

# NORTHERN NEWS



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

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

APRIL 2014

## FEATURED ARTICLES

**My Oakland**  
*by Cindy Ma*

Page 1

**Planners, public health,  
and healthy cities**  
*by Donald W. Bradley, Ph.D., AICP*

Page 3

Lake Merritt, looking west on Lakeshore Avenue  
to the Alameda County Superior Court building.  
Photo: Brian Soland, AICP



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## My Oakland

Erik Balsley, AICP, interviews Cindy Ma

Second in a series of interviews of local planners and residents, in advance of the 2015 APA California Planning Conference.

**Y**ou were born and raised in Oakland? Yes, but let me first say, “I hella LOVE Oakland!” Although my immediate family moved to Pittsburg when I was 11, my extended family stayed in Oakland. Growing up, I spent every weekend in Oakland, as I did when I was a UC Berkeley undergraduate.

**In what neighborhood did you grow up, and which is your favorite?** I grew up in the Fruitvale District, a few blocks from the Fruitvale Transit Village/BART Station. As a child, my favorite neighborhood was Chinatown — partially due to comfort and familiarity, as my family came to know and become a part of a great community of people — but also because of its food and culture. My current favorite would have to be Fruitvale for its impressive mix of culture and community. It is one of the first neighborhoods to advocate for and embrace a TOD project, it holds year-round events to celebrate its residents, and it shows how a mixture of land uses and transportation infrastructure can create a walkable and accessible neighborhood.

**Do you still live in Oakland or consider it home?** I recently moved to Alameda, but Oakland will always remain my home. A majority of my family still resides here, and I work in Oakland, so most of my time is still spent here.

**What parts of Alameda do you enjoy most?** Alameda’s island location offers a small-town charm that is a different from the surrounding cities. I really enjoy the shoreline and regional Bay Trail that runs along it. The business district along Park Street offers a variety of food options, small shops, and entertainment.

**What still surprises you about Oakland?** Often, I am biking through the city and am caught off guard by its beauty. There are amazing old buildings (like the Victorians in Preservation Park), great tree-lined streets, and little parklets that remind me that Oakland is much more than just an “urban” city.



Cindy Ma

**What do you see as Oakland’s strengths?** Oakland has an outstanding community of people and a “maker culture” that is quite unique. The individual stories of struggle, perseverance, and success in its communities enrich Oakland’s history and bring a “realness” and authenticity without equal.

**What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the city?** The inability so far to successfully connect different cultures and communities across its neighborhoods. While the diversity of the city is one of its strengths, offering richness and different perspectives, I find that communication between communities — that could reduce fear and mistrust issues that some residents and visitors may still feel — is often lacking.

**What do you think has changed the most in Oakland, and what do you think of the changes?** When I was younger, Lake Merritt, Downtown, Uptown, and International Boulevard looked very different from the way they look now. Over the years — and with former mayor Jerry Brown’s 10K initiative, Lake Merritt’s streetscape and

*(continued on page 11)*

# WHAT'S INSIDE

## My Oakland

*Erik Balsley, AICP*, interviews Cindy Ma.  
Second in a series. [Page 1](#)

## Planners, public health, and healthy cities

*Donald W. Bradley, Ph.D., AICP*  
Planning's full circle on public health. [Page 3](#)

## Four Californians join FAICP ranks

On April 27, APA will induct Thomas Jacobson, JD, of Sonoma State University, and three other Californians in the 2014 class of College Fellows. [Page 4](#)

## APA California–Northern 2014 Awards Gala

Save the date: Friday, May 16, 2014, 6:30 PM. [Page 5](#)

## Where in the world

*Photo by Hing Wong, AICP.* [Page 5](#)

## Meet a local planner

*Jennifer Piozet* interviews Michael Groves, AICP, of EMC Planning Group. [Page 6](#)

## SPUR's Agenda for Change

A vision for Bay Area cities, available for download. [Page 8](#)

## 2015 State Conference logo competition open

[Page 8](#)

## Two research projects seek input

California's special districts; and technology and local governance. [Page 9](#)

## Northern Section Board of Directors photos

See who represents you. [Page 10](#)

