



NORTHERN NEWS



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Northern

Making Great Communities Happen

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So you want to be a Planning Director

By Curtis S. Williams, AICP

[Ed. note: On his retirement as Palo Alto's Director of Planning and Community Environment, *Northern News* asked Curtis Williams to share his views on what makes a good planning director and how one can prepare for such an exalted position. "Planning director" is not just the next step up the career ladder from assistant director or other management level positions. It requires something more.

In this article, he shares his thoughts on the primary distinctions between the planning director and other management and planning positions, and suggests five key characteristics for becoming a successful planning director. While his remarks focus on "city" planning director positions, they might be applicable to special districts, regional or state planning organizations, and other agencies.]

Who is the successful planning director?

One who gets stuff built? Completes general plans? Lasts in an agency for at least five years? Or strongly demonstrates AICP ethics? I suggest success requires connecting with your community to develop a credible relationship with a broad group of constituents, city staff, your manager and city council, and boards and commissions. This doesn't guarantee consensus on all or even most issues, but establishes respect for the director as a professional and objective voice to guide discussion of the issues. Each community is unique with regard to the players, staff, codes, and politics; but without a degree of credibility among the varied community interest groups, you are not likely to succeed.

What are the key characteristics of a successful planning director? If I had to pick just five characteristics, I'd suggest the following. Many other characteristics that define a "good planner" have not been included, but I assume that most candidates for director will have previously exhibited those general abilities. My purpose here is to

define those special attributes that distinguish a planning director from other planners, including from other managers in a planning or community development department.

- 1. See the Big Picture: Know the broad city organization and context.** All planners are part of the overall city team, but directors are responsible for integrating the planning department's work with that of other city departments, ensuring that council and city manager priorities are met, and that budget opportunities and constraints are addressed in staffing and work programs. The director needs to help the city manager and council address priorities and allocate resources among all departments. This requires delicate maneuvering, understanding the "big" picture, and ironing out internal conflict among department heads. You should try particularly to understand the needs and style of the city manager — usually your immediate boss. Manager and director need to work well together.
- 2. Reach out: Know and understand the role of key stakeholders.** Every city has key members of the community who are part of the planning and decision-making process. These may include city-appointed boards and commissions, neighborhood and business organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce), developers and builders, environmental and human services advocates, and small groups or individuals focused on specific issues. The media, particularly local newspapers, are also active in disseminating information (or misinformation), and their editorial stance may influence public policy.

One of your initial tasks is to get to know as many of these parties as possible and establish a working relationship. No matter their role or authority, they are likely to provide an early warning about key issues, and they will

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Hike to plan, plan to hike

The California Planning Roundtable and APA Northern Section are sponsoring a benefit walk for the California Planning Foundation. Planning students may “walk free”; others are encouraged to donate \$25 toward student scholarships.

The leisurely five-mile hike will take place April 19 along the Richmond Marina Bay Trail, from 9 AM – 1 PM. Participants will meet at Shimada Peace Park (Richmond Marina, end of Marina Bay Parkway) at 8:30 AM for coffee and pastries. The walk offers scenic views and opportunities to learn about the historic center of the Bay Area shipbuilding industry, Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park, plans for UC Berkeley/Lawrence Livermore National Lab Richmond Bay Campus, and restoration of nearby Meeker Slough and Stege Marsh.

For a trail map and to register, see the event flyer at <http://bit.ly/1cudmbD>, or contact Hanson Hom at hansonapa@gmail.com **CM|3.5 pending**

Where in the world?



Photo by Hilary Nixon (Answer on [page 5.](#))



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"To the leaders of the State of California. One million low-income households in California do not have access to an affordable home. Not one county or legislative district in the state has an adequate supply of homes affordable to extremely low-income households." — National Housing Partnership Corporation, Feb. 2014, <http://bit.ly/1hcpMMW>

Meet a local planner

By Jennifer Piozet, associate editor

Siân Llewellyn, AICP, has been with AECOM more than 14 years. She is a vice president in the design + planning practice, and for the last two years has lived in San Francisco.



Siân Llewellyn, AICP.

How did you become interested in planning as a profession?

I grew up in suburban Florida, but I always loved cities. I didn't even know that planning was a profession until I met the principal in charge of a land planning firm. That's how I came to the planning world, sort of through the back door. She convinced me to join the firm as a marketing coordinator. Eleven years after undergraduate school and eight years after finding out about planning,

I went to Georgia Tech to get my master's in city planning. I liked the challenges the planners were attacking in the firms I worked for as a marketer, and I wanted to get on the project side. Today I am both a marketer and a planner in a large consulting firm.

What are the most significant planning challenges facing cities today?

In my current role at AECOM, I work with professionals all over the world. The cities we work with vary greatly, and yet they have many of the same problems: rapid urbanization, inadequate infrastructure, and uneven adaptation to climate change.

Cities are attracting people at a rapid pace. In places like Shenzhen, PRC, or Abu Dhabi, UAE, this rapid densification is a problem that planners tackle. How can you build a city almost overnight and yet assure a decent quality of life? In the US we have different concerns around density. Here it is more likely that we need to retrofit our cities to make them livable and balance urban/suburban issues.

Infrastructure has always driven the shape of cities: roads, bridges, sewer, water, railroads, and, power. Depending on the age of the city, its infrastructure may need a complete overhaul, like London's and San Francisco's new water systems; an expansion to accommodate growth, like Moscow's proposed new satellite cities; or a redesign, like Seattle's Alaska way and Boston's Big Dig.

Climate change adaptation will be a driver — look at the pounding that coastal Britain and Portugal are taking this winter. Hurricane Sandy's effect on New York/New Jersey last year was an inkling of what's to come. Locally, San Francisco's Ocean Beach, the Oakland Airport, and all of Alameda Island will need to consider climate change in their plans.

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Meet a local planner *(continued from previous page)*

What do you find most fulfilling about your job?

My favorite thing to do is to see the physical changes that happen in places I have planned. Sometimes that happens quickly; other times the plans take a while to have an effect. For example, I did a Community Redevelopment Agency master plan for a city in Florida in 2000. It's exciting to go back and see the progress. I love watching long term planning move to fruition.

What are the most important qualities you look for in your staff?

I look for people who have the desire to learn new things and really get into our work. You rarely find someone with all the technical skills you need, but you can add to technical skills. I look for someone who has the range and capacity for growth as well as the willingness to grow.

What advice can you offer to planners starting out?

Learn what it's like to grow and be willing to do it. Keep an open mind, consider new approaches. For example, how can we apply disruptive technologies to city planning? How can we improve city functions with technology? How can we have an intelligent transportation system? How can we be applying new technologies to our work? How can we do things differently?

Is there a question I should be asking but have missed?

You could have asked me about my hobbies, but that's a whole other interview!

Interviewer Jennifer Piozet is Northern News' associate editor. To suggest a candidate for an interview, please contact her at jenniferpiozet@gmail.com ■

Answer to "Where in the world?" (Page 3)

Salzburg, Austria, July 2013. Photo by Hilary Nixon.

"New push for state affordable housing funding. Affordable housing projects in California lost their most reliable funding source when the state dissolved redevelopment agencies a couple of years ago. Now, there's growing support to find money for affordable housing once again. Backers are pushing a measure that would charge a \$75 fee on real estate transactions to raise \$500 million a year for affordable housing projects." —Ben Adler, <http://bit.ly/1gpW9Cx>



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Call for nominations — Several new categories!

Do you know a great project, planner, firm, or agency? The Northern Section is officially opening a call for nominations for Section Awards.

If you've been following the awards program, you'll note that this year we have many new categories, along with plenty of old favorites. The new categories are intended to reflect greater cohesion with awards at the state and national levels and enable us to recognize a wider spectrum of projects and people.

Last year, winners from the Northern Section went on to garner several State Awards. Let's keep up the tradition and recognize the best in planning.

The Section Awards Categories for 2014 are:

Project Awards

Opportunity and Empowerment **NEW**
Comprehensive Plan – Large and Small Jurisdictions (2 awards)
Implementation – Large and Small Jurisdictions (2 awards)
Innovation in Green Community Planning
Economic Planning and Development **NEW**
Transportation Planning **NEW**
Best Practices
Grassroots Initiative
Public Outreach **NEW**
Urban Design **NEW**
Communications Initiative **NEW**
Advancing Diversity and Social Change
Planning Landmark
Hard-won Victory

Awards for people, agencies, and firms

Planning Advocate
Planning Agency (public sector) **NEW**
Planning Firm (private sector) **NEW**
Emerging Planning and Design Firm **NEW**
Academic Award
Planning Pioneer
Distinguished Service
Distinguished Contribution
Section Activity
Planning Emeritus Network (PEN)

Get all the details, rules, and applications at:

<http://norcalapa.org/programs/awards/>

The deadline for nominations is Thursday, March 20, 2014

Mark your calendars: Join our annual Awards Gala dinner to learn more about the best in Northern Section planning. It's happening **Friday, May 16, 2014**, at the Parc 55 Hotel near Union Square in San Francisco. AICP I CM Credit is pending for this event.

