



# NORTHERN NEWS



American Planning Association  
California Chapter  
Northern  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

A Publication of the Northern Section of the California Chapter of APA



**MARCH 2011**

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## Residential TODs in Santa Clara County are "over-parked"

By Eduardo C. Serafin, PE, AICP, and Justin Meek,  
with Robert W. Swierk, AICP, and Ying C. Smith, AICP

Last year, a graduate class in urban and regional planning at San José State University teamed up with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to study parking at transit-oriented development (TOD) residential projects in the southern portion of the San Francisco Bay Area. Observing the parking utilization rates at 12 housing developments near VTA light rail and Caltrain stations, this collaborative research effort produced local evidence that the parking supply at residential TODs exceeds demand. The study corroborates recent research that other Bay Area residential TODs are also "over-parked" (Cervero 2009)—useful evidence for decision-makers that parking requirements should be reduced for housing projects near rail transit.

This article summarizes the objectives, methodology, key findings, and policy implications of the SJSU-VTA project. A complete Technical Report (December 2010) is available at <http://bit.ly/gk9Y7p>.

### OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The project objective was to corroborate other research and determine whether reduced parking requirements can work in Santa Clara County. If the surveys showed parking utilization significantly below parking supply, then local parking requirements could be lowered—in turn reducing residential TOD construction costs and their overall footprint, and making land available for other uses.

An initial literature review was conducted to determine best practices for estimating parking demand, identify local parking requirements, and develop a parking survey work plan. An on-site survey methodology was selected, and pre-survey field visits were made, followed by on-site surveys to collect a range of parking-related data.

### KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Local parking requirements for residential developments (set by local zoning) clearly have led to a considerable oversupply of parking at the residential TODs surveyed. Each of the 12 TODs surveyed offers more parking than residents need and actually use. Unused parking ranged from 17 to 39 percent. Overall, 2,496 of 9,751 parking spaces (26 percent) were not used at the time of the surveys. A factual and reasonable conclusion is that more

*(continued on next page)*

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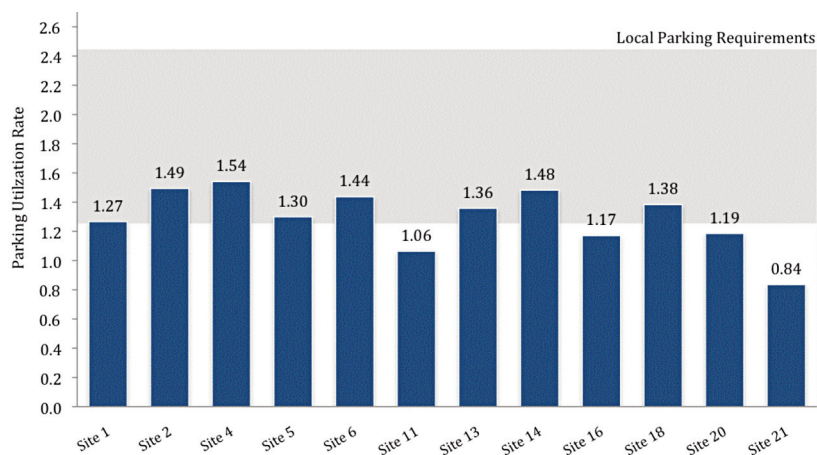
## Residential TODs in Santa Clara County are “over-parked”

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parking is provided than is needed and that parking requirements for residential TODs in Santa Clara County and similar locations could be reduced by as much as 26 percent.

Currently, required residential parking in Santa Clara County municipalities ranges from less than 1.3 parking spaces per dwelling unit to 2.5 spaces per unit. On average, only about 1.3 spaces<sup>1</sup> are needed per unit in a residential TOD in Santa Clara County, compared to an existing average parking supply of 1.7 for the survey sites. Our research showed that residential parking demand within one-half mile of a rail transit station is less than what current zoning codes require (see Figure 1). Thus many Santa Clara County municipalities could reduce residential parking requirements significantly without the risk of “underparking” a TOD residential site.

**Figure 1.** Parking utilization rates for surveyed sites compared to local zoning requirements



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

### Reducing parking and overall project costs

Reducing parking requirements for TOD residential projects could benefit both local municipalities and developers. Construction and maintenance of unused or underused parking areas consumes land, money, and other resources. The unneeded parking unnecessarily increases costs for developers and also deprives municipalities of alternative uses for the land. In addition, the savings in development costs could be used to support project enhancements desired by the developer, the city, or the community.

### Simplifying local parking requirements

Many Santa Clara County municipalities have their own unique way of granting reduced parking requirements for residences near transit stations. Most often, the process requires case-by-case decisions (such as granting conditional use permits) or a previously completed planning effort (such as a Specific Plan). In several jurisdictions, parking reductions can be granted only through issuance of a variance or in conjunction with the developer's participation in and promotion of transportation demand management (TDM) programs.

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The American Planning Association, California Chapter Northern, offers membership to city and regional planners and associated professionals primarily living or working in California, from Monterey County to Del Norte County, including the nine county San Francisco Bay Area and Lake and San Benito Counties. APA California Northern promotes planning-related continuing education and social functions in order to:

- Provide an arena for communication and exchange of information about planning related activities;
- Raise member awareness and involvement in APA affairs;
- Increase public awareness of the importance of planning;
- Encourage professionalism in the conduct of its members; and
- Foster a sense of community among the members.

APA California Northern publishes *Northern News* 10 times each year in PDF for the exchange of planning ideas and information. Current and back issues are available for download at <http://bit.ly/9YpPxS>. Entirely the effort of volunteers, the *News* is written and produced by and for urban planners in Northern California. Circulation (downloads per issue) averages 6,000.

*Northern News* welcomes comments. Letters to the editor require the author's first and last name, home or work street address and phone number (neither of which will be published), and professional affiliation or title (which will be published only with the author's permission). All letters are subject to editing. Letters over 250 words are not considered.

Deadlines for submitting materials for inclusion in *Northern News* range from the 12th to the 16th of the month prior to publication. The 2011 schedule can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/dHlgyM>.

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## Residential TODs in Santa Clara County are "over-parked"

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Providing for reduced parking requirements for residential TODs in local zoning codes would save municipalities the staff time and resources required to review and grant special permits. Developers would likely embrace this move, as it would provide them with greater predictability and simplify their cost determinations. Codifying the parking requirements for residential near transit might even result in an increased number of TODs.

