

# NORTHERN NEWS

A Publication of the Northern Section, California Chapter, American Planning Association

RECEIVED

FEB 1 1993

## "On the Waterfront" Program Rescheduled for February 4

DUNCAN & JONES

Due to unforeseen schedule conflicts, the program on the Central Embarcadero Project originally scheduled for January 28 had to be rescheduled to accommodate the ASLA and AIA co-sponsors. We apologize to those who tried to attend the event, but we were unable to notify those who had not already RSVP'd. You may again RSVP by calling the San Francisco AIA at (415) 362-7397 (or take your chances and arrive unannounced). The program will be held at the **AIA offices at 130 Sutter Street, San Francisco, on February 4 at 7:00 PM**, and will include a presentation of the current planning and design process as well as an opportunity for your input. The panel will include **Brian Gatter**, Vice President for Public Service of ASLA, Northern California Chapter; **Clark Manus**, Vice President and President Elect of the AIA, San Francisco Chapter, and **Larry Cannon**, San Francisco Liaison to the APA Northern Section, California Chapter, all of whom have been part of the Embarcadero project. Cost is \$5.00 at the door for ASLA, AIA, and APA members.

## SUBSIDIES FOR DEVELOPERS - SOUND FISCAL PLANNING OR ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL?

by Marian Wolfe

Finance and development directors are now faced with the dilemma of whether to provide subsidies to developers who seek financial assistance. Increasingly city governments are approached by developers, particularly retail developers, with requests for subsidies to bridge the gap between projected and preferred rates of return. From an informal survey of several small and medium sized Northern California cities in Fall 1992, we discovered that most of these cities have provided some type of assistance to help developers in the recent past. In half the cases, assistance came from General Fund revenues, and the other half used redevelopment agency funds. In most cases, the primary benefit to cities stems from increases in sales tax revenues; in several cases, cities also receive a small percentage of gross receipts.

**What are the economic factors that have forged this new cooperative relationship?** The development climate of the 1990's has presented challenges. Developers face a myriad of problems in trying to get new projects approved and built. Financing, oversupply of existing products, and lack of available sites are just a few of the problems faced by non-residential developers today in California. So far, retail developers have fared better, particularly developers of power centers. Since many consumers bypass regional malls in favor of power centers comprised of discount and warehouse type stores with easy access, power centers have become one of the "hottest" real estate products today in California.

*...Power centers have become one of the "hottest" real estate products today in California.*



All developers (including retail developers) are required to cover types of costs that were not usually part of the cost of doing business in the past. These costs include the additional time and technical assistance required to receive project approval from local planning departments and commissions, impact fees, and the costs of off-site improvements which prior to Proposition 13 were considered the responsibility of local governments.

Realizing that their new developments will greatly increase the sales tax base, some retail developers approach local governments with requests for assistance in paying for many of these additional costs of development. The main argument used by developers is that, given the potential revenues and costs of new retail development, the returns are too low to justify investors' risk. Since new retail developments provide fiscal benefits to cities, developers reason that city governments are in a good position to provide them with financial assistance. Among developers, retail developers are in the best position to ask for assistance, since their new developments are likely to enhance the local tax base to a greater degree than other types of developments.

While cities make decisions about assistance based on a number of factors (political as well as economic), it is important for staff planners and consultants to provide realistic assessments of the potential impacts on a city's fiscal health

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by Don Steiger

**Planning for National Conference in California Underway!** The initial meeting of the '94 Conference steering committee was very successful. Israel Stollman, APA Executive Director, and Michele Whitney, APA Conference Manager, met with members of the NSCCAPA Board to discuss opportunities, explain tasks, and generally give us much encouragement and guidance.

Dean Macris, Paul Sedway and Gary Schoennauer have agreed to form the nucleus of the host committee. Your Board will be supporting their efforts and activities. As Section Director, I will serve as a contact until other arrangements can be made. Informational updates will be published in the *Northern News* on a regular basis, and I encourage your involvement. We have much to do.