## Who's where

Marco Arguelles, Tom Ford, Mark Hoffheimer, AICP, and Adam Turr y. [Page 11](#)

**APA members: Get 10 percent off on AICP | CM courses at UC Davis.** [Page 12](#)

## LIZ — enchanting new urban activation

*Kate Howe*  
Art and innovation in San Francisco. [Page 13](#)

## Norcal roundup

*Assembled by Jennifer Piozet*  
Timber! along the tracks • Gabriel Metcalf on San Francisco • Job growth behind shuttle buses • Google: buses for all • RDA loss impacts Santa Clara • San Jose's drinkable sewage • New village behind Facebook • Plastic bag ban in Sonoma County • Arcata considers plastic foam ban • Why planning matters (video) • Saving chimeric coast redwood. [Page 14](#)

## California

*Assembled by Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP*  
37-story residential tower for San Diego • Drought is disaster for nation's fruits, veggies • Mojave solar upsets Park Service • Drought not caused by climate change • Residents surveyed on future development • Closing America's largest landfill. [Page 17](#)

## U.S.

*Assembled by Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP*  
Telecommuting climbs • Unwieldy 'megafires' • Housing policy hurts middle class • Rail trails ruling not so bad • Louisiana's disappearing coastline • Highest transit ridership in 57 years. [Page 19](#)

## World

*Assembled by Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP*  
BRT for Buenos Aires arterial • New British garden city • Marshall Islands swamped • Primer on greenhouse-driven warming • Global warming slowdown? • Protect or retreat from flood? • Housing can be typhoon- and earthquake-proof • Tokyo's carbon cap. [Page 21](#)

## California conservation easement GIS data released

*Larry Orman*  
[Page 24](#)

**Board member directory and newsletter information**  
[Page 25](#) ■

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# Planners, public health, and healthy cities

By Donald W. Bradley, Ph.D., AICP

Early American city planning emerged barely a century ago with the public health movement in its roots. As the 21st century begins, urban planning has gone full circle and again embraces the public health profession.

City planning and public health grew out of the emphasis on our early cities' filth, pollution, and overcrowding. The tenement houses needed regulation and laws to provide sunlight, air, and public space for a growing population. Urban planners and public health officials now need to share our skills, information, and authority to improve the health of our cities and their residents.

Urban planning has witnessed several shifts since the late 19th century public health emphasis, among them the "City Beautiful" movement, real estate booms and busts, World Wars I and II, suburbanization, civil rights efforts, the segregation to integration shifts, planning theories of advocating pluralism, and including more of the social sciences in the profession and practice, as well as the institutionalization of city planning into the governmental political process. We now welcome and encourage the fields of land economics, urban sociology, physical geographers — even political scientists — to augment the more traditional architects, civil engineers, landscape architects, land use lawyers, urban designers, and transportation engineers.

Health is not the absence of physical disease or mental illness. Real, high-level health is being fit and feeling good, without pain, depression or anxiety, neuroses, psychoses, organ damage, alcohol abuse, drug dependence, prescription medication addiction, or nicotine use, while participating in a regular exercise program and eating a nutritious and balanced diet.

City planners are similar to public health practitioners in many ways. We all want what is good for the public. Our processes also have much in common. Planners analyze, set goals, work with the public, replace what is bad with something better, make things look better, provide more green vegetation, and try to conserve resources. Public health workers provide healthier outcomes for the public through physical healthcare and childhood disease prevention by vaccinations, physical examinations, diagnosis, and treatment.

Environmental psychology emerged not long after the "human ecology" movement and about the same time as the first "Earth Day" in 1970. Human ecology recognized that all things are related to everything else on the planet — humans, animals, plants, insects, organisms, sea life, birds,

reptiles, trees, shrubs, grasses, food, energy, climate, water, air, and land uses. The research shows that while the medical, nursing, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and genetics fields have all made tremendous progress in the past century, city planning has not kept pace. Longevity has increased, morbidity has decreased, and our "quality of life" indicators have gone up as well. But social indicators tell us that city living has suffered. Cities have maintained or worsened their labels as unfriendly, unsafe — even dangerous — places to live, while workers and residents struggle to spend quality time trying to enjoy the advantages cities offer.