For more information, please contact Awards Co-Directors Eileen Whitty at ejpwhitty@gmail.com or John Cook at j.cook@circlepoint.com ■

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LETTERS

Thanks for another enjoyable edition of the *Northern News*. Kudos for consistently producing a highly readable and professional publication. Thanks also for publishing the names of your authors and photographers. Great idea!

Chandler Lee
San Francisco

Just wanted to drop you a line and tell you how much I enjoy the APA news mag you put out. It has helped me to connect with APA. I've been in San Francisco now for two years, since moving from London and before that Atlanta. Sometimes it's hard to find a way to connect into a community when you don't work in the community. I work for a large firm and my project work is all over.

Siân Llewellyn, AICP
San Francisco

I saved the article on "Deconstructing and salvaging the past." It reminded me of the wastage in post-disaster cleanup, with way too much debris being burned or sent to landfills. I added a Cleanup page to my website, <http://EFTornadoSafeHome.com>. Interested readers can check it to see if they can do anything to help in these situations.

Jean SmilingCoyote
Chicago

Excellent article and publication. First time I've seen an article on the deconstruction topic for non-historic properties. Thanks for sharing.

Doug Kelly, AICP
Orlando

Thanks — very rich diversity of articles, well written, and attractively formatted. I was particularly attracted to the stories on climate change and land use, reuse of salvaged materials, and the article by Jason, especially his advice to young planners.

Pete Pointner, FAICP
Kildeer, Illinois

I just finished reading the latest on-line Northern California newsletter: Extremely informative and well written. Keep up the good work!

Gary Binger
New York

"What we think of as normal, isn't. The last century was unusually damp. The average over the last couple of thousand years might've been 15 percent drier than the 20th century." —KQED's Craig Miller interviews Lynn Ingram, <http://bit.ly/1ju1GKF>

Pollution in paradise

The consequences of rapid development and lax environmental regulation in Thailand

Adam Turr  y and Dana Turr  y

Name the most remote place in the Universe (but one that still has Wi-Fi), and that's where we wanted to go for our honeymoon. A place that would wash away any leftover stress from wedding planning, work, graduate school, and the hustle and bustle of the city. Thailand was to be this destination, and we were about to traverse the country on a three-week journey that would include an irresistible abundance of "plannerisms."

Our first stop was Bangkok. Friends had tried to forewarn us about the intensity and size of Bangkok; however, nothing could prepare us for the chaos and beauty of the world's 25th largest city. As our pilot announced our descent, we peeked out of the cabin window at the megametropolis that extended beyond the horizon and to the shores of the Gulf of Thailand.

Bangkok is a city full of canals and mini bridges that in many ways resemble those of Amsterdam. In 1870, King Chulalongkorn commissioned a project that involved the creation of a network of canals to divert water from the Chao Phraya River and support the cultivation and trade of rice and sugar. These canals also function as protection from yearly threats of flooding in a city that receives an average of 59 inches of rain per year.



Gold Buddhist art enriches the Bangkok cityscape.

We were amazed by what we saw as we explored Bangkok's oldest district, the Rattanakosin: Ancient wats (Buddhist temples) laden with gold, Buddhist shrines

dotting the rugged sidewalks, food carts teeming with customers, and an abundance of motorized longboats supporting local commerce through steady shipments of goods and tourists. Traders on boats trailing billows of diesel exhaust sold rice, fruits, vegetables, and cheap trinkets for tourists and 99-cent stores in America. Across the canal, we watched a man walk out of his shack made of tin, cardboard, and other found materials, cast a net into the canal, and pull out more than a dozen fish. We were truly witnessing a clash of new and old world traditions.



Bangkok's canals provide transportation; they also are sewers and litter depositories.

We were impressed with the history and economic activity in Bangkok, but couldn't overlook what seemed to be a complete lack of environmental regulation that disproportionately affected the impoverished. Difficult to ignore was Bangkok's poor water quality. In the United States, the Clean Water Act contains guidelines for point and non-point sources of water pollution. Municipalities and industries that discharge into sewer systems must apply for an NPDES permit and are regularly inspected — and fined for being out of compliance. But Bangkok's rapid urbanization has outstripped the city's capacity to treat sewage. Current household water treatment infrastructure supports only 2 percent of Bangkok residents. Residential effluent accounts for 75 percent of the pollution in the Chao Phraya River. We saw machine shops,

(continued on next page)

food peddlers, and villagers power-washing debris into local canals. This unfortunate disregard for the environment was all too common during our three-week stay.

Pressing on, we journeyed north to Thailand's most culturally significant city, Chiang Mai. This mountainous region was lush with jungle and studded with the Buddhist shrines and temples that inspired us to visit Thailand in the first place. We were hoping to escape the grit of Bangkok and do all of the outdoor activities we had seen on the travel channel, and to breathe in crisp mountain air.

However, as we ventured through Chiang Mai's historic city center, we were quickly disappointed by the consequences of the developing country's poor air quality policy. As tuk-tuk taxis and mopeds spewed clouds of exhaust, children and adults walked around in masks and intermittently took breaks to treat themselves with nasal decongestants. Residents burned trash because the city's waste collection systems were insufficient, and we began to experience watery eyes and labored breathing.



Tuk-tuk taxi and motorbike exhaust makes the air nearly unbreathable in certain parts of Thailand.

While Americans may complain about the smog in some US cities, the Clean Air Act has regulated stationary and mobile emissions since 1970, and new regulations continue to curb air pollutants and greenhouse gasses. In 2006, California enacted AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act. The goals of this legislation are to identify greenhouse emission sources and reduce emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. The bill set comprehensive permissible emission standards for motor vehicles, refrigerants, landfills, and industrial activities. Many

communities statewide are also seeking ways to become less auto-centric and more reliant on transit, walking, and bicycling.

Thailand's comparable agency, the Air Quality and Noise Management Bureau and Pollution Control Department, established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQSs) in 1992. These standards included phasing out of leaded gasoline by 1995, and set new emission standards that call for improvements of fuel types, more vehicle inspections, expanded transit systems, and better traffic management. Challenging these reforms are Thailand's growing number of vehicles (+4 percent per year), new air standards that are less stringent than those found in Europe or the United States, and a vehicle inspection and maintenance program that is ineffectively enforced. As far as we could tell, the tuk-tuks, city buses, longboats, and other moving vehicles do not appear to have had inspections of any sort.

Fortunately, it would take more than dirty air and putrid water to ruin our vacation. The generosity of the Thai people, their world-class cuisine, and turquoise southern seas were enough to win us over. Our more critical sentiments came from our background as environmental planners experiencing new territory, ungoverned by the stringent environmental policies to which we are accustomed.

Our experiences in Thailand reaffirmed why we both dedicated ourselves to the planning field. We find meaning in environmental policy work and helping communities to balance growth with environmental sustainability.

Adam and Dana Turr y both have graduate degrees in urban and regional planning from San Jose State University. Adam is a Keep Oakland Beautiful board member and is involved with a number of watershed and litter issues. Dana is an environmental and urban planning consultant. You can reach them at Adamturrey@yahoo.com and Danaturrey@icloud.com ■



Dana and Adam Turr y.

In memoriam

Julianne Ward Nelson, 45, a planner for the city of Napa, passed away Feb. 5 after a brave and tenacious five-year battle with cancer. She leaves behind her husband and two sons, ages 5 and 8. Before coming to Napa, Julianne was a senior planner (future planning) with the City of Santa Cruz (2006–09), and Planner IV (advance planning) with Santa Cruz County (2000–06). In Napa, Julianne was part of the team that crafted the Downtown Specific Plan (May 2012). She received a B.A. in urban studies and planning from UC San Diego and a JD from California Western School of Law, San Diego. She was admitted to the State Bar of California in 1995.



Donald R. Ross, 73, passed away unexpectedly on Jan. 15. He had been the city planner for the city of Escalon until his death, and senior planner for the town of Los Gatos until 1996. Don received his Master of Urban Planning in 1973 from San Jose State University, and was one of the very first graduates of the program. He was a Navy veteran and retired as Master Chief Petty Officer in August 2000. During his 27 years as a Los Gatos planner, Don became the cornerstone for the town's development review process. He also mentored several young planners who went on to lead their respective agencies. ■

Get involved with Northern Section

We are currently recruiting for a Peninsula Regional Activity Coordinator to serve on our Section Board. To find out more and review the description for the position, see the Northern Section By-Laws at <http://bit.ly/00dLMo>. You'll find the duties for the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) Directors (old terminology) in Section 4.7.17, pages 13–14.

Interested candidates should contact Section Director Jeff Baker at Jeff.Baker@dublin.ca.gov ■

UC Berkeley offers new Complete Streets training

UC Berkeley ITS Tech Transfer will conduct a new training course on **Complete Streets Planning and Design** on **June 10–11** in San Francisco. The course is intended for urban planners and transportation engineers at local, regional, and state agencies, as well as consultants. The two-day course awards **1.6 CEUs** and **16 AICP CM** credits.

