

Planning for the 2015 APA California Conference

By Erik S. Balsley, AICP

When asked about her childhood in Oakland, Gertrude Stein famously said, “There is no there there.” For many, Oakland is nothing more than this quote. For others, it is “occupy” protests, crime, and home to an influx of residents priced out of San Francisco.

Members of the Local Host Committee for the 2015 APA California Conference find these media narratives simplistic: they overlook the places, people, and experiences that have made Oakland the dynamic place where many of us live and work. From now until the 2015 conference, we will be presenting unique and lesser known aspects of our Oakland and other east bay cities here in *Northern News* and on the Section website.

It is worth noting that Gertrude Stein’s abbreviated quote was in reference to her return to Oakland 30 years after she left, upon seeing that the farm that had been her childhood home had been developed for housing. Rather than nostalgia for an old Oakland no longer recognizable, we see the city as it is today: an edgy, innovative, historic, vibrant, multi-cultural hub undergoing a renaissance.

More than 40 people attended the Local Host Committee’s first meeting September 14th. In the coming months, we will be interviewing some of our committee members about why they chose to live in Oakland, their neighborhoods, and how the city is changing. Their stories will be presented in a new column, “My Oakland/East Bay,” to highlight the sometimes hidden and often surprising secrets of the area.



For example, as a new Oakland resident, I decided to explore my neighborhood further and stumbled into the Morcom Municipal Rose Garden. There among redwood trees and the still blooming roses, I saw — out of the corner of my eye — a wild turkey strutting among the rose bushes. Not at all what I expected to see a block away from the Safeway. The east bay is not your typical urban environment, and we look forward to telling you more about it.

The next meeting of the local host committee will be on Saturday, November 16, 2013, from 10 AM–Noon at the URS Office, 1333 Broadway, Oakland. Please join in and help us plan an outstanding conference! ■