Some of the factors contributing to unhealthy urban environments are clearly beyond the scope, control, or authority of public health workers or planners in public agencies or private practice, at either the urban or regional level. Those factors include unacceptable public school environments, high dropout rates, high crime rates, violence, robberies, rape, no gun control, gang activities, vehicular-caused air pollution, toxic wastes, climate change, natural disasters, drought, famine, starvation, wars, domestic violence, childhood abuse, bullying, drug addiction, political corruption, epidemics, racial discrimination, religious intolerance, homelessness, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and gender inequality.

But personal lifestyle patterns can contribute to a healthier urban environment and better individual healthful living:

**"We are what we eat."** Eat more nutritious foods in balanced diets with more vegetables, fresh fruits, with balanced vitamins and minerals and less salt, sugars, sodas, and fats.

**"Use it or lose it."** Exercise our bodies and minds, manage stress, run, swim, walk, all on a regular but moderate basis; and,

**"We are our brothers keeper."** Compassionately care for our children, parents, the poor, sick, homeless, disabled, aged, and all others in need. People need each other in families, the workplace, and in social settings. Many rely on religion, clubs, sports, hobbies, charities, and other activities for support.

We humans experience a wide range of the human condition, from serenity, comfort, contentment, and health to fear, anxiety, grief, depression, loneliness, anger, turmoil, chronic stress, physical and mental pain, and torment.

*(continued on next page)*

Mental illnesses include mood disorders, severe sadness, agitation, bipolar disorder, dementias, family dysfunction, relationship conflicts, addictions, schizophrenia, paranoia, delusions, and hallucinations. Planners and public health personnel can contribute to healing by providing better ingredients for healthy cities:

- Bring more nature and greenery into your city with parks and open spaces.
- Insure better healthcare for all ages and income levels.
- Provide community mental health clinics for all in need.
- Demand adequate hospitals and medical centers.
- Integrate urban design into your plans, policies, and projects.
- Insist on environmental quality protections and regulations.
- Disseminate more health information to the media and schools.
- Include a Health Assessment element in your general plan.
- Make a personal and family commitment to a healthy diet and exercise.
- Increase interdisciplinary collaboration with public health departments.

Health planning in your city or county plan document should be coordinated with the county health department

and the state health organization, with their recommendations integrated into your plans. Health professionals will gladly provide you with facts, statistics, and other valuable data.

So, can we as planners work more closely with public healthcare officials, medical doctors, community nurses, environmental and clinical psychologists, residents, academic researchers, and activist organizations to insure a healthier city? Yes, it's not that difficult. Remember what Daniel Burnham told us over a century ago: "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work."



Donald W. Bradley, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology and Planning. He has worked in Los Angeles, North Carolina, Michigan, for the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, Veterans Affairs, El Camino Hospital, and in Asmara, Eritrea, Africa, and has taught at UC Berkeley, Stanford, UC Davis, SJSU, U. of Michigan, Michigan State U., Northwestern Polytechnic U., Sunlin U. in Pohang, South Korea, and Chengdu U.

and Chongqing U. in China, and has led the Northern California APA AICP Exam Prep course for 25 years. Dr. Bradley served as President of the Michigan Chapter of the American Institute of Planners and the California Planners Emeritus Network. ■

## Four Californians join FAICP ranks



Thomas Jacobson, JD

**Thomas Jacobson, JD**, a Professor of Environmental Studies and Planning at Sonoma State University, has been named to the College of Fellows of AICP. Jacobson — the sole northern Californian to join FAICP in 2014 — earned his J.D. at the University of California Hastings College of the Law, and holds a Master's in City Planning from U.C. Berkeley. His primary teaching, research, and professional inter-

ests are planning and regulation for sustainable development, growth management, property rights and environmental regulation, development impact fees, and planning for healthy communities. He directs Sonoma State's Center for Sustainable Communities.

Jacobson has practiced as a land use and environmental lawyer and as a planner throughout California. He is a member of the California Planning Roundtable and Of Counsel with the Sohagi Law Group. He is the principal author of *Healthy by Design: A Public Health*

*and Land Use Planning Workbook*. Among his other publications are chapters in *Exactions and Impact Fees in California* and *Tribal Gaming and Community Planning in California*, and the chapters on Growth Management and Aesthetic Regulation & Design Review in *California Land Use Practice*.