The class is offered in partnership with Caltrans Division of Local Assistance. Registration fees are subsidized with funding from the Cooperative Training Assistance Program. Reduced rates are available to employees of California's city, county, regional, and other public agencies only. For more information and how to register, see the course flier at <http://bit.ly/1eOXxCe> ■

"Fannie Mae to pay U.S. \$7.2 billion; bailout offset in full. Fannie Mae posted its eighth straight profitable quarter in the final three months of last year and will send the federal government \$7.2 billion. The dividend payment will bring the total amount Fannie Mae has paid to the Treasury Department to \$121.1 billion. That will more than fully offset the \$116.1 billion in government aid it received since 2008." —Jim Puzzanghera, <http://lat.ms/1gpVrp1>

be valuable assets when examining proposed projects or regulations. The more trust they place in you, the better they will feel about your performance and their city. Good relationships with the media can help ensure that they disseminate accurate information and maybe limit their criticism.

3. Be the Face (and Heart) of the city: Communicate effectively and sincerely.

The planning director is often the face of the city, and sometimes the heart as well, since so many issues are highly emotional. The planning department interacts constantly with the public, from the planning and building counter to the many public forums and hearings. The director has the responsibility in these venues to demonstrate a professional, objective approach. Projects, proposals, and meetings can easily go haywire due to an inappropriate response — sometimes just a sentence or a word — and hasty or careless responses are difficult to remedy. You need to know how to listen effectively and to respond *sincerely*, reflecting empathy, respect, deference, and compassion, no matter how strongly you may disagree. All your staff should keep their cool, even when facing harassment or profane behavior or language. Mediation and facilitation training can provide a good background to achieve the needed skills.

4. Facilitate the City's Vision: Lead and manage. You, along with your department's managers, must assure that operations are efficient, budgets are met, and customer service is (hopefully) exemplary. As director, however, you provide *leadership* for the department and the city on planning issues, including:

- Focusing resources to meet city management and council priorities,
- Bringing planning issues and concepts to the forefront of public discussion, and
- Working with other management staff to balance fiscal, infrastructure, and public service needs with planning and development proposals.

Leadership also includes conveying visions, goals, and priorities to staff. Give them the broad context for decisions, and clarify your style and the reasons for your inclination on particular issues.

I found this one of the most difficult parts of the job. The time commitments of responding to city manager, council, and community may sometimes distance you from your staff, but as director, *you* lead the way for the department, even if the price is occasional conflict.

5. Don't take it personally; you are not the decision-maker.

A significant difference between you and other planning managers on your staff is the extent of firsthand interaction you will have with the city manager, city council members, planning commissioners, influential individuals or organizations in the city, and the media. Most important planning decisions have real-life tradeoffs you likely will not have covered in graduate school or experienced before you became a director. One of your roles will be to clarify and present positions on issues in the context of professional responsibilities and ethics. You must have confidence in your judgment, and effectively articulate, justify, and sometimes advocate the department's position despite critical reaction from the community or even other staff.

Within those bounds, however, are substantial gray areas. The city manager can overrule you, and the city council holds ultimate decision-making authority on public and private developments, ordinances, budgets, and other planning matters. When decisions are made contrary to your better judgment, frustration is understandable, but that is democracy at work (as is media commentary on staff's role or recommendations on planning issues). *Don't take it personally.* If you feel the need to be the decision-maker, or if you tend to take political actions personally, do not become a planning director. You won't be happy, nor will you be fulfilled.

Are you prepared? What can you do to prepare?

By all means "go for it" if you —

- Like being in the middle of high-level deliberations,
- Are adept at working with others on a management team to balance city goals,
- Can sincerely communicate to the public and decision-makers in a cooperative, meaningful way,
- Can lead your staff and others to follow your vision, and
- Are not fazed by long hours, lots of conflict, decisions contrary to your recommendations, and occasional attacks in the press or from council members or commissioners.

You can prepare to become a planning director by —

- Getting your AICP credentials,
- Keeping abreast of planning in the rest of the region, state, and nation,

(continued on next page)

So you want to be a Planning Director

(continued from previous page)

- Considering mediation and facilitation courses or other personal training to more effectively and sincerely communicate with the public, and
- In your current position, involving yourself in citywide issues, procedures, and interdepartmental projects, toward understanding the context and constraints facing the director.

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on what makes a good planning director, and how to get there.



Curtis S. Williams, AICP, is a planning consultant to public agencies and was most recently planning director for the City of Palo Alto from 2009–2013. You can reach him at cwma@pacbell.net ■

"Smart cities aren't just about technology. They're about people. This is a standard ending to a talk about cities and technology. There's no point in city leaders getting focused on grand technology projects if they do nothing to help the people who live and work in cities." —For more "urbanism talk" from Rich Heap, see <http://bit.ly/MUxRZg>

Who's where



Nisha Been, AICP, is now Senior Environmental Planner in the Oakland office of Rincon Consultants. She previously was an environmental planner and project manager with URS Corporation. Nisha holds a B.A. in environmental studies from UC Santa Cruz, and currently serves on the legislative review committee for the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of AEP.



Shannon Fiala has been appointed by Northern Section to serve on its board as one of two co-directors of the Young Planners Group. Shannon currently works as the Ocean Beach Assistant Program Manager at SPUR. She has Master's degrees in city and regional planning and landscape architecture in environmental planning from UC Berkeley, and a B.S. in resource ecology and management from the University of Michigan.



Hilary Nixon has been appointed Chair of the department of Urban and Regional Planning at San Jose State University. Prof. Nixon received her Ph.D. in Planning, Policy, and Design from UC Irvine in 2006. At San Jose State, she teaches a variety of courses in environmental planning, history, and theory of urban planning and policy analysis. In addition, she serves as a Research Associate with the Mineta Transportation Institute, and has published numerous reports on transportation subjects. Dr. Nixon serves as scholarship co-chair for the California Planning Foundation.



Jason Su has been appointed by Northern Section to serve on its board as one of two co-directors of the Young Planners Group. Jason is the project management assistant for the San Francisco Department of Public Works, where he aids in the execution of streetscape projects. He holds a Master in urban planning (urban design) from San Jose State University and a B.A. in business economics and sociology from UC Irvine. ■

Homeowners are again borrowing against homes. "After a home equity credit binge during the housing bubble, banks restricted the loans as home prices crashed. But now second mortgages are back in vogue. A wave of homeowners in California and nationally are again putting their homes in hock — despite the costly lessons of the housing meltdown." —E. Scott Reckard and Andrew Khouri, <http://lat.ms/1jmDVEN>

Art Box redux

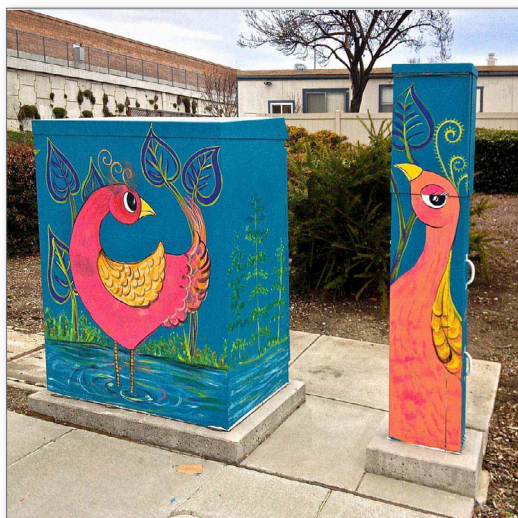
Juan Borrelli, AICP

Last October's cover story described a highly successful program in which artists and the San Jose community collaborated to beautify neighborhoods by painting murals on city utility boxes. You can read the article and see photos by Juan Borrelli, AICP, and author Tina Morrill, at <http://bit.ly/17CfT3c>

Tina noted that more than 60 utility boxes throughout San Jose had been painted during the first two years of "Art Box Project SJ." Juan has continued to snap photos of the painted boxes during his travels around San Jose. Here are his favorite photos.



N. Almaden Boulevard at W. Julian Street.
Artist: Kori Thompson.



Hillsdale Avenue at Narvaez Avenue.
Artist: Karon Fleming.

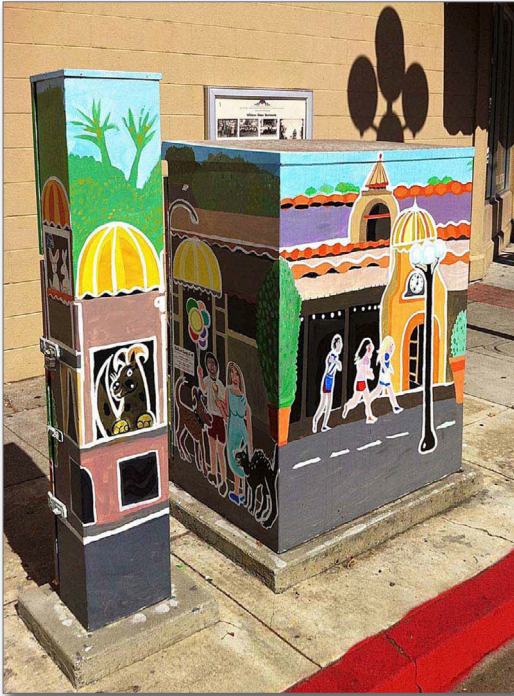


Bascom Avenue at Parkmoor Avenue.
Artist: Tulio Flores.