Many decisions about conference sessions will be made at annual division meetings in Chicago. Each of you can help through your involvement in the various divisions of APA. Your participation at these meetings will increase opportunities to present the many fine examples of California planning. It would be best if your ideas are developed, written, and coordinated through the host committee.

We would also like to know if you expect to attend the Chicago conference. We will hold at least one committee meeting there. The host committee will have a booth at the Chicago conference, and would like to coordinate staffing in advance.

**Thank You!** Very special appreciation to Barry Miller from all of us for a wonderful Holiday Party. His retirement as Newsletter Editor Extraordinaire has perhaps opened new vistas as Party Planner.

The NSCCAPA Board also wishes to thank Jeff Holmwood, Membership Coordinator, for his years of fine service. We have reluctantly accepted his resignation, and certainly wish him the best! We are looking for a volunteer for this position and other Regional Liaisons.

**Rain, Rain...** You should all be congratulated for your drought cessation efforts!



## CEQA and General Plans: Make Your Opinions Known

Bob Odland, the NSCCAPA Legislative Liaison, will host an evening forum on **Thursday, February 25, in Room 104, Wurster Hall (College of Environmental Design) at U.C. Berkeley.** An informal reception will begin at 6PM, with the discussion starting *promptly* at 6:30. Cost is \$5 to cover wine and cheese (UC students admitted free).

The CCAPA and AEP have been working together to identify and analyze problems with CEQA in order to play a more proactive role in the CEQA debates expected in the legislature over the next two years. Much of the debate is in response to the recommendations of the Council on California Competitiveness to streamline the CEQA process. ABAG and the State Bar also have committees studying CEQA.

Some of the concerns of the CCAPA/AEP Task Force are the increasing length of EIRs, misuse by NIMBYs, and lack of integration of CEQA and General Plans. Bob and several others are looking specifically at the relationship of CEQA and the General Plan. A major focus is reducing the number and/or complexity of project-specific EIRs by strengthening the environmental perspectives of General Plans.

Bob will discuss the work of the Task Force to date and ask for your ideas. He also will explain the CCAPA legislative review process for all planning-related bills and how you can become involved.

Please call Sheila Diver at Sedway Cooke Associates, (415) 495-2400 to reserve your place.



## Letter From the (New) Editor

Now that Barry Miller has let the cat out of the bag, I must come forward and publicly accept the responsibility and pleasure of being the new editor of *Northern News*. Barry provided a graceful transition by continuing the bulk of the work while I was getting warmed up, and now has moved on to that glorious world of *past* editor, where there are only fond memories and *no* deadlines.

I feel I should at least briefly introduce myself, since I will have a small part in deciding the form and content of the newsletter for awhile, although it's really you, the authors and readers, who provide the input necessary for anything to happen around here.

I am a member of the Class of 1990 at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a B.S. in City and Regional Planning, having spent almost ten years as an undergraduate in a variety of fields before finally grabbing a degree and beginning my career at Brady and Associates in Berkeley. I have great respect for the planning profession and see us moving into some challenging times ahead with economic development, social equity, environmental sustainability, human-scale urban design and growth management still the hot topics to be addressed, perhaps in some new ways. Cooperative public/private ventures, community-based decision-making, and regional government might be some of the (perhaps self-cancelling) solutions, but I don't have any answers yet. Maybe you do.

The *Northern News* provides one avenue for professional communication on these and other topics for planners in coastal northern California. The *News* currently includes reports on the Board's activities, current events, job opportunities, professional growth topics, special interest stories, and personal reflections. I think it's clear that we are a diverse group as you read the material on transportation, land planning, urban design, regulatory and other aspects of planning in the *News*. This approach has generally served us well, but there may be other formats or topics that could be included.

I have to admit that I don't have any grand scheme for the future of the *News* just yet, but I welcome your input. Knowing planners, I'll either get deluged with strong opinions on everything under the sun or I'll have an empty box awaiting me this month since there's no regulatory deadline for suggestions. In any case, changes will probably occur gradually, so consider this an open invitation to phone, fax or write me with your ideas.