The other Californians selected are:

- M. Margo Wheeler, Director of Planning, City of Palm Springs;
- Jerome W. Lubin, a leader in health planning practice and a Los Angeles County Mental Health Commissioner; and
- S. Gail Goldberg, executive director of the Urban Land Institute, Los Angeles. Goldberg was Director of the Los Angeles City Planning Department from 2006 through 2010.

The FAICP Induction Ceremony will be held Sunday, April 27, from 4:30–6:00 PM, during the 2014 National Planning Conference in Atlanta. You can see a complete list of the 40 Fellow-elect, Class of 2014, at <http://planning.org/faicp> ■

The display of calling cards from firms offering professional services appears in every issue of *Northern News*. Fees paid by the firms for this service help defray the costs of this newsletter.

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Where in the world?



Photo by Hing Wong, AICP (Answer on [page 9](#).)



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## Meet a local planner

By Jennifer Piozet, associate editor

**Michael Groves, AICP**, is the president and senior principal of EMC Planning Group, a land use and environmental planning firm based in Monterey, California.



**Michael Groves, AICP**

### How did you become interested in planning as a profession?

I was interested in athletics, specifically baseball, which I played in junior college and at UC Santa Barbara. I thought I would be a PE instructor, but I took a biology course in junior college and became interested in what happens to the land. This, coupled with my love of the outdoors, led me to UC Santa Barbara where I studied geography and environmental studies. I learned that I loved reading maps, which introduced me to planning.

My initial planning job was on the Carmel Valley Master Plan. That was very controversial. I also worked on environmental documents around 1977 during a time when CEQA was still new. I started the EMC Planning Group in 1978 when I was 24. I have been doing planning and environmental work for over 35 years, driven by a passion to help communities and people solve problems. I've always had the desire to look into the future, which helps me be a good planner.


### What is the most significant planning challenge facing your city today?

Across California, the most significant planning challenges are economic development, infrastructure, and balance. With the closing of the redevelopment agencies, what's next for **economic development**? Everyone is grappling with their budgets and staffing.

Cities and counties across the state are struggling to provide needed **infrastructure** improvements — roads, sewers, power generation, and water delivery. The concept of infill development in smaller rural communities is not always what the people want to buy or what the community wants. It's a challenge.

We sometimes get caught up in a single cure-all, but there's a need to have a menu of solutions for smaller communities, to create housing and jobs for them, too. Setting boundaries for each community is a challenge. As larger communities grow outward, they tend to absorb the smaller ones. Infill can be good in bigger communities, but a **balance** must be struck to ensure we are developing communities appropriately.

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Meet a local planner (continued from previous page)

**What do you find most fulfilling about your job?**

Working with my teammates at EMC Planning Group is the most fulfilling part of my job. If I had this company and was working by myself, I don't know that I would be inspired every day. But I have high quality teammates who inspire and challenge me to be better. Working with cities, counties, and special districts, helping them shape their infrastructure, directly shapes the communities — making them better places to live. I have always been environmentally conscious, and like to think about how we can plan our communities within and around natural resources. I try to maintain natural resources instead of destroying them. It comes very naturally to me to think that way, and it's fulfilling to teach others.

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

Writing skills, communication (and listening) skills, team-oriented (team sports!), ability to take initiative and to lead, creativity, and forward thinking. Know what your vision is before you do it.

**What is your advice to planners starting out?**

Be willing to work with other people towards solutions. As planners, we are often the ball in the tennis match. Really try to provide leadership towards a solution where there's a win-win for all parties.

People have misconceptions about what planning is. It requires a lot of leadership and mediation, not necessarily field-work. Writing and speaking skills are essential, and teamwork. Be solution-oriented!

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

I am incredibly grateful to have been born and raised on the Monterey Peninsula, and to have worked here for the past 35 years. And I'm passionate about helping kids.