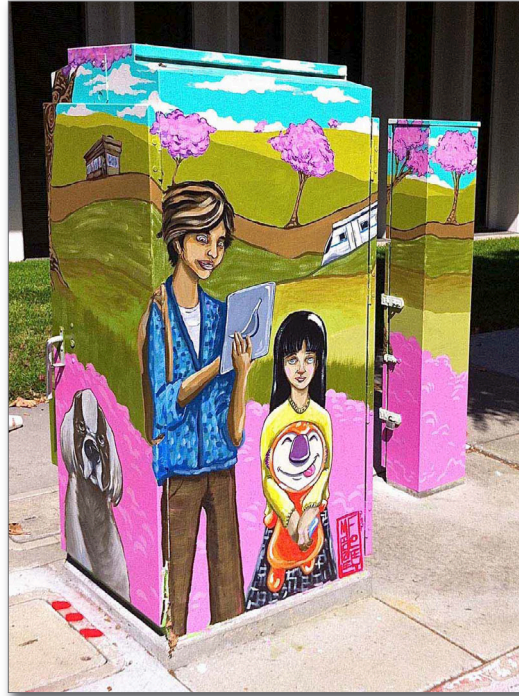


Park Avenue and Sandringham Way.
Artist: Carrie Lyons.

(continued on next page)



Minnesota Avenue at Lincoln Avenue.
Artist: Vanessa Stafford.



W. Taylor Street at The Alameda.
Artist: Michael Foley.



Keyes Street at Senter Road.
Artist: Paul J. Gonzalez.

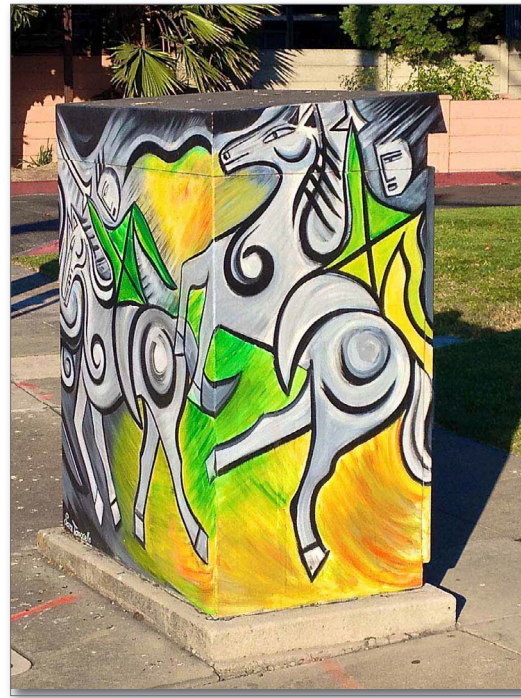


N. 4th Street at Jackson Street.
Artist: Orly Loquiao.

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Camden Avenue at Meridian Avenue.
Artist: Laurius Myth.



Hedding Street at N. 13th Street.
Artist: Sara Tomasello.

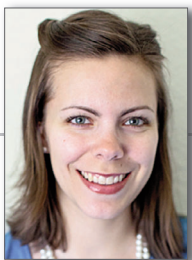


Bird Avenue at Coe Avenue.
Artist: Scott Willis.



Leigh Avenue at Parkmoor Avenue.
Artist, "Magic" Sean Gil.

All photos by Juan Borrelli, AICP. ■



Norcal roundup

Assembled by Jennifer Piozet, associate editor

Thank you, Walter Cottle Lester

Mercury News, February 1, 2014

Mike Rosenberg, <http://bit.ly/1eivPNO>

• “Walter Cottle Lester, who passed up a staggering fortune to donate his family’s vast farmland to ensure Silicon Valley would forever maintain a piece of its agricultural roots, has died at age 88. He passed away the day before the opening of the public trail he fought so hard for — one that helped him preserve his family’s 237-acre ranch in South San Jose. Lester gave up more than \$500 million, turning away repeated bids from developers to build on his pristine land that his family kept for three generations since the 1860s, and is considered the biggest farm left in San Jose.

“People ask, why didn’t Walter sell and go buy an island? Well, his world was right here,” said David Giordano, who managed the farming operation for Lester the last two decades. “His duty in life, as he perceived it, was to preserve the ranch in its entirety.”

“The last surviving member of the Cottle family, for which Cottle Road is named, Lester was reclusive, never married, and had no children. Over the last few years, Lester donated his land to Santa Clara County and the state of California in exchange for their agreement to turn the area into a \$26 million park that cannot be developed and will include plenty of land for farming. ‘You’re almost transcending space and time when you walk into the place,’ County Supervisor Dave Cortese said. ‘It’s going to be that way forever now.’”

Green light for signal priority

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority website, February 7, 2014

Cody Kraatz, <http://bit.ly/1eTeEN8> • “The VTA Board of Directors

on February 6 gave the green light to technology that will shave 10 minutes off the Limited 323’s current 45-minute trip from Downtown San Jose to De Anza College. The San Carlos-Stevens Creek corridor has the second highest ridership in VTA’s system, between the Local 23 and Limited 323. The Transit Signal Priority system will give green lights to the Limited 323, creating a 20 percent time-savings. The faster trip will allow riders to more efficiently get to class, commute to work, shop at Valley Fair and Santana Row, or dine in Downtown San Jose.

“VTA saw a 25 percent time savings on the Rapid 522 when signal priority was installed, and ridership increased 15 percent when compared to local service. Since its launch, Limited 323 ridership has grown by 14 percent. The continued ridership growth that VTA expects signal priority to bring also lays the foundation for the proposed Stevens Creek Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. That project would bring fast, frequent, reliable service with limited stops, special vehicles, and enhanced amenities for passengers.”

Caltrain and high-speed rail blending

The SF Examiner, February 12, 2014

Laura Dudnick, <http://bit.ly/1iNtFFt> • “By 2019, Peninsula residents will see a much more efficient, quieter, and environmentally conscious Caltrain system. That’s what Ben Tripousis, Northern California regional director for the California High-Speed Rail Authority, told local business owners at the Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Forum on February 11. The agencies will ultimately run on two tracks through the Peninsula, with Caltrain operating six commuter trains per hour on its new electric system and the High-Speed Rail Authority running four trains per hour.

“Four locations on the Peninsula are being analyzed for passing tracks — two in the mid-Peninsula, one near San Francisco, and the fourth near San Jose, Tripousis said. There will be no elevated tracks on the Peninsula as part of the blended system. Caltrain is receiving upgrades as part of its modernization program, a \$1.5 billion project paid for in part by the rail authority and with local, regional, and federal dollars.

“High-speed rail officials expect to break ground on construction in Fresno sometime this year.”

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

Film shows Cold War junkyard on Mt. Tam

Marin Independent Journal, February 8, 2014

Nels Johnson, <http://bit.ly/1joCqbK> • “Marin County’s highest peak, which once rose as a pristine sentinel coastal Miwoks regarded as holy ground, stands today as a junkyard littered with the debris of the Cold War. The West Peak of Mount Tamalpais, bulldozed six decades ago to make way for a radar station and barracks accommodating 300 on the lookout for nuclear war, is scarred with the remnants of the military’s 30-year stay. The 106-acre plateau carved at the top, now riddled with two dozen dilapidated structures that include a bowling alley and sewage plant, as well as concrete foundation slabs, six acres of asphalt, tangles of power lines, pipes, utility poles, and miles of fencing, is documented in a new film by visionaries who dream of restoring the mountain as close to its primal glory as possible.

“Filmmaker Gary Yost of Mill Valley, with help from actor Peter Coyote and music executive George Daly, produced ‘The Invisible Peak,’ a 22-minute documentary focusing on the mountain’s dark side. The film, which launches a cleanup campaign in concert with local, state, and federal land management agencies, debuted February 14th in Mill Valley at a sold-out ‘valentine to the mountain’ forum hosted by Coyote and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. ‘I made this film to drive change in the way people see the mountain and how they become empowered to do something about protecting their environment,’ Yost said. ‘The over-arching concept is to connect the audience to the mountain ... and to inspire the desire to give back.’” You can see the 21:30 film at 1280x720 at <http://vimeo.com/84477950>, or 1920x1080 at <http://vimeo.com/83733185>

Two Bay Area burbs among nation’s ‘most exciting’

Top Ten, January 28, 2014

Randy Nelson, <http://bit.ly/1ba6rUG> • “Movoto, a San Mateo-based Internet real estate company, has named Berkeley the nation’s third most exciting city, with Santa Clara placing ninth. ‘After ranking the country’s most exciting cities last year (<http://bit.ly/1h0KmjK>), Movoto’s *Top Ten* applied the same formula to the largest suburbs of the 50 largest cities in the US:

- Live Music venues per capita
- Fast Food restaurants per capita (the fewer the better)
- Nightlife per capita (bars, clubs, comedy, etc.)
- Active Life options per capita (parks, outdoor activities, etc.)
- Percentage of restaurants that are fast food (the lower the better)
- Percentage of young residents.

