

Northern News

NORTHERN SECTION, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

The Road Too Often Taken

an interview with Jane Holtz Kay by John Cook

MAY 1997

Part history and part manifesto, Jane Holtz Kay's new book "*Asphalt Nation*" attempts to explain the (forgive the metaphor) driving forces behind twentieth century patterns of low density development and argues for the expansion of current trends towards recentering American cities.

To many of us in the planning profession, Kay's story and arguments are familiar. But she isn't writing explicitly for us. Her book is quite accessible to a general audience.

Although the eventual impact of her book upon the general public is difficult to predict,

its very presence underscores the extent to which planners writing about land use and transportation issues have not consistently engaged the public at large.

I spoke with Jane Holtz Kay recently about her book and

her arguments; following are excerpts which at least partially capture the popular and entertaining—if at times breezy—style of her book.

Cook: What prompted you to write this book and for what audience do you intend it?

Kay: Definitely a mainstream audience. Although I do enjoy "preaching to the converted"—it's inspiring—we have more than 250 million people [in this country] and I want to reach them with this book. About half of my journalistic work has been for professional magazines. . . but I think that writing about architecture [and planning] is often abstruse and sometimes incomprehensible. It's a subject that people comprehend in their lives but very often reading [about it] is dense and academic.

I feel that we have to enlarge the audience for good design. In the course of my writing for

my other books and *The Nation*, I learned that architecture that serves the automobile is often the enemy of good design. I very soon learned that I would have to register the poor quality of life caused by car dependency—young kids, the elderly population, the poor—they have serious mobility issues because they can't drive.

[My] most insightful research was into the environmental argument and the economic arguments against driving. If you are going to be a change agent, you have to talk about the undermining of the economy and efficiency by the automobile. Those issues are very powerful arguments to me.

We've always said that "the roads are crowded" and we should build our way out of the situation. I don't think we should be building or widening any more roads. It's the "solution" that failed and will always fail.

Cook: Let me play the devil's advocate for a moment: to what extent are low density, auto-favorable zoning regulations the "will of the people" as reflected in popular desires to have a big house on a big lot?

Kay: Number one, if you look at our built environment and find the most pleasing, most attractive, and most expensive environments—they are clearly the densest, most compact, traditional neighborhoods, like Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay, or, in San Francisco, Telegraph Hill. . . *This* is a reflection of what people want.

There is not a free market choice because there is no free market. As I quote an activist in my book, driving is not a free lunch, it's a free lunch you are getting paid to eat. . . We are all paying for the enormous infrastructure costs for development on the fringe.

(continued on page 4)

There is not a free market choice because there is no free market.

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DIRECTORS CORNER

by Wendy Cosin, AICP

San Diego broke the APANational Conference attendance record (set in San Francisco) with 4,200 people attending. Did you know that of 37 national awards, 12 were submitted from California and seven from Northern Section?

The best sessions that I attended in San Diego were the final two. Each took a step back to assess the state of planning, as well as to critique the conference. An issue discussed at both sessions was the tension between project-level and plan-level planning. San Diego's experience was an interesting backdrop — although the city continues to have active long-range planning programs, the word "planning" was eliminated from any agency names when it was reorganized into business centers based on work products. The City Manager said that a criticism of the previous structure was that the goal of planning was planning, not implementation. The Planning Commission Chair rebutted that without a long range vision there is no consistent direction for the community. He also expressed concern that budgetary issues are unduly pressuring agencies and planners toward regulatory relief and economic development at the expense of good planning. Gary Schoennauer concurred that the trend away from a strong, long range approach to planning is a problem and that planners need to learn the tools (such as building constituencies, strengthening media relations, cross-training, marketing) and provide the leadership to champion planning.

Planning and public discussion for the Bay Bridge retrofit project is in full swing. This is an exploratory call to our membership to see if there is interest in adding APA involvement to the mix. APA could organize a symposium to discuss the various functional, urban design, and planning issues from a planning perspective. This is an opportunity to increase the visibility of APA and for section members to get directly involved with this important project. If you are interested in working with a group to put a program together, please call Peter Gertler at 415-243-4616.