*Steven Buckley*

Phone: (510) 540-7331 Fax: (510) 540-7344

Mailing address: 3871 Piedmont Avenue, Box 9, Oakland, CA 94611.



## Professional Development Overview

*Wendy Cozin, AICP*

As the new Professional Development Director for Northern Section of CCAPA, I am very pleased with the way the Thursday evening programs have been received. Recent programs have included slide shows of Russia and Eastern Europe, a tutorial on Specific Plans, and a panel discussion on the issue of extending BART to the S.F. Airport. Approximately 50 people have attended each program and, despite running out of wine at the first event of the season, everyone seemed to have a good time.

In asking colleagues what they want from APA, professional development activities are high on the list. Even with our busy schedules, the opportunity to socialize, network, and learn about new ideas can help us all. A full year of active programming is planned and I hope people will continue to attend in high numbers. We also hope to be able to expand the programs to include breakfast and lunch meetings and to hold events at a variety of locations so that more people can attend.

A few pointers:

**Please RSVP.** Even if the RSVP is at the last minute, it helps us get a better idea of how much wine and how many chairs are needed. If there are last minute program changes, we will be able to contact you.

**Volunteer.** We are always looking for program ideas and need help setting events up. Working at an event is a good way to meet people and get involved in APA—and you get in for free! Call me for information at (415) 738-7340.

*When not setting up chairs and slide screens, Wendy Cozin serves as Director of Planning and Building for the City of Pacifica.*

### CCAPA's Perspective '92: The CCAPA Legislative Year in Review Report

is now available. Find out about all of the new planning legislation signed into law, review copies of the hottest planning bills of 1992, and find out what the key issues will be in 1993. You may also want to join our legislative review teams for 1993. Order by sending a check for \$25 to: CCAPA, 1333 35th Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.

# PAST LIFE EXPERIENCE

Steve Matarazzo

Recently, while on vacation in Santa Barbara, I visited an old hangout, Isla Vista, the student community of the U.C. campus there. While jogging through the campus, I was slowly transformed, through endorfin inducement, to the student I had once been. As I dodged the traffic on the bike path, the whirl of bicycle wheels caught my ear, and the energy of the moment grabbed my memory and ultimately tugged at my keyboard.

Now, back at the daily grind, once again far removed from that collegiate life, it seems impossible to me that I was once the naive, "save the world" student, typical of that generation. But while I was on that vacation trot, it was very clear to me where I had been, notwithstanding the long interim that has since clouded my perception. That experience brought into clear contrast the difference between what I took as gospel in the academia of environmental and urban planning and what most of us have experienced in the often grey and clouded "real world" of land use planning.

Planning school dictum states that armed with the appropriate technical planning documentation, an informed legislative body will choose the correct environmental and land use policy path. However, empirical evidence continually shows us that the most common path chosen is that which leads to less-than-perfect planning. This path is often paved with good intentions, constant public pressure to retain the status quo, and the political imperative to get re-elected. Expert, professional analysis of all the issues is good, but obtaining three out of five votes is better.

Ah, but back to that brief moment in time where I was once again the aspiring planning student. Those were the days when imagination mattered more than reality, where technical discourse did not require scientific proof, and where students, learning from non-practitioners, memorized lecture notes based on themes long-since outdated by an advancing technology and rapidly changing culture.

It may not have been "real", but it was the best time of our lives. And the only vote that mattered was the "yes" or "no" of your prospective date.

