



# NORTHERN NEWS



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*Making Great Communities Happen*

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**FEBRUARY 2013**

## A new era for Housing Elements?

### HCD reaches out to Local Agencies

By Pete Parkinson, AICP, and Barbara Kautz, FAICP

As any planner or consultant who's worked on updating a city or county Housing Element can tell you, the research, writing, and policy development is only part of the effort. The real excitement often starts when you submit your new Housing Element to the state department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for its determination as to whether the Element "substantially complies" with state law.

#### The problem

For many local governments, HCD review has been a frustrating exercise. This is partly a function of the Housing Element statute itself, which is far more detailed and prescriptive than for any other General Plan Element. Nor has the statutory playing field stayed the same for very long; the Housing Element statute has been amended no fewer than 23 times in the past 15 years, often in significant ways. On top of these complexities, local governments have perceived HCD's review process as unpredictable and, at times, seeking content beyond the already rigorous statutory requirements. HCD reported to the Legislature that it typically reviews each agency's Housing Element three or four times.

To further complicate things, local Housing Elements are now linked to the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy required under SB 375. This makes the stakes greater. Here in the Bay Area, an HCD-certified Housing Element is one of the prerequisites for receiving certain transportation funds under the new OneBayArea Grant (OBAG) program.

#### Help from the Brown Administration

In response to local governments' frustration, APA, the League of Cities, and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) put together a position paper suggesting

ways to make Housing Element review more efficient and recommending modifications to HCD policies that went beyond the statutory requirements. Several unique factors combined to make this the right approach at the right time. First, like many local governments, HCD's own budget was reduced and the agency was left with fewer staff to review Housing Elements. HCD's reduced staff capacity coincides with a convergence of literally hundreds of local Housing Elements needing review under the new SB 375 deadlines. At the same time, the recession reduced population growth projections such that regional housing needs determinations are going down throughout the state in the next planning period. As the need to plan for more housing units has gone down, the slowdown in residential development has meant that many housing sites identified in the last cycle of Housing Elements are still available for the next cycle.

Last but not least, the past year or so has seen a significant change in leadership at the state level. Governor Jerry Brown's policies have been generally supportive of giving more authority to local government, and he has appointed Claudia Cappio, Director of the state's Housing Finance Agency, as the single point of leadership for HCD and CalHFA and Lisa Bates as the new HCD Deputy Director for Housing Policy. Both are committed to the streamlining initiatives. Perhaps more importantly, while they remain committed to the development of affordable housing, they have experience in local government and understand the concerns of local planners.

#### Housing Element Update guidance

The streamlining effort got underway in earnest with a *Housing Element Focus Group* convened by HCD in spring of 2012. This small group, consisting of four local government representatives (representing APA California, the League, CSAC, and the COGs) and four housing advocates,

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## JOBS and EVENTS CALENDAR

have moved to the Northern Section website, [norcalapa.org](http://norcalapa.org). ■

If you thought "early January mornings seemed darker than ever while at the same time, the sky was clearly lighter around 5 p.m.," you were correct. Although "the winter solstice was past, by Jan. 2, there were 12 more minutes of sunlight in the afternoons, but three fewer minutes in the morning." This seeming anomaly is really quite normal, "relating to the fact that not all days are 24 hours. We would never notice it if we all just used sundials." —John O.Neil, *The New York Times*, <http://nyti.ms/Y691ck>

## Director's note

By Jeff Baker



As the incoming Northern Section Director, I look forward to leading the Board in supporting the professional needs of a diverse membership, providing networking opportunities, and exploring emerging trends in planning.

Please join me in thanking **Hanson Hom, AICP**, for his service as the Northern Section Director over the last two years. Hanson has been an active member of the Board for eight years — serving four years as the Ethics Review Director, two years as the Director Elect, and most recently, two years as the Northern Section Director. His leadership and insight have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the board and expanding the programs and services offered to our members. I look forward to working with Hanson in his new role as the Immediate Past Director.

I would also like to recognize and extend a thank you for their years of service to several Board members who have decided to step down. This includes **Joanna Jansen, AICP**, and **Andy Waggoner** who served as the East Bay RAC Co-chairs, organizing networking and educational opportunities in the East Bay. **Katja Irvin, AICP**, is stepping down from her role as the South Bay RAC Chair but will continue in her role as a Sustainability Committee Co-chair.

**Scott Edmondson, AICP**, is stepping down from his role as a Sustainability Committee Co-chair but will continue to be involved on the Committee. Lastly, **Florentina Cracium** has decided to step down from the Membership Director position but is looking to continue to serve on the Northern Section Board in a different capacity. Please join me in thanking these volunteers for their dedication and service.

As I write this, we are gearing up for the annual Northern Section Board Retreat, January 19th in Burlingame. The annual retreat provides the Board with an opportunity to take a fresh look at the coming year and to set our goals and priorities for Northern Section.

There are several volunteer opportunities available for individuals interested in joining the Northern Section Board. We are currently seeking candidates for two open Board positions: Membership Director, and Mentorship Chair. To find out more about the Membership Director position please review our by-laws at <http://bit.ly/OOdLMo>. Learn more about the Mentorship Program at <http://bit.ly/SMN7sY>. If you are interested in one of the two positions, please contact me at [Jeff.Baker@dublin.ca.gov](mailto:Jeff.Baker@dublin.ca.gov) ■

This is the twenty-first issue of *Northern News* available in both PDF and online digital format — a virtual magazine with pages you can flip right on your computer screen. National APA's *Planning* magazine has joined the parade with their January 2013 digital issue. You can read *Planning* online at <http://bit.ly/TLtjEi>

"In 1985, Americans owned nearly 70 percent of the total value of the nation's housing stock, the main anchor of middle-class wealth. By 2011, the homeowners' share had plummeted to just under 40 percent, and the banks owned the major share of U.S. housing." —Hedrick Smith, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, foreign correspondent, and documentary filmmaker. *The Globalist*, <http://bit.ly/10fWuTG>

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State regulators say that 1,066 megawatts of solar power has been installed throughout the state through the California Solar Initiative. Launched in 2007, the Initiative called for 1,940 new megawatts of solar power to be installed by 2016. —Dana Hull, *Contra Costa Times*, <http://bit.ly/TQ7h3d>

## A new era for Housing Elements? (continued from page 1)

met regularly over several months to look at ways to streamline the Housing Element process. HCD staff planners, particularly Paul McDougall and Jennifer Seeger, also devoted many hours to working with the Focus Group.

As a result of the Focus Group effort, HCD recently released a new Housing Element Update Guidance that contains some potentially valuable tools for cities and counties that will soon begin their update process to meet the 2014 or 2015 Housing Element deadlines for northern California communities. (See <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/>) The underlying principle of the new *Guidance* is that a city's or county's certified Housing Element from the last cycle is a good place to start for the update. Local agencies can focus on what has changed since the last Housing Element rather than starting from scratch. Most importantly, this approach will be carried through in HCD's review of new Housing Elements: focusing on what is new, rather than a ground-up review.

The new *Guidance* contains two key elements. A **Completeness Checklist** will help local agencies determine whether their draft Housing Element includes everything that is specified in the statute. In part because of the complexity of the statute, HCD has frequently received Housing Elements for review that lack key requirements (analyses of emergency shelter locations, for instance). Local agencies should use the checklist to ensure that their Housing Elements include all required pieces. They can also use the checklist when drafting scopes of work so that consultants will provide Housing Elements that include all statutory requirements. HCD staff will use the checklist to determine whether anything is missing from the Housing Element submitted by a city or county. This "completeness review" — similar to what planning agencies do when reviewing planning applications — will occur before HCD staff completes a substantive review of the draft element. If the element is missing key components, HCD will notify the community before starting its substantive review.