- I've been the head baseball coach at the Monterey High School for the past 33 years. I started when I'd just opened EMC Planning, so I was busy; but it has been so fulfilling to be a mentor to kids over this time span. I've helped kids get scholarships and get into college. I teach the kids leadership, not about winning or losing. All good things will happen if you have leadership.
- I'm the president of a local foster parents' association and I've been working to create a state-approved *system improvement plan* to better the treatment of foster kids.

Interviewer Jennifer Piozet is Northern News' associate editor. To suggest a candidate for an interview, please contact her at [jenniferpiozet@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferpiozet@gmail.com)





## “SPUR’s Agenda for Change”

This 19-page report was released on March 12, 2014. It can be viewed and downloaded at <http://bit.ly/1qHS5Vg>

“The report represents SPUR’s vision for the central cities of the Bay Area. It condenses the big ideas behind our work, based on decades of policy thinking adopted by the SPUR Board of Directors, and lays out our plan for making this vision a reality.” The primary author is Gabriel Metcalf.

Here’s what Nancy Scola had to say in *Next City*, March 12, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1qHSKpT>

“With the debate over San Francisco’s future as high-temperature as it is, SPUR’s account is like a cool glass of water. What’s wrong with the Bay Area, the report argues, is fixable, but it will require two main things: ‘Elegant density’ and diversity by design. SPUR wants the Bay Area to think regionally, reject sprawl, and build up its existing cities (San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose come in for particular attention). As others have argued, bigger and taller buildings can help reduce the strain on existing housing stock, but the report notes that ‘poorly designed buildings in their neighborhoods’ is often what triggers locals’ aversion to structures of increased heights. SPUR, therefore, calls for ‘nurturing a culture of good design.’ Downtown San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose could hold more jobs, the group writes, but those areas should have better public transportation connections and a greater number of easily accessible stores, restaurants and more.” ■

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**Northern Section’s Logo Competition is OPEN**

APA California – Northern will be hosting the 2015 California Planning Conference in Oakland. To draw on the talented art community in the Northern Section, we are holding an open competition to design the logo for the conference based on the theme “Rooted in Authenticity.” Each designer may submit up to **three entries**. Please go to the Section’s conference website for more information: <http://bit.ly/1cYkfrp>

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## Research projects seek your input

**California's special districts.** Professor Elizabeth Bergman of Cal State East Bay is requesting member comment for her forthcoming book, *California's Special Districts: A Complete Guide to Laws, Regulations, Finances, Governance, and Public Opinion.* In particular,

- What special district topics are important to your occupational needs?
- Do you have a case study experience interacting with a particular special district to share?

The project will be completed in the summer of 2015. Contact Professor Bergman directly at (510) 885-3860 or email her at [elizabeth.bergman@csueastbay.edu](mailto:elizabeth.bergman@csueastbay.edu)

**Technology and local governance.** Dr. William Riggs and Ms. Kayla Gordon (Department of City & Regional Planning, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo) are undertaking a research project on technology and local governance. The purpose of the study is to understand how technology use is changing for local government officials and city planning practitioners with the increasing use of mobile technology. You may take part in the study by answering questions in an online survey of approximately 8–10 minutes. It is hoped that the information gained from the study may be used to improve the use of technology and mobile applications.

To take part in the study, please photograph the QR code



or go to <http://bit.ly/1e4dcs1>

If you have questions regarding the study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Dr. William Riggs via email at [wriggs@calpoly.edu](mailto:wriggs@calpoly.edu) ■

### Answer to "Where in the world?" (Page 5)

**St. Mary's Church and Berliner Fernsehturm** — the oldest church still in liturgical use in Berlin, and a TV tower completed in 1969. At the ground, the two towers are 300 meters apart. St. Mary's dates from 1270; its Baroque and Neo-Gothic dome was added to the bell tower in 1790. The TV tower, at 1,207 feet, it is the tallest structure in Germany. Photo by Hing Wong, AICP.