### Adapting for future transit expansion

Several new transit projects are planned for Santa Clara County, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines and a BART extension to San José. These will provide better transit service to many areas of the county, providing residents the option to access destinations such as central business districts without driving. As more areas in the county are connected by frequent and convenient transit, opportunities will arise for residents to take advantage of the accessibility and convenience that TOD residential projects offer. As that occurs, there may be further potential to reduce TOD parking requirements.

Our research has shown that the surveyed TOD residential sites near rail stations in Santa Clara County are over-parked. Extrapolating, we suggest that TOD residential projects near new BRT transit stations could also enjoy reduced parking requirements, especially if the convenience, comfort, and quality of BRT is comparable to rail service.

### Improving land use and urban form

Municipalities should expect positive impacts from decreasing parking ratios for residential TODs. Land would be more efficiently used, making it available for additional housing or enhanced community amenities. According to Arrington & Cervero (2008), decreasing parking ratios from 2.2 to 1.1—while holding other factors constant—increases the potential for building more units by 20 to 33 percent. Reducing parking ratios should result in lower construction costs, greater housing production, higher transit ridership, and improved overall physical form and performance of residential developments (Arrington & Cervero 2008, 48-51).

As to urban form, putting surface parking lots between housing units and adjacent roads and walks typically creates barriers to walkability. Reducing the amount of parking (especially surface parking) can improve the overall physical form of residential developments, making them more inviting and pedestrian friendly—i.e., more "livable."

### AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Mixed-use developments and TOD projects present an opportunity to offer shared-parking. Depending on the time of day, parking shared among residents and commercial business patrons reduces the overall need for parking. By integrating commercial and residential parking, the parking supply will be used more efficiently (Boroski 2002, 9). This is especially true if the mixed-use development is located within one-half mile of a transit station. Future research on shared parking in Santa Clara County TODs would be useful in the planning and approval process.

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## Residential TODs in Santa Clara County are “over-parked” *(continued from previous page)*

At the same time, TOD residential properties with reduced parking ratios should result in higher transit ridership. Municipalities could then offer an incentive to private developers in the form of reduced traffic-related impact fees. The rationale would be that since these TOD residential projects generate fewer vehicle trips, their associated fair-share contribution to roadway traffic impacts could be lowered. However, future research studies should be conducted to verify that those who choose to live in Santa Clara County TODs drive less often and have fewer cars, thereby reducing parking demand.

The Research Team developed a work plan for estimating parking demand using stated-preference user surveys. For reference in future research, a methodology for conducting a user survey is included in Appendix C of the final research report for parties who may wish to estimate the total residential parking demand at TOD sites.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS SUMMARY

- Lowered construction costs associated with reduced required parking could incentivize more residential TODs and support project enhancements desired by the city or community. The cost of constructing parking facilities often exceeds \$30,000 per space in a garage and about \$5,000 per surface space. Further savings could be achieved by not having to maintain underused parking spaces.
- Simplifying local parking requirements would save municipalities staff time and resources. And by providing greater predictability, developers might pursue TOD residential in cities that codify TOD parking requirements.
- As more areas in Santa Clara County are connected by frequent and convenient transit, there will be new opportunities for residents to take advantage of the accessibility and convenience that TOD residential projects offer, and more developments should be able to reduce their parking supply. Residential TODs near new BRT stations could similarly reduce parking demand.
- By reducing the amount of parking (especially surface parking) at a site, the overall physical form of residential properties can be improved to make them more inviting and pedestrian friendly, and thus more “livable.”

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### THE RESEARCH SPONSORS

**The Department of Urban and Regional Planning at SJSU** offers graduate study leading to the degree of Master of Urban Planning. Accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board, the program is designed to prepare skilled professionals who are well grounded in the theories, methods, and techniques of planning in local, regional, and state government for the purpose of improving the quality of urban regions.

**The VTA** began as a Santa Clara County department in 1972 to oversee the region’s transportation system. Until 1995, VTA’s primary responsibility was the development, operation, and maintenance of the county’s bus and light rail system. VTA separated from the County and merged with the region’s Congestion Management Agency in January 1995, undertaking the added responsibility of managing the county’s blueprint to reduce congestion and improve air quality. The agency has a strong interest in seeing transit-supportive land use and transportation policies implemented by local agencies in the county.

### REFERENCES

- Arrington, G. B. and Robert Cervero. 2008. *Effects of TOD on Housing, Parking, and Travel*. Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board.
- Boroski, John, Topaz Faulkner, G.B. Arrington, Stuart Mori, Terry Parker, and Daniel Mayer. 2002. *Statewide Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study: Factors for Success in California. Parking and TOD: Challenges and Opportunities (Special Report)*. California Department of Transportation.
- Cervero, Robert, Arlie Adkins, and Cathleen Sullivan. 2009. *Are TOD sites Over-Parked?* UCTC Research Paper No. 882. Berkeley, CA: University of California Transportation Center.

<sup>1</sup> This result for Santa Clara County TOD sites is comparable to the average parking demand rate of 1.2 spaces per dwelling unit for other San Francisco Bay Area TOD sites studied by Robert Cervero in 2009. (See Table 2.1 in the Technical Report.) ■



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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

By Hanson Hom, AICP

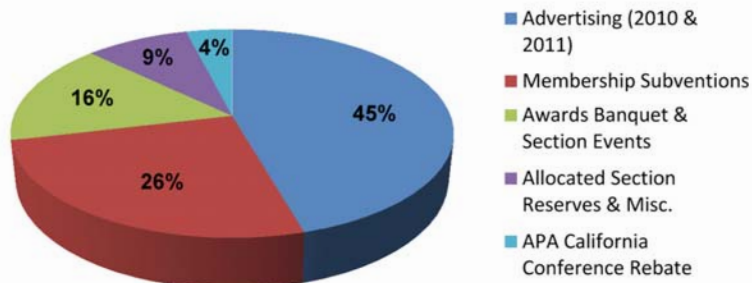


**Board retreat.** We had a very productive all-day retreat in January to identify goals and priorities for 2011 and to plan Northern Section activities for the year. Results of the membership and sustainability survey sent to all members at the end of 2010 were particularly helpful in the Board's goal-setting. (See [page 8](#) for survey results.) Key goals and priorities for 2011 include:

- Explore strategies to increase membership and support services;
- Emphasize providing free or low-cost AICP | CM professional development events, and research other avenues such as webinars;
- Continue to create partnerships and seek co-sponsorship opportunities with private and nonprofit organizations;
- Expand outreach and career development for young planners and students, including outreach to universities, additional scholarships, a mentorship program, and support for the Young Planners Group;
- Expand Northern Section's website and use of other social media tools and sites;
- Improve the format of the *Northern News* to be more reader-friendly and focus on local/regional news and activities; and
- Create a Sustainability Subcommittee to provide resources and promote dialogue on effective sustainability planning, with initial task to create a webpage on Northern Section resources. (See [page 15](#).)