The second tool is the **Streamlined Update Template**. This tool helps focus the local agency (and interested stakeholders) on what has actually changed since the last Housing Element was adopted. The template will guide HCD reviewers to those sections that need substantive review in the new cycle and document those areas where no change was made. To qualify for streamlined review, cities and counties must have had their last Housing Element certified by HCD, completed any required rezoning of sites, and adopted (if applicable) ordinances regarding emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing, density bonuses, and reasonable accommodation. Even if an agency doesn't qualify for streamlined review, it may wish to direct HCD to the areas that have changed from the last adopted element. HCD certified most Housing Elements adopted in the last cycle, so agencies not eligible for streamlined review are likely to be those that did not adopt Housing Elements at all in the last cycle. (Note: If local agencies do not adopt their next Housing Elements

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2012 was the hottest and second-most extreme year on record in the US, but only the ninth- or tenth-warmest for Mother Earth. (Reuters, <http://bit.ly/WlwkT4>) Climate Central provides an interactive graphic that lets you click on a state to graph its annual average temperatures — and the trend line. <http://bit.ly/10cmkcx>

## A new era for Housing Elements? *(continued from previous page)*

within 120 days of the due date, they will be required to adopt new Housing Elements every four years rather than every eight years.)

### Success to date

Communities in San Diego County have already started to submit draft Housing Elements to HCD for review. Of the eight draft Housing Elements submitted in 2012, seven were found to be in substantial compliance after the first review! If this success becomes the norm, local governments and HCD may be able to develop a more collaborative working relationship.

### Policy issues

Local planners had more limited, but some, success in areas where HCD's review appears to go beyond statutory requirements. Some of the more important substantive issues raised were these:

- **Treatment of sites with approved projects.** HCD had adopted a policy of considering vacant sites with development approvals as not suitable for development of lower income housing unless affordable housing was actually part of the project approval, even if the housing was approved at densities that the statute recognizes as appropriate for lower income housing (20 to 30 units per acre in the Bay Area, for instance). Some communities had approved hundreds of unbuilt units at high enough densities, but HCD's policy forced them to zone additional sites for lower income housing.

HCD has now agreed that in most instances it will consider vacant sites zoned or approved at the right density to be suitable for lower income housing until a building permit is issued, unless it receives comments showing that the site is being marketed to higher incomes.

- **Justification required for non-vacant sites and for sites allowing commercial development.** Communities had found that HCD required far more analysis of non-vacant and mixed-use sites than of vacant sites, thus discouraging agencies from using infill and encouraging use of greenfield sites. Although the statute requires additional analyses of non-vacant sites, HCD often required even more analysis, such as lot consolidation programs for small infill lots, analysis of property owners' interest in development, structural conditions, economic success of existing uses, remediation requirements, and detailed analysis of applicable zoning on each site.

In regard to non-vacant sites, HCD remains very concerned about the extent to which existing development is an impediment to redevelopment and continues to desire more information than required by the statute. Similarly, with regard to vacant mixed-use sites that permit commercial development, HCD is very hesitant to allow communities to 'count' all of the residential development permitted on these sites out of concern that

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"On average, Americans work 1,778 hours — or 44.5 workweeks — a year, very close to the OECD average of 1,749 hours. Greek workers average 2,109 hours at work a year. South Koreans work the most among OECD member countries, averaging almost 2,200 hours." For data for a few more countries and interesting details, see *The Globalist*, <http://bit.ly/RK62NO>

## A new era for Housing Elements? *(continued from previous page)*

commercial development will take place instead. This is the case even though the statute does not require any additional analysis for mixed-use sites, and Planning Law requires local governments to find additional sites when commercial development is approved on sites designated for housing in the Housing Element.

- **Densities below the 'default densities' for lower income housing.** HCD's practice has been to deny densities below the 'default densities' (20 to 30 units per acre in the Bay Area) as suitable for lower income housing except in rural and Central Valley communities. When the 'default densities' were adopted, local governments were told that they were not minimum densities, and that lower densities could be adopted with an appropriate analysis. However, coastal communities have found that HCD rejects their analysis.

HCD has stated that it recognizes that the 'default densities' are not mandatory, and that lower densities can be justified with an 'adequate' analysis. The difficulty lies in the lack of clarity about what constitutes 'adequate.' From our focus group discussions, it appears that an analysis that may be most convincing to HCD would be a showing that the subsidies required for affordable housing are no higher at lower densities than at higher densities. HCD also expressed some willingness to consider regional analyses. For instance, a SANDAG analysis showed that required subsidies would be lower at 20 units per acre than at 30 units per acre.

## Conclusion

Based on the success of the San Diego County cities to date, we are hopeful that cities and counties will find it much easier to obtain HCD approval of their Housing Elements than in the past. While disagreements remain, the discussions to date have at least helped to clarify and define what HCD is looking for.

Happy drafting!



*Pete Parkinson, AICP, is director of the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department and former vice-president for policy and legislation for APA California. You can reach him at [Pete.Parkinson@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Pete.Parkinson@sonoma-county.org).*



*Barbara Kautz, FAICP, is a partner at Goldfarb & Lipman LLP and was formerly community development director for the City of San Mateo. You can reach her at [Bkautz@goldfarblipman.com](mailto:Bkautz@goldfarblipman.com).*

*Both participated in the Housing Element Focus Group. ■*

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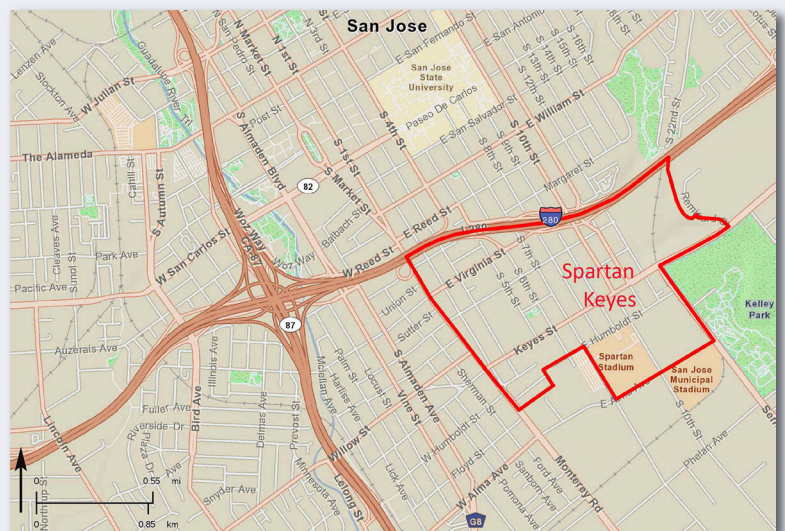
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Last January, *The Globalist* wondered: "If the entire world had the same rate of car ownership as the United States, how many vehicles would be on the world's roads?" See the answer at <http://bit.ly/VsyDbX>

## SJSU graduate students and CommUniverCity assess the Spartan Keys neighborhood

By Dwight Brown, Jennifer Piozot, and Jacqueline Vance

In December, San Jose State University (SJSU) urban and regional planning graduate students completed a comprehensive assessment of the Spartan Keys community in central San Jose. The neighborhood, delineated during the city's former Strong Neighborhoods Initiative program, is approximately 370 acres in size and is located one mile south of the SJSU main campus. Although Spartan Keys is a centrally located San Jose neighborhood, it has struggled to maintain a distinct community identity — in part, because major roadways permeate the community. Heavily-used truck routes and busy, one-way street couplets fragment the neighborhood as drivers are funneled to and from Interstate 280, creating challenges for fostering a cohesive and connected community.



