available data, nearly a third of California housing was in the so-called wildland-urban interface, where wildfire risk is greatest, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

“In a season of perpetual fires and apocalyptic orange skies, and with home prices only continuing to rise, it seems open to question whether the state can get much bigger. But even in the age of climate change, some economists project that growth will find a way.

Read the full article here. (~6 min.)

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