The Board also adopted its 2011 budget at the retreat. The budget correlates with the above goals and priorities and totals \$50,500. The following pie charts summarize the projected revenue and expenses for the Northern Section.

### Projected 2011 Sources of Funds



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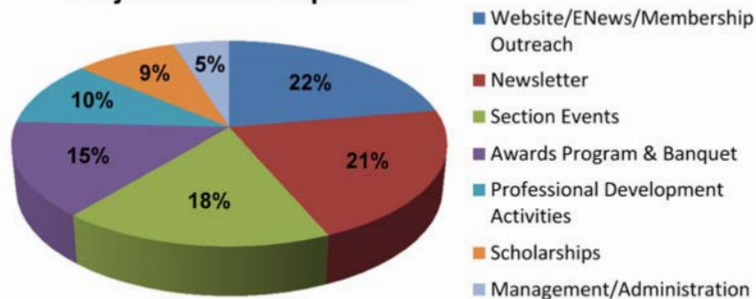


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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE *(continued from previous page)*

### Projected 2011 Expenses



**New Board members and opportunities.** Several new Board members were appointed at the retreat and we welcome them to the Board: **Theresa Alster**, who joins Mika Miyasato as a *Northern News* Associate Editor; **Brian Soland**, San Francisco Regional Advisory Council (RAC) Chair; and **Michelle Thong**, Student Representative, UC Berkeley. **Juan Borrelli, AICP**, was appointed to the new position of Section Historian.

We have an additional opportunity for you to participate on our board as Planning Diversity Co-Director. The Co-Director would work with **Miroo Desai, AICP**, on important diversity outreach activities for Northern Section. Please contact me at [hansonapa@gmail.com](mailto:hansonapa@gmail.com) if you are interested in becoming more involved on the board of your professional association by filling this position.

**APA Northern Section Awards program.** The deadline for submitting nominations for an **APA Award** is fast approaching. Completed nominations are due by **March 18**. Information is available on the Northern Section website, [www.norcalapa.org](http://www.norcalapa.org). And mark your calendar for **May 20** to attend the Awards banquet at Scott's Seafood Restaurant, Jack London Square, Oakland, when we will honor the awardees. This has always been a well-attended and joyous event and a great networking opportunity. This year we are pleased to offer a **sponsorship program** at four levels (see [page 11](#)). It is a great opportunity to market your firm and support APA. Please contact **Darcy Kremin, AICP**, at [darcy.kremin@cardno.com](mailto:darcy.kremin@cardno.com) for more information. ■

## Correction

In "Talk about change!" (*Northern News*, February 2011, page 22) the 1960 population for California was misstated. It was 15.7 million, not 1.7 million. ■

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## Membership survey results; AICP | CM information

By Tania Sheyner, AICP, Professional Development Director

**Survey.** In November of last year, Northern Section emailed a survey to solicit input from local APA members regarding what our section is doing well and what we can do to better serve your professional needs in 2011. Approximately 13 percent of the Northern Section members responded, giving the Board useful information and great suggestions to inform our program planning.

Two issues were reiterated throughout the survey. Members look to the Section —

- to provide low-cost or free opportunities to obtain AICP | CM credits, and
- to keep them informed on local and regional planning issues.

Other subject areas that respondents said they would like to see covered (through the Section's publications and through upcoming programs and events) are legislative issues; state, national and global issues; legal issues; and issues related to job search. In addition, survey respondents revealed that they read most or all issues of *Northern News* and have attended at least one APA-sponsored or co-sponsored event in the past year.

We appreciate everyone's feedback and encourage those who did not take the survey to offer their suggestions for future programming. Please email the Professional Development Director ([tsheyner@esassoc.com](mailto:tsheyner@esassoc.com)) or any of the Board members. Board member contact information can be found on [page 2](#) of this issue of *Northern News* or on our website, [www.norcalapa.org](http://www.norcalapa.org).

**Availability of CM Credits.** After reviewing all of the CM-eligible courses that Northern Section sponsored or was involved in over the past year, we find that the Section either sponsored or co-sponsored a total of some 35 courses with a total of nearly 90 CM credits, including Ethics and Law credits. The courses were given across the Section's geographic area, and most were either free or fairly low-cost (\$20 or less per CM credit). The section's CM courses ranged from walking tours to presentations on local planning efforts, emerging trends in the profession, workshops on new legislative changes, and other offerings. A list of CM-eligible courses provided in 2010 will be available on the Northern Section website, [www.norcalapa.org](http://www.norcalapa.org), in the coming weeks. Check it to be sure that you have logged in all of your local CM-eligible APA events on your APA profile.

You can keep up with local events being sponsored or co-sponsored by Northern Section by checking the Calendar in the back of *Northern News* (see [page 18](#)) or by reading the biweekly eNews. If CM credits are offered, that is noted at the end of the item. Also check our website, [www.norcalapa.org](http://www.norcalapa.org), for updates. ■





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## Northern California roundup

**Redwood City plan reinvented.** A plan that won APA awards in 2008 but was stymied by a successful lawsuit has been reinvented and approved. "City leaders had already approved a Downtown Precise Plan and an environmental impact report in 2007. The plan was sent back to the drawing board after a local property owner sued. He said the city did not sufficiently study how taller buildings would affect shorter ones, open space issues, or the impacts new developments might have on historic structures. The environmental impact report approved January 24 was rewritten—as ordered by a judge—to include a comprehensive shadow study and a list of existing and potentially historic buildings. The approved plan would allow for a maximum development in the downtown area of 2,500 residential units, 500,000 square feet of new office space, 100,000 square feet of shops and other retail, and 200 hotel rooms. Dan Zack, the city's downtown development coordinator, told the council that it would likely take 10 to 20 years to reach those caps." —Bonnie Eslinger, *Daily News* Staff Writer, "Redwood City approves improved downtown plan," *San Jose Mercury News*, January 25, 2010, <http://bit.ly/g77MbL>.