*Editor's note: Steve would like to apologize for his current fit of nostalgia, and promises future, future-oriented articles.*



## JOBS IN PLANNING

**Assistant/Associate Planner**  
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Salary range: \$3,224 - \$3,869/\$3,547 - \$4,255 per month; excel. benefits. The WMA develops and implements comprehensive waste management programs for Alameda County and the 14 cities and 2 sanitary districts within the County. Assistant/Associate Planner will research and conduct special projects, prepare reports and recommendations relative to assignments, and interpret planning requirements. Req. one/two years of prof. planning exper.; Bach. Degree or equiv. in planning or related field; CA driver's license. Must be self-starter, team-player, flexible and creative. Brochure and application form avail. from: Shannon Associates, 1400 K Street, #311, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 447-8022. Deadline: February 26, 1993. AA/EOE



## Dinner Program: Transportation Planning in Alameda County

On Thursday, March 18th, planners will have an opportunity to enjoy an Italian dinner while learning more about the two major transportation planning efforts of the Alameda County Congestion Management Authority: the Countywide Transportation Plan and the Congestion Management Plan. The program will look at the related land use and air quality issues, as well as a case study of how the plans affect general plan amendments. The event will be held at the Sweet Basil Italian Restaurant, 1604 Decoto Road in Union City, at 6:30 PM. The cost will be \$20, payable by March 5th to APA Northern Section. Send to: Jon Holan, c/o Union City Community Development Department, 34009 Alvarado-Niles Road, Union City, CA 94587. Look for more information in next month's *News*, or call Jon at (510) 471-3232, ext. 318.

## Joint Public/Private Sector Projects to be Topic of USC Evening Forum

The University of Southern California, School of Urban and Regional Planning, will present a program on public and private partnerships in real estate development, **Thursday, February 11, at the Hyatt Regency, 5 Embarcadero Center, San Francisco.**

The Evening Forum, sponsored by the School's Lusk Center for Real Estate Development, is **free** and open to the public. The program begins with an **informal reception at 5:30 PM, followed by a panel discussion at 6:30.** *Reservations are required.*

**"Public/Private Real Estate: Growth Sector of the '90s?"** will address the criteria for successful public/private partnerships, new opportunities with the state and cities in the public/private arena, and prospects for working with the government to create affordable housing.

The speakers will be:

- Frank Harding, Office of Local Assistance, State of California;
- Edward Helfeld, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency;
- Glen Isaacson, Glen Isaacson Associates;
- Jerry Keyser, Keyser-Marston;
- Jay Mancini, The Mancini Company; and
- Don Turner, Bridge Corporation.

Kevin Starr, professor of planning and development, USC School of Urban and Regional Planning, will moderate. To make reservations or obtain more information, call (213) 743-3851.

## Connecting with GIS: Benefits and Payoffs

February 19, 1993

Doubletree Hotel, Monterey, CA

An intensive one-day Executive Program sponsored by the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) and the Bay Area Automated Mapping Association (BAAMA).

- Offers a unique opportunity for face-to-face discussions with GIS experts, including:

**John Antenucci**, President, PlanGraphics

**Jack Dangermond**, President, ESRI

**Pierce Eichelberger**, GIS Project Coordinator, Orange County, Florida.

- Focuses on the growing importance of GIS in an era of tight budgets.
- Is ideal for elected officials and senior managers from all sectors seeking new ideas and proven approaches to problem solving.

Call (202) 289-1685 to register. Cost is \$245. Send your check to: URISA Secretariat, 900 Second Street, NE Suite 304, Washington, DC 20002.

## SUBSIDIES...

(continued from page 1)

in both the near term and long run. The types of questions that need to be addressed include the following:

- Would development still occur in the event assistance was not provided?
- Can the city provide assistance and remain fiscally sound?
- Does the supporting financial information provided by the developer clearly indicate the need for assistance?
- Are there other ways, aside from direct subsidy, that the city or county can use to assist development?

Ideally cities would not need to share any of the growth in sales tax revenues with developers, and could still experience retail development. In reality there are many retail developers, such as Walmart and Toys R Us, that routinely expect to receive such assistance, and if they do not receive it from one jurisdiction, they will approach another one more likely to provide it. With proper due diligence and through careful negotiations, local governments can devise agreements with developers that appear to be win-win situations.

*Dr. Marian F. Wolfe is a Principal with Vernazza Wolfe Associates, Inc., an Oakland economics consulting firm.*

LOOK FOR PART TWO OF MS. WOLFE'S ARTICLE IN NEXT MONTH'S NORTHERN NEWS

## Planlines

by Chuck Myer, AICP

### THE LIGHTS ARE ON, BUT...

Imagine, if you will, looking out your window over the rolling hillsides, and seeing 1,800 4-foot green fluorescent lamps, lighting the night sky.