The Spartan Keys neighborhood in relation to San Jose State University. Map by Dwight Brown, 2012

The completed assessment will form a baseline of existing conditions for a multi-year involvement in the area by CommUniverCity (CUC) San Jose, a collaboration between a local community, the university, and the City of San Jose. Since its inception in 2005, CUC has been "building community" in low-income, largely immigrant neighborhoods by engaging residents and students in service learning projects that accomplish neighborhood-driven goals. To date, CUC has engaged over 40,000 residents of central San Jose neighborhoods, and 10,000 SJSU students have invested over 150,000 hours of service valued at \$3 million.

The CUC board selected the Spartan Keys neighborhood for expansion of the program, building on past successes with the

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SJSU graduate students and CommUniverCity assess the Spartan Keyes neighborhood *(continued from previous page)*

collaborative neighborhood planning process in the nearby Five Wounds Brookwood Terrace neighborhood. Informing this decision was the work of graduate planning students in fall 2011 who studied fourteen central San Jose neighborhoods and determined, through dozens of interviews with local stakeholders, that Spartan Keyes was the most receptive to engaging with CUC.



Historic Victorian homes elegantly line Spartan Keyes' streets.  
 Photo: Jennifer Piozet

Two graduate classes, under the guidance of Richard Kos, AICP, and Justin Meek, AICP, conducted the assessment. The eight-credit, studio-based course emphasizes a “learning by doing” and “out of the classroom, into the neighborhoods” approach to community analysis as a way to prepare the students for contemporary approaches to urban analysis. The 34 students were actively involved in a number of assessment activities including photographic documentation of community assets and liabilities, meetings with local leaders, thorough quantitative analysis and GIS mapping of 2010 census and American Community Survey data, literature reviews, stakeholder interviews, and parcel-level field data collection to document existing land uses and housing conditions. The students also synthesized and interpreted data collected from a social capital survey designed to measure levels of trust and reciprocity in Spartan Keyes. This important “state of the community” data will serve as baseline for CUC to measure its community-strengthening impacts over time.

The students ascertained that resident concerns could be categorized into four primary challenges: fragmentation by transportation facilities, safety and drainage of alleyways, lack of open space, and a need for a cohesive community. To address these concerns, the students formed seven study teams:

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## Who's where



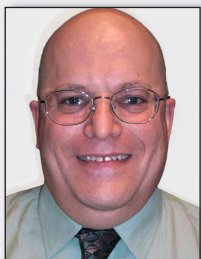
**Bob Brown, AICP**, has been named community development director for the City of Novato. Brown has been a planner for more than 34 years and had been serving the city in an interim capacity. He previously served as the

community development director for the cities of San Rafael and Milpitas, planning chief for the City of San Mateo, and zoning administrator in Palo Alto. Bob has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology from Santa Clara University and a Master of Urban Planning from San Jose State University.

**Lynn Goldberg, AICP**, has been named planning and building director for the City of Calistoga. Most recently the senior planner for the City of Healdsburg for seven years, she has also served as a contract and consulting planner



for many North Bay communities, specializing in housing elements. Ms. Goldberg holds a Master in City Planning from UC Berkeley and a Bachelor of Arts, Environmental Studies and Planning, from Sonoma State University. She is married to long-time planner Wayne Goldberg, winner of the 2008 Northern Section and CCAPA Distinguished Leadership Award – Professional Planner, and lecturer in the planning program at Sonoma State.



**Robert Hilman** is the new associate planner for the City of Eureka. He returned to Northern California after serving as a senior planner for a year-and-a-half with PCR Services Corporation in Santa Monica. Prior to that, he was

a senior planner for Planwest Partners (Arcata), where he served as an environmental planner focusing on CEQA projects. Hilman has an M.A. in City and Regional Planning from Cal Poly, SLO; and bachelor degrees in both Geography and Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University. He is excited about being back on the North Coast.

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## SJSU graduate students and CommUniverCity assess the Spartan Keyes neighborhood *(continued from previous page)*

- One team assessed Spartan-Keyes' transportation assets and deficiencies in terms of serving as "**complete streets**" for local residents. To do so, the students assessed on a block-by-block basis all pedestrian, transit, and bicycle infrastructure and considered the impacts of adjacent land uses and conditions related to housing type, quality of streetscape, and pavement conditions.
- The **public art** team surveyed the neighborhood to identify potential locations for public art installations and then created an inventory of existing public art.
- The **youth services** team conducted interviews, meetings, and site visits in order to better understand after-school program needs.
- The **open space** team catalogued and evaluated all potential green space sites in the neighborhood.
- The **community-greening** team identified potential grant-funding sources, established a community greening vision, and produced a local planting guide for neighborhood residents.
- The **SJSU South Campus team** conducted interviews with university staff to determine opportunities for resident access to SJSU south campus athletic facilities and explored ideas for dedicated community meeting space.
- The **alleyways** team investigated the constraints, limitations, and guidelines for improving safety and drainage in these access corridors, while students in the concurrent Urban Design (URBP 232) course developed visions for possible alleyway transformations.



The graduate student assessment team, Fall 2012.  
Photo: Asha Weinstein Agrawal

The busy semester concluded with a lively "Community Conversation" at the local Art Ark Gallery on December 12th, where the students shared their assessment findings with local

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## Who's where *(continued from previous page)*



**Alyson Hunter** was recently named senior planner for the City of Arcata. Alyson is no stranger to North Coast public service. She previously was an associate transportation planner for Caltrans District 1 for four years. Before that,

she worked for more than a decade as a planner for Humboldt County. Alyson holds a B.A. in Geography/Social Science from Humboldt State University.

### **Licinia McMorrow, AICP,**

is now real estate project manager at the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. Her previous positions included planner with City of San Jose; assistant project manager, San Francisco



Redevelopment Agency (where she worked on community and economic development and financing in Bayview Hunters Point) and senior planner, Town of Woodside. McMorrow holds a Master of Planning from USC and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Macalester College (St. Paul). She served on the board of APA California Chapter Northern Section as South Bay Regional Advisory Committee Chair for two years (2007–2009).



**Whitney McNair, AICP, LEED AP,** is associate director for land use and environmental planning, Stanford University. McNair was the principal and co-founder of Metropolitan Planning Group, and before

that, the planning manager for the City of Mountain View. She holds a Master in Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University and a B.A. in Environmental Studies from UC Santa Barbara.

## SJSU graduate students and CommUniverCity assess the Spartan Keyes neighborhood *(continued from previous page)*

residents. Thanks to the students' extensive outreach efforts, attendance was significantly greater than anticipated by longtime neighborhood leaders. Attendees included local artists, community leaders, representatives of city agencies, and local politicians. Generous financial support from APA California–Northern offset the cost of refreshments.

Speaking about the project at the event, Councilmember Sam Liccardo said, "I am thrilled that CommUniverCity has spread its wings into Spartan Keyes, and I know many community leaders are as well. ... We appreciate that energy and good thinking, as well as your imagination. ... We are in the midst right now of recreating a city."

During the event, the students collected additional input from attendees for inclusion in the final assessment report to be completed in February; it will be available at <http://bit.ly/xJRh04>. The comprehensive assessment will serve as a foundation for future CUC efforts in Spartan Keyes.