“Each suburb was ranked from 1 to 139 on all criteria, with one being the best possible score. We looked at business listings for each city and US Census data, then we averaged the individual scores to produce an overall score.

“If you had asked anyone in the Movoto office to guess the top 10 most exciting suburbs in the country, **Santa Clara** would honestly not have been in the running. This San Jose suburb ranked ninth, in large part due to the considerable percentage of 18 to 34 residents (31 percent) and the fact that Santa Clara rated a 20 out of 139 for nightlife.

“**Berkeley**, which placed third, is right in Movoto’s back yard, so we’re familiar with what it has to offer in the way of excitement. With UC Berkeley in town, the 18 to 34 group sits at 43 percent. Berkeley placed sixth for active life options (there are parks and yoga places everywhere). And this seemingly laid back suburb has a lot of nightlife. From bars (Jupiter and the Albatross) to world-renowned venues like the Greek Theatre, it’s a fantastic town to hang with friends after dark or take in an A-list act.

“Other Bay Area suburbs studied, and their ranks, are Albany 12th, Alameda 14th, Pacifica 18th, South San Francisco 29th, and Cupertino 50th.” A table of the complete rankings for the 50 U.S. suburbs studied can be seen as a PDF at <http://bit.ly/1aKnHEX>

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

“Sustainability isn’t just good for the environment. It’s good for business. Businesses don’t have to do good for the sake of it. They can do it because it makes financial sense to do so, and it makes sense for others to keep making that point.” —“Urbanism talk,” Rich Heap, <http://bit.ly/MUxRZg>

Too big? But they really work!

Mission Local, February 10, 2014

Daniel Hirsch, <http://bit.ly/1dMNojk> • “To be less irksome to neighbors, they could be smaller and the routes could be restricted to larger streets, but transportation experts say the tech buses between San Francisco and Silicon Valley do a good job shuttling 35,000 people a day and most likely keeping thousands of cars off the freeway. Mission Local asked transportation experts for their ideas on how to mitigate the intensity of the buses’ impact on the neighborhoods in which they operate. The experts addressed the transportation issues and not the larger issues of rising rents or gentrification, all crucial policy issues.

“Susan Shaheen, a professor at Berkeley’s Transportation Sustainability Research Center, has heard in informal discussions of transit wonks, that out of the 22 different transit systems in the Bay Area, Google’s private network is the seventh largest. ‘If Google is seven and Facebook is eight, that says these services are working at attracting lots of people,’ Shaheen said. ‘This ... has potential to take a lot of cars off the road.’

“If the shuttles were forced to load and unload commuters at a central terminal in less dense and less residential parts of the city, experts said the network of private shuttles would not only be less efficient; they could also cause undue stress on the public transit system. ‘We need to work with them to make the buses smaller,’ said Timothy Papandreou, director of Strategic Planning & Policy at SFTMA. ‘The physical fleet is too hulking and too big ... people who bike find them really intimidating.’”

Google in SF’s Mission District?

Los Angeles Times, February 18, 2014

Jessica Guynn, <http://lat.ms/1oTlyL0> •

“First came the Google bus. Now the Google building. The Mission District — which used to be a largely Latino working-class neighborhood — has been ground zero for growing tensions over tech-driven gentrification in San Francisco. Now the Internet giant won’t just be running its fleet of luxury commuter buses on the city’s congested streets. It’s setting up operations in the neighborhood. Google plans to take over a 35,000-square-foot building on Alabama Street to house start-ups the Internet giant acquires, according to the *Financial Times*. The space is large enough to fit about 200 staffers. Google is looking to cash in on the neighborhood’s hipster vibe that its upscale corporate home in the South of Market area of downtown San Francisco does not have. The move reflects the rising competition for technology workers who prefer to live in San Francisco.”

Hangar One lease goes to Google

Palo Alto Online, February 10, 2014

Daniel DeBolt, <http://bit.ly/Mafa39> • “NASA and the General Services Administration have selected Google’s Planetary Ventures for a long-term lease of Hangar One and the Moffett Airfield. The subsidiary of Google has already partnered with NASA in the past, and is now set to build a 1.1 million-square-foot campus on another portion of Moffett soon.

“The Google subsidiary proposes to use Hangar One for the ‘research, testing, assembly, and development’ of emerging technologies related to space, aviation, rovers, and robotics, according to GSA’s Jackeline Stewart. She adds that Moffett’s large Hangars Two and Three ‘will be used for similar purposes.’

“Though lease negotiations remain, the announcement appears to mark the end of a long battle to preserve the

historic 200-foot tall home of the U.S.S. Macon, a landmark which the Navy had planned to tear down at one point because of toxic lead, asbestos, and PCBs in its frame, paint, and siding. It now sits as a bare skeletal frame in need of siding, a job costing more than \$40 million. Google’s Planetary Ventures will be required to ‘re-skin and protect Hangar One,’ according to the GSA, and operate the federal airfield for limited aircraft use, with a requirement to take on the airfield’s financial burden once said by NASA to be over \$7 million a year.

“Google will also be required to upgrade the NASA golf course at the north end of the runways and rehabilitate the large wooden World War II-era Hangars Two and Three on the northeast side of the airfield.”

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

What's good about downtown Oakland?

Oakland Local, February 11, 2014

<http://oak.le/v04Ht> • “When *Oakland Local* recently picked the brains of five long-time Oaklanders, we didn’t just ask them to tell us about downtown Oakland’s challenges. We also wanted to know what opportunities they saw in the heart of the city. Here are four assets they highlighted.

“Connectivity. ‘Access to public transit, one of the things that destroyed the fabric of downtown Oakland, is now one of its biggest assets,’ said developer Alan Dones, CEO of Strategic Urban Development Alliance. The seven years of excavation for BART tunnels, ‘right at a time that suburban sprawl was happening, really dealt a blow to Oakland’s retail community.’ And ‘people want to live closer in now,” said AIA regional and urban design committee chair Matthew Taecker, AICP. ‘Downtown Oakland’s central location within the region is a huge advantage.’

“Diversity. ‘It’s an exciting place to be — a lot of different shops and restaurants that reflect ethnic diversity,’ said Taecker. Dones sees Oakland as an ecosystem that promotes important cultural and activist movements, and that’s an asset.

“Affordability. ‘Oakland is still a place where you don’t have be earning six figures to live,’ said Joel Ramos, regional planning director at Transform. Income diversity and stable populations breed strong communities, where neighbors and shop workers develop long-term bonds.

“History. ‘Even though there’s a long way to go in terms of the street design, a lot of the older buildings are intact and give Oakland a sense of character,’ said Taecker.

‘Years ago, someone said to me that Oakland is fortunate,’ said Chris Pattillo, chair of the Oakland Planning Commission. When people abandoned downtowns during the 1960s and 70s, in many cities, developers bought those buildings and tore them down,’ she observed. ‘The bones of the city are very strong.’ ‘Oakland has a lot to work with,’ said Dones.”



Broadway and 14th Street, Oakland.

Photo: Juan Borrelli, AICP

Don't go filling your swimming pools

SF Gate, February 5, 2014

Kurtis Alexander, <http://bit.ly/1aLVTR5> • “It is a bleak roadmap of the deepening crisis brought on by one of California’s worst droughts. The threatened towns and districts, identified recently by state health officials, are mostly small and in rural areas. In **Healdsburg**, where the low-flowing Russian River threatens to undermine city wells, the mayor spoke with state officials about tapping additional wells in the nearby Dry Creek Valley. The city has the right to use the Dry Creek wells, but only for part of the year — and not until spring. City Manager Marjie Pettus said lining up the additional water is a precautionary

measure — the city is not at risk of running dry. Healdsburg was one of the first cities in the North Bay to enact mandatory conservation measures. People can water landscaping only on certain days, while washing cars and filling swimming pools are prohibited.”

Use the link at left to see a list of 17 communities at risk. They include **Willits**, which declared a water shortage and passed mandatory conservation measures, and **Cloverdale**, where 9,000 Sonoma County residents draw their water from four wells. ■

CA housing fails to meet needs of low-income families

The Wall Street, February 11, 2014

Conor Dougherty, <http://on.wsj.com/1hgff3i> • “Renters across the nation, and in particular in California, are locked in a pernicious squeeze of rising rents and stagnant incomes that has diverted a growing share of their paycheck to rent. Often lost in the housing boom/bust/boom from mid-2000 until now is that over the period rents have for the most part gone only one direction: Up. In California, the continued rise in rents — combined with stagnating incomes and the erosion of state and federal affordable housing funds — has led to a big shortfall in affordable housing, according to a February 2014 report from the California Housing Partnership.

“As the report notes, close to a quarter of California’s population lives below a broad federal measure of poverty that takes both housing costs and government programs into account. That is by far the highest in the nation.