"Ah," you say, "a dream-like vision of nature and technology in harmony." Hallucinating? No. You're merely looking at "Luminous Earth Grid," an art installation near Benicia by San Francisco environmental artist Stuart Williams. Planned for March and April, Williams' luminescent lights will occupy an area roughly the size of eight football fields north of Benicia and west of the Parish Road exit from Highway 680. It will be illuminated daily from noon to midnight.

Williams, 46, a Michigan native by way of New York, was "captivated by the magnificent beauty of the natural landscape" here. He gave up a career as an architect to become a painter, but missed the "larger-than-life" scale of his previous work. So, he began planning "Luminous Earth Grid" in 1987. He drove 2,000 miles within a 50-mile radius of San Francisco to find this location.

Williams' work is not <sup>g</sup>unlike that of Christo, the first artist to prepare an EIR for a work of art. That work, "Running Fence," obviously had a great impact on Williams. (Unlike Christo, however, Williams is not opposed to sponsorship of his project, which will cost \$58,000.)

Before the art, of course, must come permits. Since the project is in the secondary management (i.e., buffer area) of the Suisun Marsh, Solano County acts on behalf of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission in issuing a marsh development permit, as well as a use permit. Recent AICP inductee Brian Parker accepted the application for the County on September 30.

As with Christo's works, the influx of observers could be an impact. Visibility is an issue, as is signage. There will be no large parking areas dedicated for viewing, and the CHP fears cars stopping on the interstate will create a safety problem. (Using the frontage road, Lopes Rd., will help.)

Besides the traffic issue, Lydia Kvashina, another Solano County planner, was concerned about the impact on aircraft operations at nearby Travis Air Force Base.

(Follow-up conversations with Travis revealed that they think they'll be able to tell the difference.)

Assembly is scheduled to start on March 8, for two weeks. Like Christo's projects, it will be up for about three weeks, followed by one week of dismantling.

A divergence from the Christo scenario is that in this case the property owners involved are not all red-necked farmers who hate longhair hippie artists. Part of the land is actually owned by the City of Santa Clara! (Wealthy Santa Clara had hoped to use some of their 2,000 Solano County acres for wind turbines, but the County's General Plan restrictions and the end of tax credits took the "wind" out of that plan.) Assistant City Manager Ron Garrett says the Santa Clara Council approved the project in concept two years ago, but that it's not a "done deal." Williams says he may choose to place the lights on the more visible neighboring parcel owned by Ed Parish.


Another hot local issue is the Joint Powers Agreement of the Cities of Fairfield, Benicia and Vallejo to preserve a recreational/open space area between the three cities, including the Santa Clara site. This brings up another interesting question. Is Santa Clara subject to the zoning restrictions of another city or county?

These political questions are not the main issue for Williams, who is more concerned about creating a "poetic vision of technology and nature wedded in harmony." "The glowing grid," he says, "can be seen as a play on the visual language of cartography and on the parceling of the American landscape into a gridwork of squares, which can be so clearly seen from an airplane.

"Furthermore, it can also be seen as an iconoclastic symbol of computer technology, which in this case respectfully and carefully melds with the flowing shape of a simple and lovely landscape... a passing apparition... a dream-like vision of harmonious unity..."

Gee, I love that kind of talk.

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## Winter Calendar of Events

- February 4 On the Waterfront - Central Embarcadero Forum  
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- 11 Joint Public/Private Projects  
San Francisco, (213) 743-3851
- 19 Connecting with GIS  
Monterey, (202) 289-1685
- 25 CEQA and the General Plan  
Berkeley, (415) 495-2400
- March 18 Alameda County Transportation Planning  
Union City, (510) 471-3232

### NORTHERN NEWS

EDITORIAL OFFICE  
3871 Piedmont Avenue, Box 9  
Oakland, CA 94611