**San Francisco and San José.** "Australian homes are the most unaffordable among English-speaking nations, while those in the US are the cheapest relative to incomes, according to a survey by Demographia, a consulting company in Belleville, Illinois. San Francisco and San José topped the survey's list as the least affordable housing markets in the US. Markets where home prices are 5.1 times household income or more are considered severely unaffordable by the report. In the US, the most unaffordable major metropolitan market was San Francisco, where homes cost 7.2 times income, followed by San Jose (6.7 times), San Diego (6.2), New York (6.1) and Los Angeles (5.9 times)." —Nichola Samanther, *Bloomberg News*, January 24, 2011, <http://bloom.bg/fi3vvx>. Download the 52-page survey at <http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf>.

**Oakland.** "Governor Brown's budget will force Oakland to make even bigger cuts than it already has. His plan not only blocks future revitalization efforts, it prohibits cities from using redevelopment funds to help balance their general fund budgets. In Oakland, including when Brown was mayor, the city increasingly used its redevelopment agency to pay the salaries of public employees previously paid from the general fund. Brown touted his new plan as a way for cities to spend more on basic services, including police and fire. But in Oakland, it promises the opposite impact. It will

*(continued on next page)*

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## Northern California roundup *(continued from previous page)*

force the city to use its cash-strapped general fund to pay for services currently financed by the redevelopment agency.”—Robert Gammon, “The hidden costs of Jerry Brown’s plan,” *East Bay Express*, January 26, 2010, <http://bit.ly/gbnujD>.

**Caltrain expected to close stations.** Caltrain officials have proposed “closing up to 16 stations in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties—turning half the rail line’s stops into ghost depots, stranding thousands of riders, and leaving several huge shopping and housing centers without train stops next door. The plans come in addition to a fare hike and deep service cuts revealed last year. City leaders said the closures would be a big blow to their economies and limit the ways residents and workers get around. The cities have built or are planning large developments around stations specifically to take cars off the road: **San Mateo** approved two ambitious commercial developments next to the Hayward Park station.

**Mountain View** endorsed a plan to build hundreds of apartment units and several shops next to the San Antonio station. **Burlingame** would lose service at its historic downtown depot. **Santa Clara**, with more than 200,000 residents and workers combined, would lose its only train station. About 13 percent of Caltrain’s 40,000 daily riders board at stations proposed for closure.” —Mike Rosenberg and Gary Richards, Bay Area News Group, “Caltrain proposes shuttering half its stations,” *San Jose Mercury News*, February 4, 2011, <http://bit.ly/fymhgz>.

**Pleasanton.** “The Pleasanton City Council, in complying with a court settlement, voted 5-0 for transit-oriented development standards and design guidelines for 31 acres in the Hacienda Business Park (near Interstate 580) that were rezoned by the council in October 2009. The guidelines and rezoning—for buildings between three and five stories, apartments, and possible retail uses—are in response to a lawsuit the city settled with Urban Habitat over Pleasanton’s voter approved 29,000-unit housing cap. Urban Habitat said the cap prevented Pleasanton from providing its share of affordable housing.” —Robert Jordan, “Pleasanton completes rezoning to allow more housing in Hacienda Business Park,” *Contra Costa Times*, February 17, 2011, <http://bit.ly/dFrk6u>. ■

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# APA California Northern 2011 Awards Program Sponsorship Opportunities



### Platinum Level = \$2,000 includes:

- 10 tickets (includes event access, dinner, and one drink ticket per person) plus a "VIP" reserved table at the gala awards ceremony;
- a table near registration for displaying promotional materials including one free-standing board on easel;
- recognition by the section director at the beginning and closing of the ceremony;
- special recognition as a "platinum level" event sponsor in one issue of the *Northern News* and on the section's website (where the 2011 awards program winners are featured online);
- a calling card ad in *Northern News* for 10 consecutive issues;
- a hyper-linked ad in eNews for six months;
- and your logo and special recognition as a "platinum level" sponsor printed on the event program.

### Gold Level = \$1,000 includes:

- five tickets (includes event access, dinner, and one drink ticket per person) to the gala awards ceremony;
- a tabletop near registration for displaying promotional materials;
- recognition by the section director at the beginning and closing of the ceremony;
- special recognition as a "gold level" event sponsor in one issue of the *Northern News* and on the section's website (where the 2011 awards program winners are featured online);
- a calling card ad in *Northern News* for five consecutive issues;
- a hyper-linked ad in eNews for three months;
- and special recognition as a "gold level" sponsor printed on the event program.

### Silver Level = \$500 includes:

- two tickets (includes event access, dinner, and one drink ticket per person) to the gala awards ceremony;
- a tabletop near registration for displaying promotional materials;
- recognition by the section director at the beginning and closing of the ceremony;
- special recognition as a "silver level" event sponsor in one issue of the *Northern News* and on the section's website (where the 2011 awards program winners are featured online);
- a calling card ad in *Northern News* for two consecutive issues;
- and special recognition as a "silver level" sponsor printed on the event program.

(continued on next page)



## Onward and upward

### Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch

was appointed planning services manager for the City of Alameda, October 2010. She previously was senior associate, PMC, San Francisco Bay Area, 2004–2010. Margaret serves on Northern Section's board as Planning Commissioner Liaison. She has been a member of the El Cerrito Planning Commission since 2004 and is currently the Chair. Margaret also has her own consultancy, Mosaik, where she does project coaching, mostly in the realm of sustainability and entitlements. ■



## APA California Northern 2011 Awards Program Sponsorship Opportunities

(continued from previous page)

### Bronze Level = \$250 includes:

- a tabletop near registration for displaying promotional materials;
- recognition by the section director at the beginning and closing of the ceremony;
- special recognition as a “bronze level” event sponsor in one issue of the *Northern News* and on the section's website (where the 2011 Awards Program winners are featured online);
- a calling card ad in *Northern News* for one issue;
- and special recognition as a “bronze level” sponsor printed on the event program. ■

## Where in the world?



Photo by Gary B. Larson, Seattle (Answer on [page 17](#))



## LETTERS

Editor:

Kudos to you once again for maintaining exquisite quality control at the *Northern News*!

**Chandler Lee**

*San Francisco*

Editor:

While "California's Prop 26" (*Northern News*, February 2011) presents useful information on the content of the proposition, its history of California's tax limitation measures is misleading.