# Northern Section Board of Directors, April 2014



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Andrea Ouse



Hansom Hom



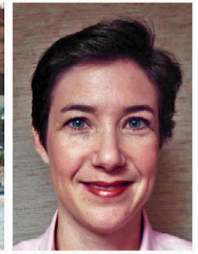
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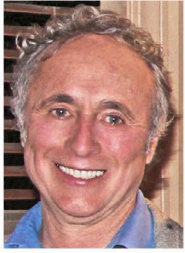
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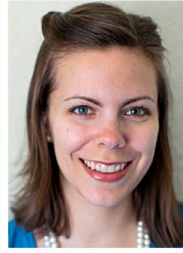
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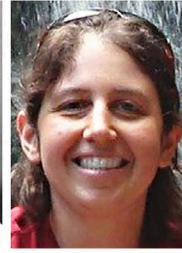
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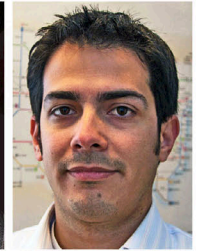
Marco Arguelles



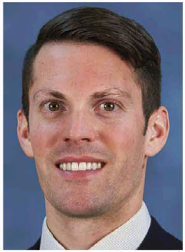
Florentina Craciun



Hing Wong



James Castañeda



Jonathan Schuppert



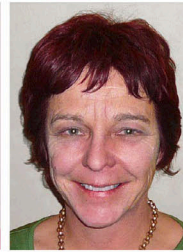
Janet Palma



Ronny Kraft



Sandra Hamlet



Katja Irvin



Kristine Gaspar



John Cook



Miroo Desai



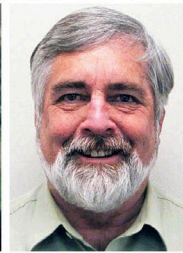
Naphtali Knox



Cindy Ma



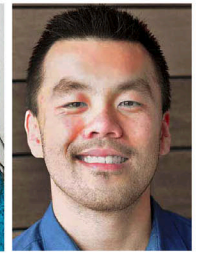
Scott Davidson



Stephen Avis



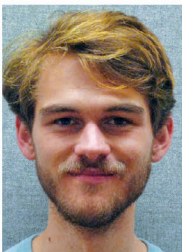
Tania Sheyner



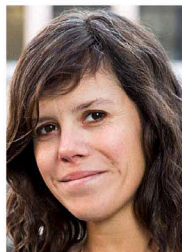
Jason Su



Colette Meunier



Ted Graves



Shannon Fiala



Geoff Bradley



Justin Meek

## Northern Section Officers:

**Director:** Jeff Baker

**Director Elect:** Andrea Ouse

**Immediate Past Director:** Hansom Hom

**Administrative Director:** Shaveta Sharma

**Treasurer:** Laura Thompson

## My Oakland (continued from page 1)

water improvements, and the redesign of International Boulevard — there has been a rebirth of sorts in these places. Lots of housing and institutional development (Uptown apartments, Kaiser and Summit Medical buildings) and new retail nodes (all along International) have made Oakland a happening place. I like that these changes have brought back life to the once sleepy downtown/uptown areas, reactivated the lake, and created a bustling urban corridor. However, I'm still getting used to seeing the influx of people brought by the changes, and the changing dynamic of certain neighborhoods. The Oakland I remember was always more of a hidden gem than "the city" it seems to have become.

**What most surprises others about Oakland and the East Bay?** That it's not as dangerous as they thought it would be.

**Where do you take out-of-town visitors in Oakland or the East Bay, and why?**

My visitors are always advised to show up with an empty stomach, as I will take them on a food tour. We usually start in Chinatown, then sample the best food in other neighborhoods — from dim sum, Vietnamese sandwiches, street tacos, Ethiopian food, and Korean barbeque, to Laotian dishes. We also try to balance out the eating by walking or biking around Lake Merritt and hiking in the awesome Redwoods in the Oakland hills.

*Cindy Ma, an Oaklander by birth, is a life-long Bay Area resident. She is a planner in the Community Planning and Urban Design team at KTGy Group in Jack London Square and is co-chair of the Northern Section's Diversity Committee. Cindy holds a Master of City and Regional Planning from Cal Poly SLO and a B.A. in Architecture from UC Berkeley. You can reach her at [ms.cindy.ma@gmail.com](mailto:ms.cindy.ma@gmail.com). ■*

## Who's where



**Marco Arguelles** has been appointed Northern Section's Regional Activity Coordinator for the San Francisco Peninsula. Marco is a Transportation Intern at the city of Menlo Park. He holds a Bachelor of Environmental Design (Urban Planning) from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Marco is a second year graduate student in the Master of Urban Planning Program at San Jose State University (degree expected this year) and is pursuing two certificates — one in transportation and land-use planning and a second in environmental planning. He is a native of the Bay Area and also spent considerable time in the Denver area.