“At the same time, a combination of state and federal budget cuts have reduced the funds for affordable housing by 79 percent between the last fiscal year and the 2007/2008 fiscal year (which was the first full fiscal year during the recession).”

Among several recommendations in the seven-page report: “Dedicate a long-term source of state funding for affordable housing and make an immediate general fund investment in the state’s existing rental housing production program.” You can download the report at <http://bit.ly/1hcpMMW>

Santa Clara County residents flock to Stanislaus and Merced counties

Merced Sun–Star, February 13, 2014

J.N. Sbranti, <http://bit.ly/NXapLB> • “Silicon Valley is flush with jobs and has a reputation for being trendy and affluent. But a steady stream of residents flee that high-tech valley every year and head over the hills to the San Joaquin Valley — particularly to Stanislaus and Merced counties.

“New Census Bureau data on population migration trends show Santa Clara County is a major source for population growth in Stanislaus and Merced. Census figures show Stanislaus gains an average of 1,132 residents a year from Santa Clara, and Merced adds 1,347.

“Many cite affordable housing as their reason for moving. Those moving in from Santa Clara represent a broad mix of people with widely varying education levels, from high school dropouts to those with graduate-level degrees. But those moving out had higher education levels than those who moved in. On average, every year, 557 more people with at least some college education moved out of Stanislaus and Merced than moved in from other counties.”

THE DROUGHT

Emergency drought legislation announced

Governor’s Office Press Release, February 19, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1c3nCrS> • Governor Brown, Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, and Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez jointly announced on February 19 “legislation to immediately help communities deal with the devastating dry conditions affecting our state and provide funding to increase local water supplies.” The legislation provides \$687.4 million for drought relief, including money for housing and food for workers directly impacted by the drought, bond funds for projects to help local communities more efficiently capture and manage water, and funding for securing emergency drinking water supplies for drought-impacted communities.

In addition, the bill calls for the California Department of Public Health to adopt new groundwater replenishment

regulations by July 1, 2014, and for the State Water Resources Control Board to work with DPH on measures to allow recycled water and storm water capture to be used to increase water supply.

The bill also makes statutory changes to ensure existing water rights laws are followed, including streamlined authority to enforce water rights laws and increased penalties for illegally diverting water during drought conditions. Several of the proposals included in this package were proposed in the Governor’s January budget, but will now be expedited.

(California – THE DROUGHT – continues on next page)

Link between climate change and drought?

The New York Times, Science, February 17, 2014

Justin Gillis, <http://nyti.ms/1gcgrPZ> • “The most recent computer projections suggest that as the world warms, California should get wetter, not drier, in the winter, when the state gets the bulk of its precipitation. That has prompted some leading experts to suggest that climate change most likely had little role in causing the drought. To be sure, 2013 was the driest year in 119 years of record keeping in California. But extreme droughts have happened in the state before, and the experts say this one bears a notable resemblance to some of those, including a crippling drought in 1976 and 1977.

“What may be different about this drought is that, whatever the cause, the effects appear to have been made worse by climatic warming. And in making that case recently, scientists said, the administration was on solid ground. California has been warming along with most regions of the United States, and temperatures in recent months have been markedly higher than during the 1976–77 drought. In fact, for some of the state’s most important agricultural regions, summer lasted practically into January, with high temperatures of 10 or 15 degrees above normal on some days. The consequence, scientists say, has been that any moisture the state does get evaporates more rapidly, intensifying the effects of the drought on agriculture in particular.”

‘Nothing average about the way Californians consume water’

Mercury News, February 7, 2014

Paul Rogers and Nicholas St. Fleur, <http://bit.ly/1eLBUB1> •

“A state database that measures water use in every community shows huge differences between California’s water sippers and guzzlers. The state’s varied climate plays a key part in how much water a city or town consumes, as does the density of its population.

“To arrive at the per-capita totals, each water provider added up all residential, government, and business use and divided by population over a consecutive 10-year period they chose between 1995 and 2010. The totals do not include agriculture, which uses 80 percent of the water that people consume in California.

“In addition to the clear difference in water usage between rich towns and poor towns, places with hot weather tend to use the most water. Coastal cities, which enjoy cooler summers and lots of fog, consume relatively little. Crescent City averages only 97 gallons a day. But in the Central Valley, Inland Empire, and Southern California desert, where more water is used on landscaping, residents use three or four times that much. In Riverside County, customers of the Coachella Valley Water District use 591 gallons per capita per day.

“One factor that has kept urban water use high in much of the Central Valley is that many of the homes didn’t have water meters until recently. They are gradually being installed after a 2004 law mandated meters statewide by 2025.

“Palm Springs officials are extremely aware that their city is among the highest per-capita water users — 736 gallons per person per day. ‘The problem is that we have so many seasonal residents. Our population is based only on the census, but our use is based on everyone who is here.’”

Solar takes up hydroelectric slack

Mercury News, February 11, 2014

Dana Hull, <http://bit.ly/LSKnap> • “The lack of rain in California is having a dire impact on the rivers and reservoirs that power the state’s hydroelectric plants. But the abundance of sunshine has been ideal for solar power, which is stepping in to fill the anticipated drop-off in hydroelectricity generation. State energy officials aren’t in a panic. Utilities have a diverse portfolio of power sources and are not expecting customer rates to be impacted this summer. PG&E gets 11 percent of its electricity from large hydropower; the rest comes from renewable sources like solar and wind, nuclear, and natural gas. Several large solar plants, including

SunPower’s 250-megawatt California Valley Solar Ranch in San Luis Obispo County, have come online in recent months. California now has 2,926 megawatts of utility-scale solar in operation, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association. And BrightSource Energy’s 392-megawatt Ivanpah project has come online in the Mojave Desert. ‘Hydroelectricity is a flexible operating tool, because water can be stored. But we’re less reliant on it. The power mix in the West has changed,’ said Stephanie McCorkle, a spokeswoman for the California Independent System Operator, or ISO.”

(California – THE DROUGHT – continues on next page)

The Dust Bowl returns

The New York Times, February 9, 2014

Blain Roberts and **Ethan J. Kytle**, <http://nyti.ms/1kx8U3O> • “Normal winters in the heart of the Central Valley bring average highs in the 50s, steady periods of rain and drizzle, and the dense, bone-chilling Tule fog. Early 2014 gave us cloudless skies, temperatures in the 70s, and spring trees in full bloom. Life in the Central Valley revolves around two intricately related concerns: the quality of the air and the quantity of the water. Surrounded by mountains, which trap the pollution, interstate transportation, and tens of thousands of farms, the valley has noxious air, even on good days.

“The political atmosphere surrounding crop irrigation is equally toxic. Some farms in the western Valley — crippled by cuts in water allocations, salt buildup, and depleted aquifers — now resemble the dust bowl that drove so many Tom Joads here in the 1930s.

“How long can we continue to grow a third of the nation’s fruit and vegetables? Twenty years ago, the water table under [one typical] farm measured 120 feet. A well test in January revealed it is now 60 feet lower. Half of that decline [likely] has occurred in the last two years. Yet in Fresno, it is hard to find evidence that the drought is changing the behavior of city dwellers. Fresnoans have long resisted water-saving measures, clinging tenaciously to a flat rate, all-you-can-use system. Nudged by state and federal officials, Fresno began outfitting new homes with water meters in the early 1990s, but voters passed a ballot initiative prohibiting the city from actually reading them.

“Our behavior here in the valley feels untenable and self-destructive, and for much of it we are to blame.”

The writers are associate professors of history at California State University, Fresno.

Helping the drought-affected won't be easy

Fresno Bee, January 27, 2014

Michael Doyle, <http://bit.ly/1jXLKko> • “The California drought will soon expose the geographic, political, personal, and institutional divisions that complicate meaningful congressional action. In the Central Valley, the potential farmer-against-farmer conflict could pit east side versus west side and north versus south. On Capitol Hill, unresolved [nonpartisan] tensions divide House from Senate.

“**East vs. west.** The proposal to temporarily halt restoration of San Joaquin River water flows and a salmon population below Friant Dam could exacerbate conflict between San Joaquin Valley farmers. Farmers on the east side, part of the Friant Water Users Authority, agreed to the ambitious river restoration program to settle a lawsuit filed in 1988.

“**North vs. south.** Farmers in different regions have different legal claims on river water. Proposals to secure additional water for farmers south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta can worry farmers north of the delta.

“**Lawmaker vs. lawmaker.** Republican Rep. Devin Nunes of Tulare and Democratic Rep. Jim Costa of Fresno represent neighboring Valley districts. While both draw campaign support from farmers, they clash in a tone that can sound irreconcilable. On the other hand, it’s hard to imagine Costa voting against an anti-drought bill. ‘Sucking the delta dry is not the answer to California’s water issues,’ says Rep. Doris Matsui, D-Sacramento, adding that the pending Republican proposal ‘will only create further discord.’