Proposition 13 was not a simple "taxpayer revolt." It was a successful effort by conservative activists, backed by landlords and the real estate industry, to implement their agenda by hiding behind homeowners' concerns over rapid increases in property taxes. That is why Proposition 13 limits property taxes on commercial investment property as well as owner-occupied homes.

Proposition 218 was not the result of "public sentiment" that "local governments were intentionally circumventing" Prop 13. Rather it was sponsored by the same anti-tax organizations. Propositions 13 and 218 "reformed" municipal finance law in the sense that they gave one-third of the electorate and legislature veto power over taxes.

The article does accurately describe Proposition 26 as sponsored by "taxpayers' associations" and funded by "oil companies as well as alcohol and tobacco" companies. Proposition 26 prevents government from requiring that businesses pay fees to mitigate the damage they cause to the environment and public health.

The cumulative effect of Propositions 13, 218, and 26 is to protect the excess profits that some businesses gain by privatizing rising land values created by a growing population and major public investments—and that some other businesses gain from doing uncompensated harm to the public. We will be better equipped to understand what needs to be changed if we understand the real purposes behind these propositions.

**Stephen Barton**

*Berkeley* ■

## Prominent planner promotes book, criticizes profession

*By Riad El-Bdour*

"It's time to return to a robust urbanism," wrote Columnist Neal Pierce (<http://bit.ly/i5Jxuj>) in his January 1st review of "Urbanism in the age of climate change" (Peter Calthorpe, Island Press, December 2010). On January 27, the author of the recently published book plugged it at a standing-room-only crowd at the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association. The talk was co-sponsored by Transform, a Bay Area-based transit advocacy group. Calthorpe—the first to coin the term "transit oriented development"—is best known among urban planners for his work on sustainable "new urbanism" projects such as the Laguna West neighborhood in South Sacramento. He was a cofounder of the Congress for New Urbanism, a Chicago based nonprofit that promotes smart growth.

"We are largely in this mess of climate change because of a dramatic increase in our Vehicle Miles Traveled over the past 50 years," said Calthorpe. In 1960 the average person drove 11,000 miles per year. Now we drive about twice that. "The time for action on climate change is now."

The environmentalist community is dominated by groups that think in "silos," and liberal groups often spend more time fighting each other when they need to come together to combat climate change, said Calthorpe. The Bay Area is behind others in terms of smart growth because of the "fractured politics of the left," while Salt Lake City is a "bastion of smart growth."

Despite differences among groups, "climate change has to be the default issue. If we don't deal with it, everything else will be irrelevant." To come anywhere near meeting AB32 mandates to achieve 80 percent of 1990 greenhouse gas emission levels by 2020—Calthorpe spoke of a longer range goal of reducing GHG emissions to 12 percent of today's values by 2050—Californians require a dramatic rethinking of how new housing developments are built.

Calthorpe compared the extremely low density East Bay city of San Ramon to the moderately dense Rockridge neighborhood in north Oakland. He described San Ramon as dominated by large-lot single family homes creating car dependency, while Rockridge is dominated by small-lot bungalows and is very walkable and transit oriented. His point: AB32 goals can be reached simply by building more neighborhoods like Rockridge.

Most shocking was his prediction that outer Bay Area cities like San Ramon will experience "negative housing growth" in the next 40 years, with many abandoned homes in low density suburban areas as people move inward toward job-rich central cities.

No surprise to most planners, Calthorpe is good at selling his smart growth vision. He associates smart growth projects—such as the new buildings built along Berkeley's University Avenue over the last 30 years—with large drops in crime. Smart growth also leads to energy efficiency, lower costs for government-provided services such as water treatment, and a general improvement in the health of residents, he said.

In closing, Calthorpe expressed hope that new technology and smart growth—combined with a growing awareness among people of what individuals need to do to address climate change—will help us succeed in reaching the AB 32 goals while living better and healthier lives.

*Read an excerpt from "Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change: Urbanism Expanded" by Peter Calthorpe. See Streetsblog San Francisco, February 1, 2011, <http://bit.ly/dNiXnF>. ■*

# HSR notes

Assembled and reported by Janet Palma, MS, AICP

Below are excerpts from recent news on high-speed rail in or affecting the Bay Area. The focus has shifted to funding and the inclusion of business in the dialogue for operation and maintenance of the system within California. In the latest news, East Bay city officials in Tracy and Union City said they would welcome the high-speed railroad as key to revitalizing their downtowns and making them more transit friendly. Pleasanton leaders, however, view the rail line as a party crasher to their scenic city center. While “current plans for the initial phase of high-speed rail call for the route to pass through Pacheco Pass on its 520-mile, \$43 billion line from Anaheim to San José, the rail authority didn’t give up on the East Bay. The agency intends to build the \$6 billion Altamont Corridor segment in a later phase at a time yet to be determined.”

—Denis Cuff, “Routes for high-speed rail segment from Stockton to San José stir debate,” *Contra Costa Times*, February 14, 2011, <http://bit.ly/fogOXO>.

For a time in 2010, it looked like an infusion of HSR money and track sharing would bail out the financially imperiled Caltrain. A Caltrain Summit on January 29 and sponsored by Friends of Caltrain included Congresswoman Jackie Spier and Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune as Keynote Speakers. Long term funding could take years to secure, and Friends of Caltrain is urging people to write their representatives to prevent drastic cuts in service.

—Shirley Johnson, “Caltrain summit: Grassroots effort to save commuter rail service,” *SFStreetsblog.org*, January 31, 2011, <http://bit.ly/fCnKYf>.

On January 21, at a prior Save Caltrain Summit hosted by Stanford University, Jim Beall, D-San José, urged local transportation agencies to merge and use funds to support a regional transit agency. —Sue Dremann, “Merge transit agencies, Caltrain summit told,” *The Almanac*, January 22, 2011, <http://bit.ly/eFOJ3g>.

## Also of note:

**January 25.** “In his State of the Union address, President Barack Obama called for ‘an upfront investment’ in 2011 so that by 2036, 80 percent of Americans have access to high speed rail. That would mean high speed rail lines connecting, more or less, Tampa to Orlando, San Francisco to Southern California, Boston to Washington, Chicago to Milwaukee, St. Louis to Detroit, and Portland to Seattle, at a cost to exceed—conservatively—\$100 billion. Right now, no Americans have access to high speed rail. The administration has invested \$10 billion to date. China has spent at least half a trillion dollars.” —Andrea Bernstein, “Obama: 80 percent of Americans should have access to High Speed Rail by 2036,” *Transportation Nation: A Public Radio Reporting Project*, January 25, 2011, <http://bit.ly/ig8K5K>.