**Dwight Brown and Jennifer Piozet** anticipate finishing their Masters in Urban and Regional Planning at SJSU in May 2013. You can reach Dwight at [dwight.brown9@gmail.com](mailto:dwight.brown9@gmail.com) and Jennifer at [jenniferpiozet@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferpiozet@gmail.com). She is a graduate research assistant at Mineta Transportation Institute. **Jacqueline Vance** anticipates finishing her Masters in Urban and Regional Planning at SJSU in December 2013, with specializations in environmental planning and applications of technology in planning. She is currently a design intern with the Planning and Development division of the Port of San Francisco. You can reach her at [jacqueline.vance@sfport.com](mailto:jacqueline.vance@sfport.com) ■

**Andrea Ouse, AICP,** is the new planning manager for the City of Vallejo, having started there the very last day of 2012. She previously was with LSA Associates for 10 years, serving as principal and managing the firm's South San Francisco office. For LSA, Ouse served as full-time deputy city planner (later city planner) for the Town of Colma (2002–2009). Ouse has just begun a two-year term as Director-elect for APA California–Northern Section. She was the APA California–Northern Section Awards Program Co-director from 2007–2012, and is the Awards Co-coordinator for the chapter (APA California, since January 2012). Her degrees include a Master in Public Administration from California State University–East Bay and a Bachelor of Science in City and Regional Planning from Cal Poly–San Luis Obispo. ■



"Urban farming is becoming a serious business in many cities around the world. City farming has extended its influence from a 'vacant-lots-only' phenomenon to a 'rest-of-the-city' phenomenon." —*Pop-up City* <http://bit.ly/UK6WSi>



# Norcal roundup

Assembled by the editors

## Houseboat decision clarifies what is a vessel

<http://bit.ly/YaGETv>

"In a 7-2 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld statutes in California and other states that say floating homes attached to the shore are governed by local housing laws, not by federal admiralty rules regulating ships and boats. The case that made it to the Supreme Court originated in Florida, but the Floating Homes Association of Sausalito filed a 'friend of the court' brief supporting the argument that floating homes are not 'vessels' because they are meant to be stationary, are attached to utilities, and are not intended to navigate waters. Stan Barbarich, an official with the Sausalito association, said that being considered a vessel also would have an impact on home financing and insurance."  
—Mark Prado, "Sausalito floating home dwellers cheer high court ruling," *Marin Independent Journal*, Jan. 18, 2013.

## Fort Ord guiding principles for reuse will not be adopted as policy

<http://bit.ly/VZByxl>

"The proposed guidelines for Fort Ord's reuse will be discussed at an upcoming workshop on implementing the base reuse plan's reassessment. But Del Rey Oaks Mayor Jerry Edelen, newly elected chairman of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority board of directors, said he does not expect a vote to adopt them as policy. Spearheaded by Carl Holm, deputy director of the Monterey County Resource Management Agency, the guidelines were proposed for the FORA board to follow as it implements suggested options in the reassessment of the 1997 base reuse plan. One of the principles would have limited land-use decisions on the FORA board to the jurisdictions that hold land there, excluding Carmel, Pacific Grove, Salinas, and Sand City. Edelen said the guidelines were a well-intentioned but ill-advised emotional reaction by some city and county staff members to an increasingly vocal element that opposes development on Fort Ord, particularly *Keep Fort Ord Wild*."  
—Virginia Hennessy, "FORA not expected to adopt 'guiding principles,'" *Monterey County Herald*, Jan. 14, 2013.

## BART weighs measures to combat platform crowding

<http://bit.ly/W3y3mu>

"On weekdays, BART commuters in San Francisco get to play the unwelcome equivalent of a human jigsaw puzzle. And while crowding is already an issue, the problem is only going to get worse — total ridership for the entire system could nearly double to hit 750,000 passengers a day in 15 years, a level that would be unsustainable under BART's current conditions, according to the transit agency. The regional rail operator is proposing several changes at the two easternmost downtown San Francisco stations, including removing furniture and pay phones, adding surcharges or

premium fare prices, and eventually building new platforms at the sites. Eventually, BART will have to make major infrastructure changes at the stations." —Will Reisman, "BART considers fixes to clogged San Francisco stations," *The San Francisco Examiner*, Jan. 13, 2013.

## Palo Alto considers ways to generate more affordable housing

<http://bit.ly/S0ZBLZ>

"Palo Alto, a city where affordable housing is famously in short supply, is trying to figure out what types of incentives it can offer developers to help solve this problem. In the process, the city is also trying to demonstrate to the state its commitment to complying with state law — both SB 1818 and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, a process in which the state allocates the number of houses each region (and, ultimately, city) should plan for. The city's Planning and Transportation Commission considered a proposed ordinance that would both make local law consistent with SB 1818 (by offering, among other things, a density bonus of up to 35 percent) and clarify the process by which developers should seek bonuses and concessions. Though members of planning staff acknowledged that the new ordinance is unlikely to result in a boom of affordable housing, they underscored its importance in showing the city's commitment to improving the situation."  
—Gennady Sheyner, "Palo Alto hopes to spur affordable housing," *Palo Alto Weekly*, Jan. 9, 2013.

## Targeted improvements could significantly reduce Bay Area traffic

<http://bit.ly/TZtWZJ>

"A groundbreaking study by UC Berkeley and MIT researchers has pinpointed a small group of drivers making Bay Area freeways miserable for the rest of us. The study's authors anonymously tracked more than 350,000 Bay Area drivers using their cellphone and GPS signals to gather some of the most detailed data yet on what causes our traffic jams. Caltrans and local transportation officials are now reviewing the results and plan to incorporate simple measures such as additional metering lights to spread out the volume of drivers coming from places where residents suffer the worst traffic, including southeast San Jose, Hayward, Dublin, San Rafael and San Ramon. By targeting those drivers to reduce the number of vehicles on Bay Area roads by just 1 percent, drivers would see the time they spend fuming in traffic drop by 14 percent — nearly eight minutes saved per hour, the study concludes. The data could also help provide the information needed to make roads and transit service more efficient, potentially saving tax dollars on unnecessary projects, the authors said." —Mike Rosenberg, "Key source of Bay Area traffic headaches revealed by top researchers," *Mercury News*, Jan. 8, 2013.

*(continued on next page)*



### Arcata projects in limbo due to redevelopment shuffle <http://bit.ly/VZAOs0>

"Arcata — like other cities locally and statewide — had its redevelopment funding pulled last year. When it appeared in March 2011 that Arcata's redevelopment agency could be dissolved, the city transferred nearly \$2 million out of the agency to save its affordable housing project at Sandpiper and other projects. Much of a recent \$2.4 million clawback in Arcata, demanded by the state's Department of Finance, has already been paid to contractors or is slated to be paid to them. A representative from Sandpiper's developer and several contractors involved in the project voiced concerns about the city's decision not to pay their invoices until the issue with the DOF is worked out. The Sandpiper housing project is almost done, and when completed, the units can be sold for about \$60,000 each, which adds up to about \$1 million that the city could send back to the county auditor. However, the units can't be sold until the city pays the contractors and the work is completed." —Luke Ramseth, "Redevelopment frustration; project incomplete, contractors unpaid in Arcata," *The Times-Standard*, Jan. 4, 2013.

### No time to be checkin' your ticket; this train has left the station <http://bit.ly/12GWMTu>

"A quarter century ago, Santa Clara County's first light-rail train left the station. But there was no grand celebration in December as Silicon Valley marked 25 years of light rail. The near-empty trolleys ... are among the least successful in the nation. Compared with the U.S. average, each VTA light-rail vehicle costs 30 percent more to operate and carries 30 percent fewer passengers. Fewer than 1 percent of the county's residents ride the trains daily. The network envisioned in the 1970s and 1980s wound up being twice the size, more expensive, less efficient, and less popular than first thought. Still, light-rail has put a dent in Silicon Valley's notoriously nasty freeway traffic, providing more than 32,000 one-way trips each day. If all those riders drove on Highway 101 in the South Bay, traffic would increase more than 6 percent. Riders' main complaint is speed, which is often less than 10 mph in downtown San Jose. Acknowledging the need to improve, the VTA is undergoing a \$27 million project to make the service more attractive, largely by adding tracks to launch express trains." —Mike Rosenberg, "25 years later, VTA light rail among the nation's worst," *Mercury News*, Dec. 27, 2012.