“**House vs. Senate.** A California water bill that passed the House by 246–175 in February 2012 simply disappeared in the Senate. Bicameral tension is inherent in Congress, where senators represent larger and more diverse populations than House members.” ■

“Don’t underestimate this drought. Megadroughts — some that dragged on for decades — were actually pretty common in California’s past. What’s not so common is a single so-called rainy season as dry as the one we’re having right now. If it continues the way it is, it could be one of the driest years in the past 500.”
—Craig Miller interviews Lynn Ingram, <http://bit.ly/1ju1GKF>

Miami developer uncovers prehistoric village; told to preserve archaeological features

Miami Herald, February 3, 2014; additional reporting by *CNN*, February 5, 2014; *Reuters*, February 14

Andres Aviglucci, <http://hrlld.us/1io6eSM> • “An ancient and extensive Native American village in the middle of downtown Miami is likely one of the most significant prehistoric sites in the United States. Archaeologists have dug up eight large, uniformly carved holes in the native limestone, believed to be foundation holes for Tequesta Indian dwellings dating as far back as 500–600 B.C. The Tequesta lived in what is now metro Miami until the 1700s. The village site — one of the earliest urban plans in eastern North America — borders [what likely] was the original natural shoreline of Biscayne Bay at the Miami River.

“The site covers half of a long-vacant, two-acre city block where developer MDM plans to build movie theaters, restaurants, and a 34-story hotel. MDM’s ‘Metropolitan Miami’ complex — nearing completion after more than a decade of work — would cover most of the block, including the full archaeological site. The city of Miami granted zoning and development approvals, though not a final building permit, before the full scope of the archaeological finds was known or understood.

“Making the site even more significant [are] artifacts and elements from the mid-19th Century Fort Dallas, and

brick column bases of industrialist Henry Flagler’s 1897 Royal Palm Hotel. Flagler is widely credited with establishing Miami. The Royal Palm was badly damaged in the hurricane of 1926 and demolished in 1930.

“The developer offered to carve out the limestone holding one or two of the larger circles on the site and display those in a planned public plaza.” The supervising archaeologist, who works for MDM, recommended that his client preserve as much as possible of the site in place. ‘If you have a necklace filled with pearls, what makes it valuable is its entirety, not four or five pearls,’ he said.”

UPDATE: On Feb. 14, the city’s Historic and Environmental Preservation Board rejected, 7–1, the developer’s proposal to cut one circle from the rock and display it in a plaza. The board also unanimously told MDM to ‘fully explore the possibility of preserving all the significant archaeological features and their interpretations.’ The matter now goes to the City Commission on Feb. 27.

Read the *CNN* article, by **Matt Smith** and **Justin Lear**, at <http://cnn.it/1jfDMWc>, and the *Reuters* article, by **Zachary Fagenson**, at <http://reut.rs/1hm7fxR>

Heavy ice covers 88 percent of Great Lakes

CBS Chicago, February 14, 2014

<http://cbsloc.al/1gma5Ql> • “It’s been so bitterly cold for so long in the Upper Midwest that the Great Lakes are almost completely covered with ice. The last time they came this close was in 1994, when 94 percent of the lakes’ surface was frozen. Sections of the lakes, which hold nearly one-fifth of the freshwater on the world’s surface, harden almost every winter. But over the past four decades, the average ice cover has receded 70 percent, probably in part because of climate change. Still, as this season shows, short-term weather patterns can trump multi-year trends.

“The deep freeze is more than a novelty. By limiting evaporation, it may help replenish lake water levels — a process that began last year after a record-breaking slump dating to the late 1990s. Since the low-water period began in late 1990s, shippers have been forced to carry lighter loads to avoid scraping bottom in shallow channels. Ice cover blocks evaporation, the leading cause of low water. It also will keep the lakes cooler for a longer time, delaying the onset of heavy evaporation season. Heavy ice can also protect fish eggs from predators.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

Endangered Post Offices

The New York Times, Letters, February 13, 2014

David J. Brown, National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://nyti.ms/1gcNpBS> • “The ... federal appropriations bill signed into law by President Obama in January urges the United States Postal Service to place a moratorium on the sale of its properties. Though nonbinding, the appropriations bill clearly indicates Congress’s intent that the Postal Service call off all sales of post offices until the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Postal Service’s own Office of Inspector General can evaluate the current process for transferring ownership of its buildings. The Postal Service has not come forth with a clear and consistent process for selling properties that it no longer needs. These buildings should continue to serve as centers of community life, even if they are no longer serving their original purpose. Without a clear process in place, hundreds — perhaps thousands — of historic post offices throughout the country remain threatened.”

In an email, Virgil McDill, associate director for public affairs at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, writes, “The perpetual problem is that USPS won’t release any information about their plans for closure or relocation of post offices. The best source of information on what’s actively threatened is Steve Hutkins Save the Post Office website <http://www.savethepostoffice.com>.”

Shown here are two examples of threatened historic post offices 2500 miles apart.



Fernandina Beach Post Office, built 1911. Credit: First Presbyterian Church, Fernandina Beach, Florida.



La Jolla Post Office, San Diego, California. Photo: ©Paul Hamilton, paulhami, Creative Commons-licensed on flickr.com.

Best performing US metro areas

Business2Community, February 18, 2014

Brian Wallace, <http://bit.ly/1nPswxu> • This very nice and mercifully brief infographic sets out to show “America’s super cities; the [nine] places to look out for in 2014. To classify each of these cities,” the writer started with the “Milken Institute’s best performing cities and compared them with USA Today’s, Forbes’, and Business Insider’s

highlights on city performance in 2013. So whether you’re in the market for a vacation, new job, or big move, this list can put into perspective the fastest growing areas in the United States.” The San Francisco and San Jose metro areas are both featured in the graphic.

(U.S. continues on next page)

Some conservatives embrace solar

The New York Times, January 25, 2014

John Schwartz, <http://nyti.ms/1aVmnx1> • “One would not expect to see Barry Goldwater Jr., the very picture of modern conservatism and son of the 1964 Republican nominee for president, arguing passionately on behalf of solar energy customers. But there he was last fall, very publicly opposing a push by Arizona’s biggest utility to charge as much as \$100 a month to people who put solar panels on their roofs. The utilities, backed by conservative business interests, argue that solar users who have lower power bills because of government subsidies are not paying their fair share to maintain the power grid. Mr. Goldwater and other advocates call the proposed fees a ‘solar tax.’

“Solar power is one of the fracture lines dividing the conservative movement’s corporate and libertarian sides. The American Legislative Exchange Council, which helps pro-business Republicans across the country write legislation, has successfully urged several states to fight federal mandates for adopting renewable energy. In many states, the conflict focuses on net metering subsidies that utilities give rooftop solar owners for the excess energy they feed back onto the grid. The companies argue that customers who put solar panels on their roofs might be shifting the cost of maintaining the energy grid to nonsolar ratepayers.

“David Leeper, an electrical engineer and solar rooftop user in Phoenix, and a Republican whose core values are ‘limited government, free markets, and fiscal responsibility,’ said the notion that he was some kind of free rider made him wonder whether he should owe the utility money if he conserved energy by using his air conditioner more sparingly. ‘Does that mean I took money from them?’ ”

Natural gas knocked as vehicle fuel

The New York Times, February 14, 2013

Coral Davenport, <http://nyti.ms/1c69SPF> • “A surprising new report in the journal *Science* concludes that switching buses and trucks from traditional diesel fuel to natural gas could actually harm the planet’s climate. Although burning natural gas as a transportation fuel produces 30 percent less planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions than burning diesel, the drilling and production of natural gas can lead to leaks of methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Those methane leaks negate the climate change benefits of using natural gas as a transportation fuel, according to the study, which was conducted by scientists at Stanford University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

“But the study does conclude that switching from coal-fired power plants — the nation’s largest source of carbon pollution — to natural gas-fired power plants will still lower planet-warming emissions over all. Natural gas emits just half the carbon pollution of coal, and even factoring in the increased pollution from methane leaks, natural gas-fired plants lead to lower emissions than coal over 100 years. Currently, there are no federal regulations on methane emissions from oil and gas production.

“The report’s authors conclude that the leaks can be reined in if oil and gas companies invest in technology to prevent methane from escaping into the atmosphere from gas wells and production facilities. Natural gas developers say that it is in their interest to capture methane since it is a component of natural gas and can be sold as such. Allowing it to escape causes them to lose money.”

Rolling back free parking for the disabled

The Atlantic Cities, January 16, 2014

Emily Badger, <http://bit.ly/1eFoEeE> • “Free unlimited parking incentivizes people to overuse a costly public resource. While disabled drivers might need parking *access*, they don’t need *free* parking, because a physical disability isn’t the same as a financial inability to pay. Illinois recognizes that some disabled drivers simply can’t pay — and shouldn’t be subject to time restrictions — for reasons that have nothing to do with financial need.

“The state has eliminated the idea that all disabled parking should be free. Under a new law, the state will continue

to give out disabled placards that can be used at any designated disabled parking spot. But only a small subset of drivers — people whose disabilities logistically prevent them from paying the meter — will be able to use them to park for free at metered street spots. To qualify for free placards (they’re a different color), [this subset of] drivers must also have a valid Illinois driver’s license. That means a disabled person riding in a passenger seat doesn’t have the same expectation to a free spot. The law went into effect throughout most of the state on January 1.” ■

Climate: warm. Weather: cold there, warm here

The New York Times, February 10, 2014

Justin Gillis, <http://nyti.ms/1nqNm5X> • “We are all supposed to know that climate and weather are not the same thing. But we have a strange tendency to think that whatever is happening to us right now must be happening everywhere.