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This is a mid-management position reporting to the Community Development Director. Supervises personnel and projects of both Current & Policy Development (long range planning) Sections. Requires degree in Planning or closely related field plus four years responsible professional planning experience (Master's in City Planning may substitute for one year of required experience). File City application forms by 5/30/97. Contact Personnel, 70 N. First Street, Campbell, CA 95008. Phone: (408) 66-2122.

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Facilitation and Mediation Skills for Planners

The Institute for Study of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ISADR) at California State University, Humboldt, is in June offering a series of seminars for planners and others involved in public policy issues. Seminar one, June 4-7, will cover commercial and business mediation; the second, June 11-14, will address handling complex public disputes, and the last, June 16-21, is an in-depth introduction to alternative dispute resolution. The seminars will be taught by noted experts in the field, including Susan Carpenter, Elizabeth Watson, John Gromola, Jon Townsend, Ron Kelly, and Kathy Ehnebuske.

All of the seminars are part of Humboldt State's certificate program at the ISADR. For more information on the seminars, including costs, lodging, and other details, see the web site at <http://www.humboldt.edu/isadr> or call (707) 826-4750.

UC Berkeley Extension Courses in Land Use and Natural Resources

UC Berkeley Extension's series of courses in land use and natural resources will continue into the spring. Classes are held either on campus in Berkeley, Oakland City Center, or in San Francisco. Courses beginning in May and June include Water Supply Planning, GIS Tools and Solutions, Hands-on GIS, Environmental Review and EIR Basics, an Introduction to NEPA, and an Overview of Environmental Law and Regulations. Call (510) 643-7143 for further information and to enroll.

UCLA Extension Seminar: 21st Century California

If you didn't get to attend the National Conference or if you will be in Southern California in the next couple of weeks, you might want to make time to attend "21st Century California: Anticipating and Planning for Growth and Environmental Quality," a two-day seminar to be held May 15 and 16 in Santa Monica, co-sponsored by UCLA Extension and numerous planning/real estate/conservation foundations.

Experts from all regions of the state will lead sessions intended to capitalize on the planning lessons learned from the past with the intention of doing better planning for the future. The seminar has a dual focus: the crucial issues stemming from growth and the policy alternatives, strategies, and models for meeting future needs.

Where: Sheraton Miramar Hotel, Santa Monica (Corner of Ocean and Wilshire Boulevards)

When: May 15 and 16, 1997

Cost: \$195 for both days (includes materials and lunch)

\$145 one day only

Some scholarships available; call (310) 825-7885

Information: Call (310) 825-9971 or (818) 784-7006

The Bulletin Board section of the Northern News is intended to provide a forum for individuals to provide the membership with information about events or current topics. If you would like to submit an item for the Bulletin Board section, contact the Newsletter Editor at (510) 540-0655.

Interview

(continued from page 1)

Cook: You talk a lot in your book about the historic influence of the automotive lobby: carmakers, oil companies, the AAA, and so on. How strong are they now, and to what extent do you believe they are crucial in shaping NEXTea [the proposed transportation funding reauthorization currently pending in the Congress]?

Kay: I'm currently putting together a paper . . . on the "road gang"—certainly they were and are very powerful and very underhanded. That applies at every moment in history, from the very visible (GM buying out the streetcar lines) to today's ISTEA reauthorization. Even in this bill, the funding is still 80% highways. . .

Yet one must always explore developers' doings. I wasn't surprised that Geraldine Ferraro's husband got her into trouble when I found out that he was a real estate developer. And the Clintons' real estate involvement, too. Do developers always take their own interests first? Yes, but that is basically the system. I don't know if you've ever tried to play tennis without a net—you can't really do it. I look at it this way: if we are living in a developer-driven society, we have to set up the net, we have to impose the restrictions.

Cook: You argue that we should think of money spent on transit as an "investment" instead of as a "subsidy." Say more about that.

Kay: We talk about highways as investments: "we're investing in our infrastructure. . . we're investing in this cloverleaf interchange." But then we say that we are subsidizing Amtrak. It's false. We are spending 7 times as much money on highways as on transit. We should never use the term "money losing rail" unless we say "money losing highways" too. We have so

starved mass transit that it is unfair to think any other way.

Cook: Why isn't there a sense of urgency among the general public that land use and transportation planning need to be better integrated? Is it just that Americans can't conceive of any alternatives?