### A pro basketball arena? In Santa Cruz? <http://bit.ly/V0smpE>

"Golden State owners Joe Lacob and Peter Guber moved the Warriors' Development-League team from Bismarck, N.D., to Santa Cruz. Everything sounded great, except for 'no arena.' They researched the air tent option used for basketball games at the London Olympics and thought the technology and fast timetable

were a perfect fit. But the idea had never been tested in professional sports, and doubters multiplied because of political and building permit restrictions in California. In February 2012, the Warriors presented the plan to Santa Cruz and got the city's backing for two-thirds of the cost and help with building restrictions. The facility has a 15-year warranty, but it was deemed temporary, so the team didn't have to deal with the California Coastal Commission. The Warriors were able to erect a \$5.6 million facility, including a 29,000-square-foot arena, having cleaned the vacant lot on which it sits between downtown and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk less than three months ago. Twenty-five-foot steel walls hold a fabric roof, and covered walkways lead to the locker rooms and public restrooms. The Warriors sold out the Dec. 23 opener in 41 minutes." —Rusty Simmons, "Santa Cruz Warriors open just-built arena," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 22, 2012.

### South bay home prices rising <http://bit.ly/WGnjzA>

According to the Santa Clara County Association of Realtors and DeadlineNews.com, "The average Silicon Valley sale price for a single-family home in November was \$883,185, up nearly 16 percent from \$762,007 in November 2011. The average sale price for a condo or townhome was \$468,654, a whopping 39.4 percent increase from the \$336,206 of November 2011. The peak for any November came in 2007, when the average single-family home selling price was \$1,047,683. At the time, the average condo or townhome sales price was \$579,505." —"Silicon Valley home prices reach 5-year high," *DeadlineNews.com*, Dec. 21, 2012.

### North Coast extends national marine protections <http://bit.ly/VZB7TC>

"The Obama administration, under the auspices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, intends to add about 2,770 square miles to two sanctuaries that were created in the 1980s and, along with a third sanctuary, currently extend from Cambria in San Luis Obispo County north to Bodega Bay. The battle to prevent oil rigs from sprouting along the North Coast dates back to the late 1970s, involving previous public officials and environmentalists like Richard Charter. Drilling foes fended off their nemesis through a patchwork of annual moratoriums that lapsed in 2009. Over time, plans for offshore drilling packed public hearings in the region, while roadblocks to permanent protection thwarted a long line of North Coast legislators and made the issue one of the most vexing for environmental advocates. Steadily, the push for protection earned backing from nearly all of the region's local elected officials, Charter noted." —Guy Kovner and Brett Wilkison, "Federal officials to expand national marine sanctuaries on Sonoma, Mendocino coasts," *The Press Democrat*, Dec. 20, 2012. ■

## Congratulations to Northern Section's newest AICP members

By Juan Borrelli, AICP,  
Northern Section Historian

Sixty-seven California planners sat for the November 2012 AICP Exam. Forty-three passed, including 12 from the Northern Section. California's pass rate for this exam was 64 percent, just slightly higher than the national pass rate of 63 percent. Nationally, 315 of 500 applicants passed.

Passing the AICP's rigorous exam is a mark of professional distinction. This tremendous accomplishment commits AICP members to a professional code of ethics and professional advancement through continuing education.

The entire Northern Section Board of Directors extends sincere congratulations to the Section's newest AICP members:

**Monica F. Altmaier**

**Katherine H. Caradec**

**Valerie J. Conant**

**Matthew M. Davis**

**Gary Helfrich**

**Thalia Leng**

**Stephen C. Marshall**

**Christina Paul**

**Prakash Pinto**

**Christopher M. Sensenig**

**Tim M. Sullivan**

**Zhongping Xu**

For more on the AICP Code of Ethics, Professional Development, or Certification Maintenance (CM) Credit resources, please visit <http://norcalapa.org/programs/aicp> ■

## Where in the world?



Photo by Terry Thomas. (Answer on [page 17](#))

"After years of discord, California and Nevada have agreed on Tahoe development. The new regional plan (effective Feb. 11) encourages ripping down and rebuilding the area's aging infrastructure, removing buildings from environmentally delicate areas near marshes, streams and rivers, and constructing denser urban centers." —Malia Wollan, *The New York Times*, <http://nyti.ms/X6CxZk>. See TRPA Regional Plan Update, <http://bit.ly/hFbaTE>

# Plastic garbage project decomposition: How long until it's gone?

This graphic by Oliver Lüde / CC: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, ZHdK, is from the exhibition "Out to Sea? The Plastic Garbage Project," an exhibition by the Museum of Design Zurich, <http://bit.ly/LcHStY>. The graphic uses data from NOAA and Woods Hole Sea Grant to show the estimated decomposition rates of discarded everyday articles commonly found in the seas. The resulting tiny plastic particles will never fully disappear because they are not biodegradable. For more about plastic garbage in the sea, see <http://bit.ly/M5KXAY>



"Say yes to coffee. Coffee is emerging as a tonic for the aging brain. It's anti-inflammatory, helps block the ill effects of cholesterol in the brain, and cuts the risks of stroke, depression, and diabetes, all promoters of dementia. It's also high in antioxidants and caffeine, both strong players in brain chemistry." —Jean Carper, "100 simple things you can do to prevent Alzheimer's and age-related memory loss," <http://bit.ly/XxTZvC>



# Newby Island recovers resources, generates power

By Ray Hashimoto, AICP, and Katja Irvin, AICP

Last November a group of planners toured Republic Services' Newby Island Resource Recovery Park (NIRRP) in north San Jose to see its expanded "Recyclery." With its new 110 tons-per-hour multi-stream sorting system, 1.5 miles of conveyor belts, and 3000 motors, it is the first and largest of its kind. Each shift, 80 Republic employees work at this state of the art facility. The Newby Island landfill opened in 1938 and is a legal nonconforming use in San Jose. Today, NIRRP encompasses 342 acres and is approved to accept up to 4,000 tons of solid waste per day (including industrial wastes, grit, screenings, wastewater treatment sludge, contaminated soils, clean soils, and municipal waste).

Effective July 1, 2012, city businesses transitioned from a nonexclusive franchise system, under which more than 20 different haulers collected waste, to an exclusive system with one hauler (Republic Services) serving the entire city for most commercial solid waste collection needs. Republic claims the Recyclery is the world's largest material recovery facility. The facility provides wet/dry collection service to all San Jose businesses; residential and commercial service to the city of Milpitas; and commercial and industrial service in the cities of San Jose and Santa Clara.

Since Republic acquired three of the largest commercial haulers in San Jose a year ago, the company has completed waste audits to determine the types and quantities of waste material generated by each business it serves. Information from the audits and customer accounts is being used to develop a customer engagement strategy.

The project is a win-win for Republic Services and San Jose. Mayor Chuck Reed said, "Our businesses and community will benefit from this new approach to commercial waste recycling. ... The new service will include the recycling of organic waste which will help businesses and the City alike achieve their sustainability goals. The investment in

advanced waste processing facilities generates new green jobs, turns waste into energy, and once again demonstrates San Jose's innovative leadership toward a sustainable future, and moves the City significantly closer to achieving its Green Vision goal of diverting 100 percent of its waste from landfills and converting that waste into energy." It is anticipated that the new services will increase San Jose's commercial recycling rate from approximately 25 percent to 80 percent.

Republic has taken a green approach to other aspects of their operation at Newby Island. They changed the fueling system for their fleet of garbage trucks by installing at the facility a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station that can fill 70 trucks overnight. In addition, concrete and rock from demolition waste brought to the site is used for surfacing and maintaining the road system used throughout the landfill facility. NIRRP also includes an approximately 35-acre composting and wood recovery operation that processes over 190,000 tons of material annually. Further, NIRRP houses an onsite landfill gas-to-energy facility that provides clean fuel to operate the San José/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant — equivalent to the energy needed to power 3,000 homes.