**February 3.** “Cities that expect to have passenger stations for California’s proposed high-speed train system will get help from the state to plan for development around the stations. Meeting in Sacramento, the California High-Speed Rail Authority board approved putting up as much as \$200,000 per station site. The board also approved guidelines for station-area planning. In the San Joaquin Valley—where the initial construction on the 800-mile system is expected to commence in 2012 or 2013—the cities of Fresno, Bakersfield, and Merced all welcomed the financial help.”

—Tim Sheehan, “High-Speed Rail panel OKs station site funding,” *The Fresno Bee*, February 3, 2011, <http://bit.ly/e7lopZ>.

**February 4.** “State leaders said they won’t unveil information on how the tracks will run through the Peninsula until at least 2012. California High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Roelof van Ark announced to board members during a meeting in Sacramento that the San Francisco-to-San José section of the project would take a back seat to the Central Valley. The delay means cities up and down the Caltrain line won’t know for at least a year how the high-speed train tracks will run through their communities—either below ground, on a raised platform, or at street level. Also delayed will be the selection of a possible mid-Peninsula station, which officials are considering for either Redwood City, Palo Alto, or Mountain View, in addition to confirmed stops in San Francisco, Millbrae, and San José. The location of a planned maintenance yard, proposed for Brisbane despite officials’ objections there, will also remain up in the air. The decision to delay Peninsula planning gives project opponents time to lawyer up, poke holes in the state’s current plans, and advocate their concerns. But supporters could lose the momentum they had built in the past year as the state raked in billions of dollars for construction, which had been slated to start as soon as 2012 in the Bay Area.” —Mike Rosenberg, Bay Area News Group, “High-speed rail leaders delay release of Bay Area plans for at least a year,” *San Jose Mercury News*, February 4, 2011, <http://bit.ly/ie0bsi>.

**February 5.** “I was pleased—even relieved—by the decision of the Federal Railroad Administration to require the California High-Speed Rail Authority to assign federal high-speed rail money to the Central Valley, rather than along the Peninsula Caltrain right of way. Now that the pause button has been hit for the Peninsula segment, the CHSRA has the opportunity to build trust, answer critical questions, and work effectively with Peninsula communities. Peninsula cities must also take responsibility to work through their differences and develop a seamless alignment proposal that will benefit all and be worthy of support from all.” —Jerry Hill, Assemblyman—19th District, San Mateo County. “Readers’ Forum: Must do high-speed rail right,” *Contra Costa Times*, February 5, 2011, <http://bit.ly/hikg5v>.

(continued on next page)

**February 9.** “In the first formal step to figure out who’s going to build and run California’s high-speed rail system, officials invited companies to speak up if they’re interested—and send in ideas. The California High-Speed Rail Authority’s ‘request for expressions of interest’ is 44 pages long, and it’s going out to businesses around the world. Its release marks the start of a yearlong process to select firms to design and build the initial segment between Fresno and Bakersfield. Companies have five weeks to respond.” —Tim Sheehan, “High-Speed Rail Authority invites input from business,” *Fresno Bee*, February 9, 2011, <http://bit.ly/dUqCoK>.

**Federal funding support for HSR.** The President’s FY 2012 budget “Supports high-speed rail service as a real transportation alternative. For the first time ever, the Administration proposes to include intercity passenger rail programs in the multi-year reauthorization proposal. The goal is to provide 80 percent of Americans with convenient access to a passenger rail system, featuring high-speed service, within 25 years. The budget provides \$53 billion over six years to fund the development of high-speed rail and other passenger rail programs as part of an integrated national strategy.” The amount proposed for the Federal Railroad Administration for 2012 is \$8,046,000,000—an amount that will translate into thousands of local jobs. And the budget includes a proposal to spend nearly 17 percent of the overall \$556 billion transportation package in the first year. Will mayors and governors be lobbying their Congressional representatives to keep that in the budget? Go to <http://bit.ly/11kJzo> to download “Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2012” and click on Dept. of Transportation (pp 121-125, PDF 358K). ■

## UPDATE: Plan-it sustainably

A report by Katja Irvin, AICP, and Scott Edmondson, AICP

We hope you are as excited as we are about Northern Section’s new Sustainability Program approved by the Board January 22nd. Our goal for 2011 is to establish a Northern Section learning and practice network in sustainability planning. The network will highlight examples of leading edge, innovative sustainability planning; create opportunities for members to act as resources for other members in their areas of expertise; organize easy access to learning resources; and encourage a dialogue among members. The Committee and network are forming to accelerate innovative practice in the Northern Section as part of the wider quickening response from planners and others (*Northern News*, November 2010, p. 16, <http://www.norcalapa.org/assets/chapter/newsletter/Nov10.pdf>).

Many thanks to the Sustainability Proposal Committee for its work this past fall (Hanson Hom, AICP, Katja Irvin, AICP, Justin Meeks, Tania Sheyner, AICP, Kay Cheng, and Scott Edmondson, AICP). The committee used results from our recent Membership Sustainability Survey to develop a program to meet your needs. Those 195 of you who took the survey—a 13 percent response rate—indicated a need for specific information and technical analysis, practical solutions, and workshops that focus on specific topics or promote networking and coordination with multiple stakeholders. You also requested education for and outreach to elected and appointed officials and the public.

About two-thirds of the survey respondents are involved in a wide range of sustainability-related projects and activities. Interestingly, a majority did not distinguish between traditional planning and new sustainability challenges. At the same time, many said addressing climate change (implementing SB375 and AB32, climate action plans, measuring GHGs, renewable energy, and climate adaptation) is a new challenge.

Respondents also said they most need access to self-learning, best practices, and case studies related to sustainability (59 percent); sustainability knowledge and resources in general (55 percent); and training workshops (51 percent). Stay tuned for more updates as we flesh out the sustainability program based on the survey results, research, and outreach (including collaboration with students at San Francisco State University).

Continuing Sustainability Committee members Katja, Kay, and Scott, and new member Caroline Teng invite you to join the core group of volunteers launching this effort in:

- deepening our understanding and expertise of sustainability planning,
- producing our newsletter column,
- creating content for the web-based resource, and
- developing other aspects of the network over time.