“It is really not about what happened yesterday in Poughkeepsie. The entire United States, including Alaska, covers less than 2 percent of the surface of the earth. So if the whole country somehow froze solid one January, that would not move the needle on global temperatures much at all.

“Though as yet unproven, a handful of scientists think the 50-degree temperatures in London and the frigid weather in Minneapolis might be a consequence of climate change. They contend the massive decline of sea ice in the Arctic has destabilized a weather pattern that normally keeps frigid air bottled up near the pole. That pattern is known as the polar vortex and its boundary is a fast-moving river of air called the jet stream. When the vortex weakens, the jet stream can develop big kinks, creating zones of extreme heat and cold.

“Winters have become so mild over the past 20 to 30 years that a blast of Arctic air feels extraordinary. In turn, the cold-weather angst may be influencing how people see the larger issue. For example, research shows that on a day perceived as hotter than normal, people are more likely to say on a survey that global warming is real, and vice versa.

“Fortunately, we have sophisticated thermometers scattered all over the place. Wherever we put them, they are telling a pretty consistent story. No matter how cold it got in Wisconsin last week, the world really is warming up.”

San Francisco, San Jose, top world's most dynamic cities

Jones Lang LaSalle, January 22, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1dSwa9C> • “City rankings and indices — at last count there were more than 150 — are a common method of benchmarking cities. [Ed. note: There’s another one in Norcal roundup, [page 17](#).] Jones Lang LaSalle [NYSE:JLL] — a professional services and investment management firm offering specialized real estate services in 70 countries — has launched a City Momentum Index which tracks the speed of change of a city’s economic base and its commercial real estate market. The Index assesses 111 cities world-wide with a weighted overall score based on 34 short-term and longer term variables.”

“JLL has identified San Francisco, London, Dubai, Shanghai, and Wuhan at the forefront of cities that demonstrate the combination of strong short-term socio-economic and commercial real estate momentum and longer-term foundations for success.”

“City momentum involves far more than just raw GDP growth — it is also about speed of adaptation and innovation, and the creation of cutting-edge new businesses. It further entails capturing the dynamics of a city’s real estate market.

“*Elite cities* wield clear economic might on the global stage, accounting for one-quarter of the world’s direct commercial real estate investment activity from 2012–2013.” Those cities and their JLL index ranks are “San Francisco, a city with soft global power and influence (1), London (2), Dubai (3), New York (6), Hong Kong (8), Singapore (10), Los Angeles (15), and Tokyo (19).”

“*Technology-rich cities* took early advantage of technology trends and provide fertile environments for innovation. [They are] San Francisco (1), Austin (7), San Jose (9), Boston (17) and Seattle (18).”

The press release (link above) briefly explains the variables examined and the methodology. The full 13-page JLL report is available at

<http://bit.ly/1aXtsPD>

(World continues on next page)

How much salary to buy a home? “In Cleveland, you need a salary of just \$19,000 to afford an average-price home, according to a study of mortgage rates and median home prices in 25 cities by mortgage website HSH.com. You would need a salary of \$115,510.06 in San Francisco.” —Susanna Kim, <http://abcn.ws/1efacIL>

Megacities take action on climate

Climate Progress, February 5, 2014

Ryan Koronowski, <http://bit.ly/1drSrFE> • The C40Cities Leadership group has released its 2014 quantitative study of efforts to reduce GHG emissions and improve urban resilience to climate change in C40 Cities. “‘Cities account for 70 percent of the world’s carbon emissions, and three-quarters of the world’s energy use,’ Michael Bloomberg told reporters February 4. ‘So the actions they take today to confront climate change really will have a global impact.’ Bloomberg trumpeted cities as being uniquely capable of taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change when compared to a national government.” For example:

- **“Recycling on a huge scale.** Reducing waste makes the economy more efficient and retains value while lowering carbon emissions. **Buenos Aires** is diverting 1,500 tons of construction waste from landfills with its first treatment plant devoted solely to that task. **Vancouver** is taking recycling to a new level by hosting a ‘deconstruction hub’ that allows builders and residents to reuse materials deposited by people who do not want them anymore. **Milan** now requires its garbage and recycling trucks to use 20 percent biodiesel.
- **“Moving people around with less pollution.** Overall, bike-sharing systems have increased six-fold, and 80 percent of member cities had implemented bike lanes by 2013.
- **“Switching to low-carbon energy.** **Portland, Oregon**, generates 7.9 percent of its total municipal energy use from two turbines powered by anaerobic digestion.”

You can read “Climate Action in Megacities Version 2.0” at <http://bit.ly/1kXQffi>

Can water bring peace to the Mideast – and to California?

The New York Times, February 16, 2014

Seth M. Siegel, <http://nyti.ms/1bWBELq> • “The human causes [of water scarcity] are clear: rapid population growth, antiquated infrastructure, the over-pumping of aquifers, inefficient crop practices, and pollution from fertilizer and pesticides. Then there are the factors that climate change is accelerating, like evaporation of lakes and rivers and diminished rainfall. Wasteful farming practices — in particular, flooding a field to irrigate it — are the biggest factor behind the regional water shortage.

“Abandoning this technique in favor of drip irrigation, which reduces the loss of water to evaporation, gets water to roots more efficiently and, critically, produces crop yields vastly greater than those with conventional irrigation.

“Self-sufficiency in water goes beyond irrigation, drilling, desalination, and reclaimed water. It is also dependent on a sophisticated legal and regulatory structure, market mechanisms, robust public education, an obsession with fixing leaks, and efforts to catch rainwater and reduce evaporation, among many other tools. Natural plant-breeding methods have raised crop yields with salty, high-mineral brackish water of the kind found, but mostly thought of as worthless, all over the Middle East. Israel has transformed water from a struggle with nature to an economic input: You can get all you want if you plan and pay for it.

“A partnership that starts with engineers and extends to farmers could contribute to deal making, even reconciliation, among leaders.”

(World continues on next page)

On the eco-frontier. “I don’t like the word ‘sustainability’ — instead I prefer ‘resiliency,’ an environment that responds to human needs as the world around us changes. Climate chaos — rising seas, severe temperature changes, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, population explosion — should be taken into consideration.” —Sim Van der Ryn, <http://bit.ly/N7LELE>

Traffic? In paradise?

Guyana Times, February 17, 2014

Nigel Williams, <http://bit.ly/1j7f6fY> • “The traffic congestion during rush hours in the mornings and evenings is becoming almost unbearable for citizens to cope with. These days it is normal to spend more than half an hour in the traffic when going or coming from work or school, where there is a huge build-up of traffic almost daily. Within the last five years or so, traffic congestion in the city and other main thoroughfares has gotten worse, and there could be a number of factors responsible for this.

“Although there has been significant improvement to the road network recently, the continued establishment of new housing schemes across Guyana and the increasing number of vehicles being imported into the country are contributing to the traffic-related problems. Thousands of persons have now been relocated from the city to other suburban and rural areas. Most of these persons have to travel back to the city where they work or attend school.

“Also, because thousands of persons have entered into the middle and upper middle class where they have more disposable income, many are opting to purchase their own vehicles. So within the last three to five years or so, there has been a five-fold increase in the number of vehicles driving on the roads. However, the road network expansion programme, even though improving, still cannot accommodate this massive increase in vehicles driving on the roads. We urge the authorities to continue to look at ways in which the road network could be further expanded, improved, rehabilitated, and maintained.”

European cities join Bloomberg Ideas Contest

Associated Press, February 19, 2014

Jennifer Peltz, <http://bit.ly/1jeG4T1> • “155 European cities from London to high-tech-friendly Oulu, in northern Finland, applied for the first-time European contest by a Jan. 31 deadline, Bloomberg Philanthropies said. The cities span 28 countries and include 19 capitals, from Dublin, Ireland, to Ankara, Turkey.

“Twenty finalists will be announced in mid-April. A 5 million euro — about \$6.8 million — grand prize and four 1 million euro awards will be bestowed in the fall.

“The cities were asked for ideas that solve major social or economic problems or make government more effective. Some 12 percent focused on tackling unemployment and workforce development, 9 percent on energy issues, 7 percent on obesity and the food supply, and 5 percent each on aging and fostering social inclusion. The biggest chunk of submissions from western Europe — about 15 percent — centered on energy efficiency. The European contest was open to cities of 100,000 or more residents in 40 countries.” ■

Placemaking is a political process. “The physical elements of placemaking cannot be the only priority. Architecture and the design of public space ... are essential parts of placemaking, but there is a real risk if the social function is subordinated. Professionals asserting their view of how things should be cannot dominate over the view of the people who live and work there.” —John Atkinson, <http://bit.ly/1csB7E8>

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