Composting rows at Newby Island Resource Recovery Park, off Interstate 880 at the south tip of San Francisco Bay. Photo: Katja Irvin, AICP

*(continued on next page)*



Salvaged wood, stockpiled for recycling. Photo: Katja Irvin, AICP

### Planning and land use considerations

The 342-acre NIRRP site is fully utilized. Short of closing the facility, there is little opportunity to change the impacts of this use. Changes, including relocating the composting facilities to the western edge of the site, are expected to reduce odors in the adjoining community.

Tour sponsor HMM Engineers did the civil engineering design for the upgraded Recyclery. Tasks included site grading and drainage, storm water quality plan, onsite utility design, and pavement rehabilitation plan.

Landfills and recycling facilities are normally subject to stormwater regulations in the Statewide Industrial General Permit, but the Permit allows exceptions for facilities that do not discharge directly to Waters of the US (creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, bays, ocean, etc). This is the case with the Recyclery. All stormwater runoff discharges to on-site retention ponds, which then provide watering for the refuse piles. The City, however, still requires the preparation of a Stormwater Control Plan for the project, based on the amount of new or replaced impervious surface area proposed (under Provision C.3 of the Bay Area Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit).

### Environmental mitigation

The environmental impacts of waste recovery and disposal are significant. Disposing of possibly hazardous wastes requires bentonite (a kind of absorbent clay) and textured high-density polyethylene liners, as well as leachate collection and removal systems. The hauling trucks and the methane released from the landfill generate significant air pollution. Landfills and composting facilities also attract seagulls, which are a nuisance for landfill equipment and landfill neighbors. All of these impacts are heightened at NIRRP because of its urban location near many homes and businesses.

Nuisance birds are perhaps the most difficult of these impacts to mitigate. Republic's policy has been to use a

combination of methods — falcons, pyrotechnics, and dogs — to chase the gulls at ground level. Birds are adaptive and get used to one method, so multiple methods must be used to effectively mitigate the problem. A study by the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory at Newby Island last March showed that including falcons as a bird deterrent increased the program's effectiveness. On the tour, planners got to see the use of pyrotechnics and dogs, which really conveyed the scope and cost of the problem.

### More upcoming changes and innovations

Republic Services is working with Zero Waste Energy Development Company (ZWED) on a system to convert the organic material collected to energy, using dry fermentation anaerobic digestion (dry AD). The facility — scheduled to come online this year — will be the first commercial-scale dry AD facility in the US. Dry AD uses less water, less energy, and emits fewer greenhouse gases than the wet AD processes often used at wastewater treatment plants and on dairy farms.

The ZWED project will complete this phase of Republic's renovation of NIRRP to become one of the most advanced material recovery facilities in the world. Republic, the nation's second largest publicly-traded waste management company, is looking to San Jose as a model for shaping its facilities and operations nationwide. Republic Services has at least another 50 facilities in California and several hundred throughout the US.

However, Republic says it cannot stand still. Carl Mennie, the November tour guide and Division Manager for Recycling & Composting at Republic Services, said the technology and business of waste recovery is changing so rapidly that Newby Island's state-of-the-art system will be behind the curve in eight to 10 years unless they keep upgrading equipment and operations.

#### Sources:

"Republic Services opens Newby Island Resource Recovery Park," *Recycling Today*, Aug. 10, 2012, <http://bit.ly/VniPLF>

Newby Island Resource Recovery Park, Republic Services of Santa Clara County, <http://bit.ly/URiiPf>

"World's largest and most extensive material processing system is open for business," Republic Services Media Room, August 9, 2012, <http://bit.ly/WJE7Qh>

City of San Jose Transportation and Environment Committee, Staff Report, April 18, 2012, <http://bit.ly/XE1a3a> ■

# Natural Resources Agency adopts SB 226 CEQA Guidelines

By Al Herson JD, FAICP

On January 4, 2013, the Natural Resources Agency released CEQA Guidelines revisions for implementing SB 226. SB 226 streamlines CEQA compliance for urban infill projects located in areas with thorough plan-level EIRs, provided the projects meet performance standards that define “good infill.” Compared to CEQA’s existing infill exemptions, SB 226 is more comprehensive in terms of the types, project sizes, and geographic location of the projects it covers. The Guidelines revisions, available at <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa> have three parts: Section 15183.3 describes the process for implementing SB 226, Appendix M describes infill performance standards, and Appendix N is an optional infill environmental checklist form.

*Al Herson, JD, FAICP, is Of Counsel with Sohagi Law Group, where he represents public agency clients on environmental and land use matters. You can reach him at [hersona@comcast.net](mailto:hersona@comcast.net) ■*

## Answer to “Where in the world?” (Page 13)

Cartagena, Columbia, the best-preserved Spanish colonial port in the Caribbean (from 1533). The old walled city was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. Here Calle Santo Domingo leads to the tower of the Church of Santo Domingo. Photo by Terry Thomas

“Household trash is weighed at the curb, and residents are billed for anything that is not being recycled.” *NYT Environment*, <http://nyti.ms/12L12K>

# Plan-it sustainably

By Scott T. Edmondson, AICP

Welcome to 2013. The New Year begins with a mixed but hopeful forecast for sustainability even as unsustainability trends accelerate and responses seem tepid. Recent reports for 2012 indicate that we produced the highest global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on record. This puts us on track to exceed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s extreme emission scenarios for catastrophic climate change by the end of the century (UNEP Emissions Gap, Nov. 2012, <http://bit.ly/10Am0o7>). Other demographic and economic stresses on natural systems accelerate and increasingly compromise the planetary life support system and communities’ well being. The trends challenge us to orchestrate an effective response.

Fortunately, an accumulating set of bold, innovative, and inspiring planning responses hold the possibility for some sort of softer landing. Northern Section’s Sustainability Committee has described many of these responses in this column and on our website. One auspicious development this year is national APA’s newly created Sustainable Communities Division. Its mission is to help planners provide the leadership and collaboration on the comprehensive and innovative approaches that success requires. And APA’s Planning Training Service continues to offer practical applications, such as Sustainable Zoning and Development Controls and Sustainable Development through Form-based Codes.

In 2013, our local Sustainability Committee will continue developing credible and useful information, providing inspiring examples of leading edge innovation and sustainability planning. We are now working with the local ULI Sustainability Committee on an applied sustainability workshop to be offered later this spring for developers and planners. We will continue to publish this Plan-it column, send out periodic committee E-Updates, and add content to the website and blog, <http://bit.ly/NqSUkg>

A key component of our 2013 program will be to activate membership participation. This could be as simple as you signing up for the Committee’s e-list (<http://bit.ly/MVdpQh>), but could include occasionally contributing articles and updates on sustainability planning in your jurisdiction or firm, or contributing research, class projects, and papers that you prepare as professors and students of planning. It could extend to volunteering to undertake more consistent or involved roles in the committee’s work program (regular article and column writing, web site development, lecture and workshop development, etc.). Design your collaboration to fit your interests and schedule, <http://bit.ly/Oh7sxp>

Whether it’s using Committee resources in your own work or collaborating with the Committee and your sustainability planning colleagues, you make the innovative difference that can lead to success. We look forward to working with you as we try to make a difference in 2013.