**Tom Ford** is now Senior Urban Designer at Gensler, Shanghai, where he leads a team of 10 urban designers and architects on master plan projects throughout China. He previously served as an urban design consultant to Gensler Hong Kong Planning and Urban Design Studio and Aedas Shanghai Urban Design Studio. In the Bay Area, Tom was a principal with Design, Community & Environment, 1999–2009 (now PlaceWorks) and was an urban designer with Calthorpe Associates for the preceding five years. He holds a Master of Architecture from UC Berkeley and a Bachelor's in Dramatic Art from UC Davis.



**Mark Hoffheimer, AICP**, is now Senior Planner, City of Vallejo, where he will be managing the city's general plan and zoning ordinance update and a specific plan for Sonoma Boulevard. A planner with 22 years' experience, Mark previously was a senior urban planner and project manager for Perkins+Will (five years) and a senior associate with Sasaki Associates (15 years). He holds a Master of City Planning and Certificate in Urban Design from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.A. in Economics from Vanderbilt University.



**Adam Turréy** is now Zero Waste program associate with Clean Water Action. He was previously a recycling coordinator with North Bay Corp/Ratto Group and a Zero Waste intern with the City of San Jose's Construction and Demolition Diversion Program (CDD). Adam is a *Keep Oakland Beautiful* board member and is involved with a number of watershed and litter issues. He holds a Master in Urban and Regional Planning, a Certificate in Environmental Planning, and a Bachelor's in Global Studies (Global Geography and the Environment), all from San Jose State University. ■

# APA members: Get 10 percent off UC Davis Extension courses

**APA California** members receive a 10 percent discount on most Land Use and Natural Resources courses at UC Davis. You can earn **AICP | CM** credits, stay up to date on the new policies, laws, and practices, and learn from experts in the field.

**Redesigning the Zoning Ordinance:** Discover how to transform your zoning ordinance into an understandable, streamlined, defensible, and effective planning implementation tool. *Instructors: Bruce Jacobsen and Laura Stetson.*  
**AICP | CM 6.0**

**Regional Planning and Sustainable Communities**  
**Strategies:** This course will focus on SB 375 key requirements, review the relationship between modeling and planning, and consider opportunities and constraints going forward. *Instructor: Bill Higgins.* **AICP | CM 6.0**

**Urban Planning and Design Studio:** Receive hands-on practice in professional urban planning and design skills in a studio/lecture format. Immerse yourself in planning and design principles, examples, and case studies for today's communities. *Instructor: Jeff Loux.* **AICP | CM 30.0**

**Community Involvement and Communication in Planning:** Learn the theoretical background and hands-on practice of involving stakeholders in urban planning and design decisions and natural resources policy. *Instructor: Jeff Loux.* **AICP | CM 20.0**

**CEQA: A Step-by-step Approach (online):** Clarify and deepen your understanding of CEQA and the implications it has for your organization, plan, or project. *Instructor: Terry Rivasplata.* **AICP | CM 6.0**

**Water Quality Regulation and Permitting:** Review California water quality regulations, relevant provisions of California state law and regulations, and the federal Clean Water Act. Instructors will provide case studies, strategies, and recommendations for effectively meeting agency requirements. *Instructors: Michael Vondergeest and Megan Smith.* **AICP | CM 6.0**

**Developing and Writing Effective CEQA Documents:** Learn a step-by-step approach to preparing and writing CEQA documents. Project managers will learn how to set up their projects to improve author efficiency, effectiveness, and client satisfaction. *Instructors: Terry Rivasplata and Ellen Unsworth.* **AICP | CM 12.0**

**Using GIS to Manage, Analyze, and Promote Sustainability:** This course will identify opportunities to promote, implement, and manage sustainability projects through the use of GIS. Examine, at the macro level, the ability of GIS to analyze climate and environmental trends and identify potential high risk areas. *Instructor: Robert Earle.* **AICP | CM 18.0**

For course details and to enroll, visit [extension.ucdavis.edu/land](http://extension.ucdavis.edu/land) ■

**What we know about climate change.** "A committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science released a stark report on March 18 on global warming. The report contains no new science. But the language in the 18-page report, called 'What We Know,' is sharper, clearer, and more accessible than perhaps anything the scientific community has put out to date:

<http://bit.ly/1mhBk2N>

"The report warns that the effects of human emissions of heat-trapping gases are already being felt, that the ultimate consequences could be dire, and that the window to do something about it is closing."