Kay: As I've said throughout the book, much of the damage is invisible. We don't see that highway investments depleted cities and mass transit. [Infill] development, brownfield development, the ending of single family home subsidies—all these invisible investments should be shifted to centering this nation.

I think what you are seeing now is a consciousness changing. I wrote the book with a naive faith in the written word, that rational argument could produce change. . . The whole litany of problems with the automobile has reached a crescendo. On my book tour and talk radio appearances, I don't get bashed [as much as I thought I might]. . . I see that old "pedal-to-the-metal" passion about having cars, but I also see that people are recognizing that they are so dependent on their cars—and this is a wake-up call for some of them.

Jane Holtz Kay is the architecture and planning critic for The Nation, and her books include "Lost Boston", a history of dramatic architectural transition in that city. "Asphalt Nation" is published by Crown and is available in bookstores. Kay will speak locally on June 13 at the Modern Times Bookstore in San Francisco and on June 14 at a Clean Well Lighted Place for Books in Larkspur. Both events begin at 7:30 p.m. John Cook is the editor of the Northern News and will this month receive a master of city planning degree from the University of California, Berkeley.



JOBS

Planner I

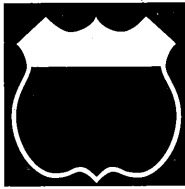
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The County of Santa Clara, Northern California's largest county, is seeking qualified individuals for the position of Planner I. A Planner I assists in conducting studies in local and regional planning, assists in research and analysis of planning data and assists in the administration of the County General Plan and County Zoning ordinance, including the interpretation of land use restrictions.

Application requirements include training and experience equivalent to graduation from an accredited college or university with a major in city and regional planning, architecture, landscape architecture, environmental studies, engineering, social science or a related field. The ideal candidate will have knowledge of computers and familiarization with GIS.

The effective monthly wage of \$2842-\$3434 includes the County contribution to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) for the 2% at 55 Plan; it also includes the payment by the County of the employee's regular contribution of approximately 7%. Actual salary without these contributions is \$2595 to \$3134. For an Employment Application and a Job Bulletin, please call (408) 299-2341. Filing Period: 5/7/97 - 5/23/97



Public Call-In Program Contributes to Bay Area Air Quality

by Lewis Ames, AICP

Planners in almost every field today become involved in some form of public policy or program that touches the impacts of moving people. Motor vehicles accidents are a leading cause of death and injury while emissions are a major cause of water and air pollution, crop loss and forest damage (from low-altitude ozone). The National Resources Defense Council estimates that some 8,000 Southern Californians a year die early because of poor air quality. Locally, motor vehicles produce 230 tons of pollution each day reversing recent trends of air quality improvement.

So in the face of these daunting figures, who you gonna' call? The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) is now launching its fifth year of asking the public to join the effort to improve air quality by calling their Smoking

Vehicle Hotline, (800) EXHAUST (394-2878). During the last summer smog season more than 7,000 people called each month with more than 225,000 calls received since the program began.

The line requires only the smoking vehicle's license plate and date and time the vehicle was observed producing excessive smoke. Ideally, reporters should include the make of the vehicle and the street on which the vehicle was traveling. In a few days, the vehicle owner receives a polite letter reporting that their vehicle has been observed putting out excess smoke by a member of the public, that they may have a problem and asking if they would check their vehicle.

There is no legal requirement for the owner to respond. However, compliance questionnaires are included with the letter. The gathered data are used to assess program effectiveness. By following the instructions on BAAQMD's automated system, the caller can request a copy of the letter sent (absent the name of recipient).

Follow up surveys have identified several trends and program results:

- The *average* vehicle model year reported is 1983.
- vehicle makes most frequently reported include Ford (15%), Chevrolet (10%) and Honda (8%).
- 21% of reported vehicles have expired registrations compared to the average of 5% for all vehicles on the road.
- most vehicles are reported from San Francisco (11%), San Jose (12%) and Oakland (7%) where the largest number of billboards promoting the program are located.

Best of all, the air quality benefits are real. About half of the respondents to the questionnaires indicated they had repaired their vehicles with about half of the repairs taking place after they received the smoking vehicle notification. Another 10% reported that they were scrapping the vehicle, using it less or using public transit more as an alternative. As a result, Bay Area air contains nearly 6.5 tons less of pollutants each day.