Please visit the Sustainability Committee’s web site, <http://bit.ly/NqSUkg>

For the expanded blog version of this article (and links and possible discussion), go to <http://bit.ly/S612sm> ■



# What others are saying

## Who not to blame for the housing bubble

<http://bit.ly/UKeu3S>

“No matter how many times people debunk the notion that government policy created the housing bubble, it doesn’t die. ... The target this time: the Federal Housing Administration, the government’s mortgage insurer mostly for low-to-moderate income and minority borrowers. ... According to estimates, over its lifetime, the agency would have to pay more out on the mortgages it has insured than it has taken in. The [FHA’s annual] report estimated the potential shortfall at \$16 billion, which is minuscule in relation to the federal budget and the \$1.1 trillion FHA portfolio. ... According to the actuarial analysis, if the agency stopped backing mortgages right now, it would have a deficit after 30 years. But even by that analysis, it has enough cash for many years. And it will not stop insuring mortgages. ... In both the boom and bust, the FHA functioned as one would hope. As the bubble grew and private lenders went nuts, its market share dwindled. When the market crashed, the FHA stepped in. ... The government can serve a valuable role in financing loans to deserving and responsible people who can’t afford traditional mortgages.” —Jesse Eisinger, “The latest myth about the government’s mishandling of the housing market,” *ProPublica*, Jan. 9, 2013.

## We have a local winner

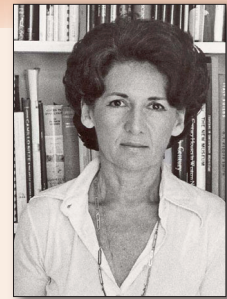
<http://bit.ly/ZthzFx>

In addition to the 18 Planning Excellence Awards to be presented at this year’s APA National Planning Conference in Chicago, 12 Achievement Award recipients will be recognized for their good planning work. The *National Planning Achievement Award for Environmental Planning* is to be given to the San Pablo (California) General Plan Health Element, Dyett & Bhatia, consultants. San Pablo added a Health Element, the first of its kind in California, to the city’s 2030 General Plan update. The role of the Health Element, “which is to realistically and achievably put people and their health first, focuses on behaviors and lifestyles, income, education, employment and working conditions, access to health services, nutrition, and the quality of physical environments.” This is the second APA award for this project, which was recognized in 2012 with the APA California Northern Section Award of Honor. You can download the health element, Section 8 of the plan, at <http://bit.ly/VQh8Ev>

## Ada Louise Huxtable, 91, venerated architecture critic

<http://nyti.ms/VOeOOg>

Ada Louise Huxtable, who was the architecture critic for *The New York Times* from 1963 to 1982 and, later, *The Wall Street Journal*, died Jan. 7. She received the first Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1970. The author of eight books, including “Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger” (1986), Ms. Huxtable published her last article December 3rd in *The Wall Street Journal*. See <http://on.wsj.com/RyS0oo>



**Ada Louise Huxtable.**  
Photo: Garth Huxtable, 1960s

## Oil sands and cancer

<http://nyti.ms/119rNQL>

“The development of Alberta’s oil sands has increased levels of cancer-causing compounds in surrounding lakes well beyond natural levels, researchers reported, [and] the contamination covered a wider area than had previously been believed. Financed by the Canadian government, the researchers set out to develop a historical record of the contamination, analyzing sediment dating back about 50 years from six lakes north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, the center of the oil sands industry. Layers of the sediment were tested for deposits of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, a group of chemicals associated with oil that in many cases have been found to cause cancer in humans after long-term exposure. The researchers found that the levels of those deposits have been steadily rising since large-scale oil sands production began in 1978. Samples from one test site showed 2.5 to 23 times more PAHs in current sediment than in layers dating back to around 1960. Critics of the industry already contend that oil extracted from Canada’s oil sands poses environmental hazards like toxic sludge ponds, greenhouse gas emissions, and the destruction of boreal forests.” —Ian Austen, “Oil sands industry in Canada tied to higher carcinogen level,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 2013.

## Commuters can save more in 2013

<http://nyti.ms/Rv7n0h>

“Those who commute to work using mass transit or van pools are eligible for the same amount in employer-provided

*(continued on next page)*

pretax commuter benefits this year as their colleagues who drive and park, thanks to the fiscal package passed by Congress [in January]. Workers whose employers offer such benefits can pay for their monthly transportation costs through pretax payroll deductions. In 2012, the amount that mass transit commuters were allowed to set aside monthly in their pretax commuter accounts fell to \$125, from \$230, while the limit for parking costs increased to \$240, from \$230, because of a cost of living adjustment. The new fiscal measure increases the pretax transit benefit to \$240 a month. [Still,] its continuation after this year is subject to future legislative action. Why is it so difficult to make the equal benefit permanent? It does not seem to make sense to offer more of an incentive to drive than to take mass transit. The loss in tax revenue from this transit parity provision is estimated at \$220 million” for 2013. —Ann Carns, “Pretax transit benefits raised for 2013,” *Bucks Blog, The New York Times*, Jan. 3, 2013.

### Leading the way in high-speed rail

<http://nyti.ms/TXSxOo>

“Trains traveling 186 miles an hour have begun regular service between Beijing and Guangzhou, the main metropolis in southeastern China, covering a distance in eight hours that is about equal to that from New York to Key West. Flights between Beijing and Guangzhou take about three hours and 15 minutes. But air travelers in China need to arrive at least an hour before a flight, compared with 20 minutes for high-speed trains, and the airports tend to be farther from the centers of cities than the high-speed train stations. Completion of the Beijing-Guangzhou route — roughly 1,200 miles — is the latest sign that China has resumed rapid construction on one of the world’s largest and most ambitious infrastructure projects, a network of four north-south routes and four east-west routes that span the country. The national network has helped to reduce air pollution in Chinese cities and helped to curb demand for imported diesel fuel by freeing capacity on older rail lines for goods to be carried by freight trains instead of heavily polluting, costlier trucks.” —Keith Bradsher, “China opens longest High-Speed Rail line,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 27, 2012.

### Coal is Poland’s energy strategy

<http://bit.ly/VVWhhK>

“That is the message the country has been sending domestically and internationally as Warsaw prepares to host the

global climate summit in November 2013. In Europe, the Poles are isolated in their fight for looser emissions reduction goals and against fixes to the EU’s cap-and-trade system. Poland is the 10th largest consumer of coal in the world and produces 92 percent of its electricity from coal. And despite EU targets for curbing greenhouse gas emissions, Poland is pressing forward with plans to replace old coal plants with massive new ones. Warsaw is both fighting more ambitious goals for reducing carbon emissions and pushing to get extra pollution allowances for new and existing plants. In 2012, Poland twice vetoed new greenhouse gas reduction targets. And while those vetoes may ultimately be circumvented, Poland is also standing in the way of making the European Emissions Trading System work. The system involves gradually lowering the number of carbon emissions certificates on the open market, thus slowly making it more expensive to release carbon into the atmosphere. But the market is currently glutted, leading to a price-per-ton of emissions well below where it needs to be to act as a disincentive.” —Joel Stonington, “Poland wages war on efforts to save the climate,” *Spiegel Online*, Dec. 21, 2012.

### California coast marine preserve completed

<http://lat.ms/YJGBEN>

“In the works since 1999, California’s reserve, meant to protect marine life, is the largest network of undersea parks in the continental United States — 848 square miles of protected waters that reach from the Oregon state line to the Mexican border. All told, the dozen-year effort has set aside 16 percent of state waters as marine reserves, including 9 percent that are off-limits to fishing or gathering of any kind. Marine reserves have proliferated in the last decade, but California’s is the only one established near a heavily populated coastline. The size of the network is exactly what filled auditoriums with red-shirted, shouting fishermen, angry at impending closures of favored fishing spots. The fight has continued in the courts. So far, none of the lawsuits has prevailed. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Marisla Foundation, and two others picked up the state’s costs, including paying for panels of local leaders to take testimony and make recommendations. So far, the foundations have spent more than \$23 million.” —Kenneth R. Weiss, “California’s marine reserve network now complete,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 19, 2012.