To volunteer, please contact Scott Edmondson, [scott-e@sustainability2030.com](mailto:scott-e@sustainability2030.com), or Katja Irvin, [katja.irvin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:katja.irvin@sbcglobal.net).

As the network evolves, you can access resources as you need them in your daily work or become an expert resource on a particular area of sustainability planning. You can help us expand the dialogue among members by sharing your thoughts, ideas, and questions about sustainability planning and the Committee’s program. To those ends, we will have more powerful technology in the near future, including a website. In the meantime, send us your questions and examples of innovative projects and plans you feel would be valuable resources for other planners, or volunteer to be a resource. We will use your questions to inform our work and will respond individually to as many as we can. ■

## What others are saying

**Is Navy off base?** The February issue called your attention to a Thomas L. Friedman editorial, “The U.S.S. Prius: There’s a green revolution going on in the Navy and Marines” (*The New York Times*, December 19, 2010, <http://nyti.ms/gy37PN>). Now, as if to disparage everything that is being done to test and use green fuels to replace oil that has to be hauled, flown, or tankered over long distances—with all the security problems that poses—RAND corporation has released a report saying: “The United States would derive no meaningful military benefit from increased use of alternative fuels to power its jets, ships, and other weapons systems. The RAND report argued that most alternative-fuel technologies were unproven, too expensive, or too far from commercial scale to meet the military’s needs over the next decade. If such fuels are to be pursued, the report concluded, the most economic, environmentally sound, and near-term candidate would be a liquid fuel produced using a combination of coal and biomass, as well as some method for capturing and storing carbon emissions released during production.” —Tom Zeller, Jr., “Alternative fuels don’t benefit the military, a RAND report says,” *The New York Times*, January 25, 2011, <http://nyti.ms/eWqzua>.

**How your tax dollars are used.** “Buried in a major new poll on Californians’ attitudes toward government is a finding that explains many things: Only 6 percent of adults can identify where the bulk of the state’s money comes from, and how it is spent. But you can’t blame the public for not being able to follow the money. State and local finance in the state has become so Byzantine that even the professionals barely understand it. Here, then, is an attempt to sort some of the myths from the facts.” —Jonathan Webber, “Few Californians understand the state’s tax system,” *The Bay Citizen*, January 29, 2011, <http://bit.ly/haOI3E>.

**Home ownership rate lowest in 12 years, rental vacancies fall.** “The meltdown of the U.S. mortgage market and rising foreclosures have wiped out more homeowners than were created in the 2000-07 housing boom. In the fourth quarter of 2010, 66.5 percent of Americans owned homes, the lowest rate since the end of 1998, according to the Census Bureau. The first wave of trouble struck several years ago as borrowers took out subprime mortgages with low interest rates that later reset, often with much higher payments they couldn’t afford. The problem spread as the recession led to high unemployment. Now, as declining real-estate values leave many borrowers owning more than their homes are worth, more Americans are simply walking away. The vacancy rate for

rental housing fell to 9.4 percent, from 10.7 percent a year earlier. Housing experts say each 1 percent decline in the home-ownership rate represents the movement of one million households to rentals.” —Dawn Wotapka, “Home ownership falls to preboom levels,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 2011, <http://on.wsj.com/foP2G9>.


**Harvard economist’s controversial vote for cities.** “City politics is better than national politics because the problems are more tangible and the communication is more face to face. This is a point Edward Glaeser fleshes out in ‘Triumph of the City’ [The Penguin Press, Feb 2011]. Glaeser points out that far from withering in the age of instant global information flows, cities have only become more important. Cities magnify people’s strengths, Glaeser argues, because ideas spread more easily in dense environments. Cities thrive because they host quality conversations, not because they have new buildings and convention centers. That’s because humans communicate best when they are physically brought together. When you clump together different sorts of skilled people and force them to rub against one another, they create friction and instability, which leads to tension and creativity, which leads to small business growth. As Glaeser notes, cities that rely on big businesses wither. Those that incubate small ones grow.” —David Brooks, “The splendor of cities,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2011, <http://nyti.ms/gOJ3DM>.

### More on Glaeser’s views on cities:

- “Ed Glaeser’s *Triumph of the City* makes arguments on behalf of the city I hadn’t seen before, like the fact that large numbers of poor people are in some ways a sign of vitality and opportunity rather than decay. But like all polemics, it sometimes goes a little far in its advocacy for building as much and as tall as possible. In particular, Glaeser blames historic preservation bodies and stringent zoning regulations for impeding growth, and thinks that their authority should be curtailed.” —Lydia DePillis, “What does Ed Glaeser have against planning?,” *WashingtonCityPaper.com*, February 14, 2011, <http://bit.ly/enR6A7>.
- “The great urbanist Jane Jacobs was correct about so much in cities, but she got housing prices wrong. She noted that old housing was cheaper than new housing, and so she thought that restricting new development could keep prices down. That’s not how supply and demand works. Abundant supply is the only way to reduce prices in really high-demand areas.” —Glaeser to David Leonhardt, “A conversation with Edward L. Glaeser,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 2011, <http://nyti.ms/fmCdVj>.

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- Jon Stewart interviews Ed Glaeser on *The Daily Show*, February 14, 2011, <http://bit.ly/gqGZFa>. Six-minute video. 

**Despatch from E.G. in Austin, via Britain.** “The United States is less exercised about climate change than a lot of countries, and it’s one of the few places where you can turn on the television and catch a debate between mainstream figures about whether climate change is even real.” Possible reasons:

- “The costs of a large-scale effort to fight global warming are too steep to bear. Therefore, ignore the issue, or pretend it doesn’t exist, or the economy (including development) is more important.
- “This is a political issue, not a scientific one, [with this] feedback loop: if climate change were real, why is it so polarising? Because it’s so polarising, it must be slightly suspicious.

“America’s recalcitrance relative to the rest of the rich world reflects two things. The first is that America consumes a lot of the world’s resources [and] would incur heavier costs than a small European state from a large-scale effort to fight climate change. The second is that America is big enough that its agreement is probably necessary and perhaps even sufficient for a serious

climate fight.” —*The Economist*, “Why don’t Americans believe in global warming?”, February 8, 2011, <http://econ.st/e142rz>.