For more information about how your local government can promote this program in public information programs, call Teresa Lee at the BAAQMD (415) 749-4900.



NSCCAPA is proud to present...

1997 Northern Section Annual Awards Banquet

The time of year has come to join your colleagues in honoring the excellent planning efforts conducted in the Northern Section. Northern Section award winners will go on to compete in the state, and if successful, the national levels. The Banquet affords you the opportunity to learn about these programs in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

For the second year the Awards Banquet will be held at the **Fort Mason Officers Club** on the beautiful San Francisco waterfront. A social hour and no host bar is scheduled to begin at 6:15, with dinner and presentations to follow at 7:15, on **June 27th**. Last year well over one hundred individuals attended this event, so sign up now.

To secure your reservation, mail this form for delivery by June 20th, with a check for **\$32.00 per person** to:

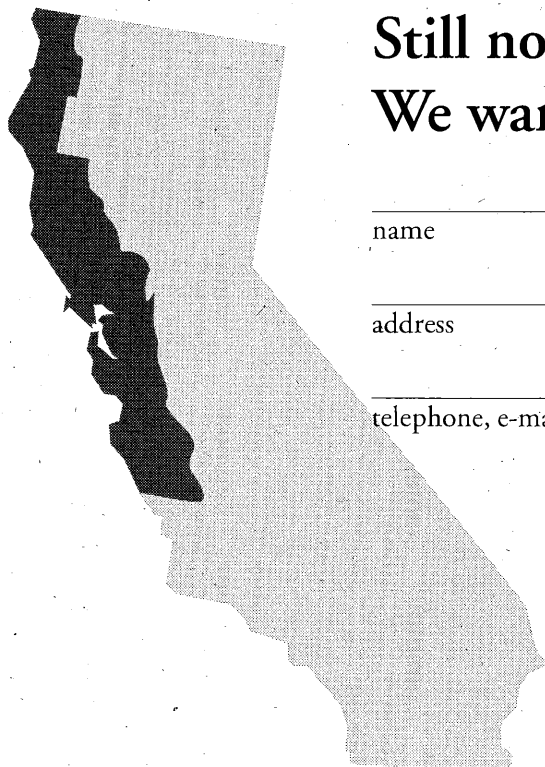
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LETTER

To the Editor,

Thanks to the National APA and the Cal Chapter Board for supporting the environmental organizations in the *Blackpoint Partnership v. City of Novato* lawsuit. (Director's Corner, March).

It is important for planners to uphold an open, properly conducted project review process, which was seriously violated in this instance. The fact that the APA acted despite objections by the city makes its action even more noteworthy and commendable, in view of the serious planning issues raised by this case.

Marjorie Macris, AICP

ESSAY

by Andrea Ouse, AICP

Pacifica Examines Its Future

Economy and ecology—perhaps an unusual pairing, but one being promoted as a viable means to bring both financial and environmental benefits to the coastal city of Pacifica in San Mateo County. In late March, an important step was taken to implement the concept of sustainable development through the program "Economy and Ecology: Partners in Sustainable Development," sponsored by Pacifica's Environmental Family, the Pacifica Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Pacifica. The sponsors worked hard to bring together a program as part of the efforts to ensure that Pacifica continues to be a unique and desirable place to live, maintains its crucial safety and social services, preserves and restores its incomparable open space resources and remains a peaceful home while becoming a prosperous community.

The community has already acknowledged and developed Pacifica as a community that values a quality of life in which the natural environment plays a vital role by building a state-of-the-art, environmentally sensitive wastewater treatment plant and restoring and enhancing wetland habitat along Calera Creek. This project—and the city's long history of environmental involvement—sets the stage for Pacifica to become a national model for sustainable development initiatives.

Guest speakers at "Economy and Ecology" included a representative from the Oakland-based Urban Ecology, who shared examples of Bay Area projects that combined financial and environmental goals and cited highlights from their recently published book, *Blueprint for a Sustainable Bay Area*. In addition, a representative of Sustainable San Mateo County spoke on their most recent project, "Indicators For a Sustainable San Mateo County: a report card of our county's quality of life."