(continued on next page)

### Older buildings may be greener

<http://nyti.ms/WFPNWF>

“In courting tenants over the last six years, 7 World Trade Center has trumpeted its gold LEED rating. But when it comes to energy efficiency, the young 52-story tower is far from a top performer, according to data released under a city law that tracks energy use in New York buildings. It had a score of 74 — just below the minimum of 75 set for high-efficiency buildings by the federal EPA Energy Star program. On the other hand, two venerated show horses from the 1930s, the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, sailed to an 84 and an 80 as a result of extensive upgrades of their insulation and mechanical systems. The MetLife Building, a 1963 hulk looming over Grand Central Terminal, scored 39. The Seagram Building, Mies van der Rohe’s bronze-toned 1958 masterpiece on Park Avenue, posted a 3. Older buildings tend to have higher Energy Star scores because they have thicker walls, fewer windows, and less ventilation. They are also less suited to energy-gobbling activities like computer data crunching.” —Mireya Navarro, City’s law tracking energy use yields some surprises,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 24, 2012.

### How smart is “Smart Parking”?

<http://nyti.ms/Y00Clj>

An article in last month’s *Northern News* (“Planners talk ‘Smart Parking,’ new solutions”) reported the outcomes of a November workshop on restricting requirements for minimum parking. The article explained that ‘Smart parking’ is a new name for an old issue — the role of the public sector in parking policies. Turns out that *smart parking* means something else in the digital world: “Place ‘smart’ in front of a noun and you have something that sounds improved. The term refers to a technology that uses sensors to determine whether a particular spot is occupied or vacant. The sensors’ data can be used to adjust parking prices, using higher rates to create more turnover on the busiest blocks and lower prices to draw drivers to blocks with underused spaces. Smart-parking technology for on-street spaces is expensive and in its early stages. In San Francisco, SFpark uses sensors from StreetSmart Technology for 7,000 of the city’s 28,000 meters. SFpark [hopes] to achieve a target of having one parking space available most of the time in the areas it covers. It de-emphasizes inconvenient time limits and instead uses smart pricing to achieve those targets. [But] the sensor technology installed has been bedeviled by electromagnetic interference from overhead trolley lines [and] the vehicle-detection sensing is only about 90 percent accurate.”

—Randall Stross, “The learning curve of Smart Parking,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 23, 2012.

### Google tried, Mountain View demurred

<http://bit.ly/T7euu3>

Last month we posted on page 16 a short blurb on Google’s decision to “put on hold its plans to build 1.2 million square feet on a site near its existing headquarters in Mountain View.” It was intended to be “a dense and walkable urban place” including housing. “The Corporate Campus Embraces Urbanization” is a worthwhile article by SPUR’s Egon Terplan and Benjamin Grant in the December issue of *The Urbanist*. “Increasingly,” they write, “we are seeing expressions of the urban future of work through specific proposals by companies interested in retrofitting the suburban corporate campus rather than moving into cities. The proposal by Google, one of the region’s largest employers, is a prime example. The success of some campuses at achieving downtown-like commute patterns through things like corporate shuttles weakens the conventional critique that the suburban workplace is hopelessly auto-oriented. But these cases are the exception, and a broader transformation will require addressing design and land use, which several new proposals begin to do.”

### The better Berlin

<http://bit.ly/TUBUjT>

“Berlin used to be Germany’s hippest city, but the latest city to attract the creative class is the former East German industrial seat of Leipzig. Moving in by the thousands, they are lured by cheap rent and the euphoric buzz of youthful ingenuity. At 533,000, the city finally has as many inhabitants as it did before the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. In the former East Germany, Leipzig was an industrial center, producing everything from chemical facilities to textiles. But the factories closed after German reunification and people headed west in search of jobs. Even today, there are many empty apartments and unemployment is high — nearly a fifth of the population is living on unemployment benefits. But Leipzig gives its residents breathing room, and the subculture is thriving. An alternative scene the likes of which can be found nowhere else in Germany has been developing in Leipzig. Just as in Berlin in the early 1990s, artists, students, and entrepreneurs are moving into Leipzig’s empty old buildings. Monthly rents are about \$0.60 per square foot. Entrepreneurs are looking for well-educated employees, and the number of applicants to the University of Leipzig has nearly doubled over the past few years.” —Maximilian Popp, “Leipzig is the new Berlin,” *Spiegel Online*, Oct. 24, 2012. ■



## BOARD MEMBER DIRECTORY

<b>Director</b> Jeff Baker	(925) 833-6610	Jeff.Baker@dublin.ca.gov
<b>Director Elect</b> Andrea Ouse, AICP	(707) 648-4163	aouse@ci.vallejo.ca.us
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<b>Communications Director</b> Erik M. Balsley, AICP	(415) 592-4769	balsley@alum.mit.edu
<b>CPF Liaison</b> Darcy Kremin, AICP	510) 874-3110	darcy.kremin@urs.com
<b>Ethics Review Director</b> Colette Meunier, AICP	(707) 748-4453	Colette.Meunier@mindspring.com
<b>International Directors</b> Hing Wong, AICP Alex Hinds	(510) 464-7966 (415) 669-7230	hingw@abag.ca.gov alexhinds47@gmail.com
<b>Legislative Director</b> Alexandra M. Barnhill	(510) 273-8768	abarnhill@bwsllaw.com
<b>Membership Director</b> Vacant		
<b>Planning Commissioner</b> Janet Palma, AICP	(510) 390-3984	janetpalma@comcast.net
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<b>Professional Development Director</b> Tania Sheyner, AICP	(415) 896-5900	tsheyner@esassoc.com
<b>Section Historian</b> Juan Borrelli, AICP	(408) 793-4384	juan.borrelli@sanjoseca.gov
<b>Student Representatives</b> Ruth Miller Veronica Flores	(770) 312-9295 (415) 997-9562	ruthm@berkeley.edu veronicagrace.flores@gmail.com
<b>Sustainability Directors</b> Katja Irvin, AICP Dave Javid, AICP	(408) 569-8214 (415) 889-0580	Katja.irvin@sbcglobal.net davejavid@gmail.com
<b>University Liaison</b> Emy Mendoza	(510) 326-1919	emymendoza@earthlink.net
<b>Webmaster</b> Ronny Kraft, AICP	(650) 508-6367	kraft.ronny@gmail.com
<b>Young Planners Group Directors</b> Avalon Schultz, AICP Natalie De Leon	(510) 504-9563 (408) 313-2662	Avalon.schultz@gmail.com natdeleon@sbcglobal.net

## Regional Activity Coordinators (RACs)

<b>East Bay</b> Florentina Craciun Dahlia Chazan, AICP	(818) 438-0634 (415) 963-3893	florentina.craciun@urs.com dahlia.chazan@arup.com
<b>Monterey Bay</b> Aaron Ackerman	(831) 649-1799	ackerman@emcplanning.com
<b>North Bay</b> Kristine Gaspar	(707) 523-1010	kristine.gaspar@GHD.com
<b>Peninsula</b> James Castañeda, AICP	(650) 363-1853	jcastaneda@sforoundtable.org
<b>Redwood Coast</b> Stephen Avis, AICP	(707) 725-1407	savis@ci.fortuna.ca.us
<b>San Francisco</b> Brian Soland, AICP	(415) 495-6201	BSoland@WilburSmith.com
<b>South Bay</b> Jonathan Schuppert, AICP	(707) 318-8993	jonathan.schuppert@gmail.com

## NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

### Editorial

<b>Editor</b> Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP	(415) 699-7333	knoxnaph@gmail.com
<b>Associate Editor</b> Erik Balsley, AICP	(415) 592-4769	balsley@alum.mit.edu

### Advertising Director/Jobs

Scott Davidson, AICP	(510) 697-2280	scottdavidson2@comcast.net
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### Newsletter Designer

Nancy Roberts	(408) 723-3200	tproberts@sbcglobal.net
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## ADDRESS CHANGES

Membership Department  
American Planning Association  
205 North Michigan Ave, Suite 1200  
Chicago, IL 60601  
(312) 431-9100  
[www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

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