**California—blue forever.** “The census is over, its findings known, and California has a brand-new redistricting commission made up of citizens who have never before been public figures. Will all this lead to lots of new faces in both Sacramento and in California’s delegation to Congress? The best guess here is probably not. There’s a surprising likelihood it might not change this situation very much. In fact, it stands a chance of placing even more Democrats in office than we see now. The fact there are 2 million more Democrats than Republicans now becomes a factor. If lines are drawn without regard to party, chances are in most districts there will have to be more Democrats than Republicans. [Thus] Democrats will have the best shot at winning the bulk of them by sheer dint of their numerical preponderance.” —Tom Elias, “Expect California to stay blue despite redistricting,” *The Daily News*, February 16, 2011, <http://thedailynews.ca.newsmemory.com/index.php#>, page A11. ■

### Answer to “Where in the world?” (Page 12)

Lhasa, Tibet. Potala Palace, former residence of the Dalai Lama.  
Photo by Gary B. Larson, Seattle

## NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR

To list an event in the Northern Section calendars (*Northern News*, monthly; *eNews*, every two weeks), go to <http://bit.ly/fp5soO> to see the required template (at top of page), the current listings, and where to send your formatted item.

### ONGOING

**Symposium, 1909–2109: Sustaining the Lasting Value of American Planning.** This four-hour symposium on May 21, 2009, brought together federal officials, planners, academics, and grassroots advocates to focus on the achievements of America's first 100 years of planning. See a video of the symposium (**free**) and earn CM credits. Visit <http://www.planning.org/centennial/symposium/>  
**CM | 4.0 may be earned by viewing all four parts of the symposium video.**

### MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	<b>2</b>	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
13	14	15	16	17	<b>18</b>	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

### MARCH

- 3/2 SF City Hall Fellows program.** Meet our Fellows and staff at the Silicon Valley Nonprofit Career Fair, Stanford University, Tresidder Memorial Union, 2nd Floor, 5–8 PM. Submittal deadline for the City Hall Fellows San Francisco Class of 2012 is **midnight March 18**. Applications are available at [www.cityhallfellows.org](http://www.cityhallfellows.org). To submit a competitive application, read the Applicant Handbook (PDF, 10 pages) before applying. If you have questions after checking the website or attending the event, feel free to contact [apply@cityhallfellows.org](mailto:apply@cityhallfellows.org)
- 3/2 APA California – Northern, Regular Board Meeting.** 6–9 PM, HNTB, 1111 Broadway, 9th Floor, Oakland. RSVP to Hanson Hom at [hhom@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us](mailto:hhom@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us)
- 3/11 Recognition Dinner for retired SJSU planning professor Bert Muhly.** 6 PM social hour, 7 PM buffet dinner and program, Mariani's Restaurant, 2500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara. Celebrate and honor the many contributions of retired SJSU urban and regional planning professor Bert Muhly. Cost: \$45 per person for meal and gift. First five SJSU students: \$20. Buffet will include a vegetarian option. Make checks payable to Scott Lefaver and mail to Scott at 760 Chapman Street, San Jose, CA 95126 by **March 1**. Volunteers or questions? Contact Art Henriques at [ahenriques11@gmail.com](mailto:ahenriques11@gmail.com) or Scott Lefaver at [lefavor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lefavor@sbcglobal.net)
- 3/12 AICP Exam Preparation Workshop.** 10 AM–3 PM. To register, contact Don Bradley, [dr.donbradley@comcast.net](mailto:dr.donbradley@comcast.net) or (650) 592-0915.

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### MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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13	14	15	16	17	<b>18</b>	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

**3/18 APA California Northern Planning Awards.** Nominations and application materials for the APA California Northern Planning Awards are available at <http://www.norcalapa.org> or <http://bit.ly/bTWiq7> and are due by 5 PM, Friday, March 18, 2011. Materials received after this date will not be accepted and will not be returned. **No exceptions!**

**3/30 Land Use and Climate Change: A regional and local perspective.** 6:30 PM Networking, 7:30–8:30 PM Program. Redwood City Main Library, Redwood City. Panel discussion on regional and local issues, opportunities, and constraints associated with climate change legislation, CEQA, and strategic planning efforts by cities. Panelists include experts from BAAQMD, PMC Consulting, and city planners. For more information or to RSVP, contact Surachita Bose at [surachitab@gmail.com](mailto:surachitab@gmail.com)  
**CM | pending**

**3/31 Diversity and Peninsula RAC social mixer.** 6–8 PM, Windy City Pizza, 35 Bovet Road, San Mateo. This is a first call-out for planners of color! Meet, network, and exchange ideas with other planners over pizza and beer. Explore the possibility to create a forum for planners of color to share practices that reflect our experiences. No-host bar. For more information or to RSVP, contact Miroo Desai at [mdesai@emeryville.org](mailto:mdesai@emeryville.org) or Surachita Bose, [surachitab@gmail.com](mailto:surachitab@gmail.com)

### APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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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

### APRIL

**4/2 AICP Exam Preparation Workshop.** 10 AM–3 PM. To register, contact Don Bradley, [dr.donbradley@comcast.net](mailto:dr.donbradley@comcast.net) or (650) 592-0915. **NOTE:** Because of Spring Break, SJSU is closed April 2. Therefore, this Workshop will either have to move off-campus or be rescheduled to another date.

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MAY						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	<b>5</b>	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## MAY

**5/5**

**APA California – Northern, regular Board Meeting.** 6–9 PM, Location TBD. RSVP to Hanson Hom at [hhom@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us](mailto:hhom@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us)

**5/18–20**

**WTS (Women's Transportation Seminar) 2011 International Annual Conference.** Hyatt Embarcadero in San Francisco. The conference theme is Building Bridges. It will span a host of technical transportation topics, help you bridge your professional development divide, and provide opportunities to connect with international transportation leaders. Go to [www.wtsinternational.org](http://www.wtsinternational.org) and click on the 2011 conference site under Annual Conference for updates. Sponsorship opportunities are available. For assistance, contact Jane Bierstedt at [j.bierstedt@fehrandpeers.com](mailto:j.bierstedt@fehrandpeers.com)

**5/20**

**2011 Planning Awards Celebration, APA California – Northern.** 6:30 PM, Scott's Seafood Restaurant, 2 Broadway, Oakland. For more information, contact the Awards Co-Directors: Eileen Whitty at [ewhitty@ebmud.com](mailto:ewhitty@ebmud.com) or Andrea Ouse, [Andrea.ouse@lsa-assoc.com](mailto:Andrea.ouse@lsa-assoc.com) ■