Other speakers included Dennis Dahlin, landscape architect, planner, and author of the forthcoming book "Eco-Lodging," who discussed groundbreaking "green" conference centers, hotels and inns from around the world and their resounding financial success. Patrick Healy of Fetzer Vineyards shared numerous business decisions made by the Mendocino County winery that incorporate economy and ecology in their operations. Fetzer Vineyards is one of the largest premium wineries in the country with many interesting successes that further the company-wide philosophy of sustainability.

Some of the main points outlined at the event were:

- a city's leader's must identify desirable sites for visitor-serving uses.
- Pacifica is uniquely positioned to benefit in maintaining its natural resources while increasing its economic viability.

(continued on page 6)

REARVIEW

by John Cook

Sessions you might have missed at the APA Conference

"Those Pesky Pedestrians: How to Make Your City Completely Unwalkable."

We all know that nothing decreases your traffic level of service like a whole bunch of people wanting to get out of their cars and walk around. Despite the well-publicized horror stories of the increasing odds against pedestrians, they still clog our otherwise pretty efficient streets. We'll explore the evolution of pedestrian deterrents, from traditional means (installing pedestrian gates, encouraging autos to honk at dawdling walkers, and increasing the issuance of tickets for jaywalking), to more cutting edge methods, such as phasing out after school crossing guards, installing fences along sidewalks to reduce middle of the block crossing, and replacing median strips with piranha and alligator pits.

Planning Director's Workshop: "I can't face another Monday night!" Proven strategies for dealing with difficult planning commissioners, from the cantankerous to the comatose.

Map Skills I: Cardinal Directions. We will introduce the concepts of North, South, East, and West. Time permitting, the concept of scale will be discussed.

Planning Commissioner's Workshop: Managing up: Eight handy tips for over-riding your planning staff.

"Let the Strongest Survive: New Darwinian Paradigms for Economic Development." Shoppers have made their intentions clear: they want LOW prices and really big, free parking lots. Unfortunately, architectural historians, inner city types, and other assorted do-gooders try to stand in the way of progress by attempting to block big box retail projects. Learn how to fight back and defend progress (not to mention your city's sales tax revenue!) with such important arguments as "If we don't get this store, the town next door will take it!"

"I Wish My Phone Would Stop Ringing! Minimizing Public Involvement." Nothing interrupts the flow of a planner's day quite like that stream of phone calls from the public. "Don't these people have jobs?" we often ask ourselves. "Why are they bothering me?" Besides, we're the experts, right? This seminar will focus on ways to streamline your productivity by avoiding opposition—and ideally, all discussion whatsoever. Strategies include: installing really complex telephone trees (eg, "You've reached the city of Heather Grove. If it is Monday, please press 124. If you are calling between 2:00 and 3:30, press 38492#"), scheduling public meetings during "Seinfeld," and speaking only in acronyms during public meetings.

ESSAY (continued from Page 5)

- Community-wide consensus must be attained on long-range policies that address the economy and ecology partnership.

The program, attended by nearly 100 people, was designed to begin a visioning process that will build a new image for Pacifica—an image based on economy and ecology with community-wide endorsement. With unified support, that image will strengthen efforts to create a new economy based on visitor-serving businesses and attention will be focused on attracting developers, companies, and new businesses with a commitment to sustainable development. Additionally, local businesses will be encouraged to introduce or increase their sustainable practices, and retailers will have a new market to supply with goods and services.



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Andrea Ouse is also the Central Bay RAC Director for the Northern Section. For more information about Pacifica's program, please contact her at (415) 738-7341. And if your community or firm is doing something new or innovative, the Northern News audience wants to hear about it! Please call John Cook at (510) 540-0655 with submission ideas.

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NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR

May

- May 8 NSCCAPA Board Meeting, Berkeley
- May 10 AICP Examination!
- May 15-16 "21st Century California"
UCLA Extension Event, Santa Monica

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

June

- June 4 ISADR Seminars Begin, Humboldt
- June 5 NSCCAPA Board Meeting, Berkeley

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

NSCCAPA Board Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at the Berkeley Permit Services Center, 2118 Milvia Street, one block west of the Berkeley BART. The Board welcomes your attendance and encourages your participation in the organization. For more information, contact Wendy Cosin at (510) 705-8108; (wec1@ci.berkeley.ca.us)

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