—Justin Gillis, <http://nyti.ms/1mhBp6A>

# Plan-it sustainably, <http://bit.ly/1gQx2ge>

## LIZ — enchanting new urban activation

By *Kate Howe*

If you've strolled down San Francisco's Market Street this past winter, you may have noticed something new jutting up from the sidewalk at Market and Yerba Buena Lane — a set of eight-foot-tall parabolic concrete disks positioned next to a mysterious "singing bench." The installation is the result of a joint project between the Yerba Buena Community Benefits District, the Exploratorium, and the City. As the first "Living Innovation Zone," or LIZ, these paired discs are the Exploratorium's "whispering dishes" — now a popular public exhibit for unscripted play, learning, and conversation. If you whisper into one dish, another person can hear you loud and clear at the other, 50 feet away. You might want to stop, explore, and teach someone else how to use them.

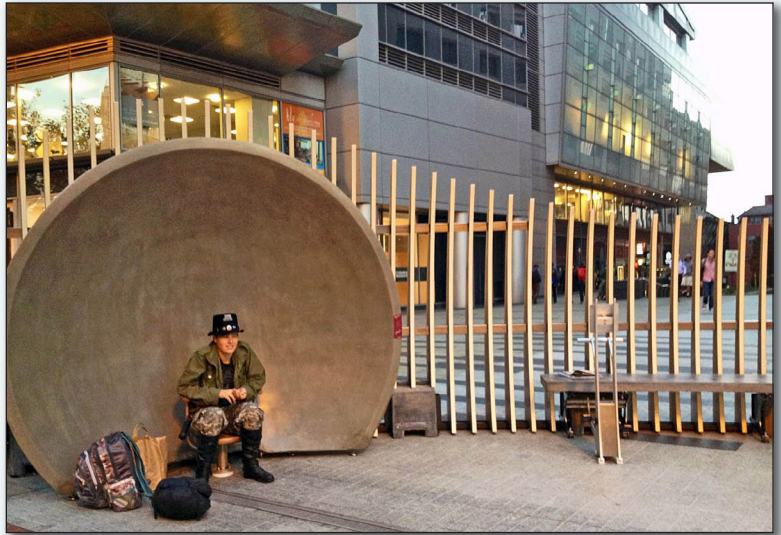
Initiated by the Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation and the San Francisco Planning Department, the program is intended to create a pathway for the experimental — to activate public space, foster learning, and showcase innovation.

As Jay Nath, Chief Innovation Officer for Mayor Ed Lee commented, "San Francisco is the innovation capital of the world, but you wouldn't know it from just walking the city's streets. We are creating a way for the City to showcase the explosion of creativity — design, arts, and technology innovations that are currently pouring out of San Francisco."

To meet that goal, the program has several complementary objectives. The first is the idea that LIZ interventions should delight and engage the public by addressing a specific community-identified need. (Unlike the popular Parklet program, no sponsorship from a fronting property owner or tenant is required). The second objective is to provide a temporary platform for emerging technologies to pilot new ways of improving the public realm. This, in effect, takes the City's "open data" initiative to the next level.

With these efforts, San Francisco hopes to improve how we use the city itself; and as an economic development initiative, LIZ might help experimental projects compete more quickly in the market. For example, the installation at Yerba Buena Lane includes a technology component to help city planners understand the social use of public space. By tracking people's movements anonymously with cell phone signals, planners can now for the first time get a sense of how people are using the space, i.e., how many stop, where they go, and for how long.

The last program objective is perhaps more nuanced but is also highly valuable. Citywide Planner Paul Chasan points out that LIZ offers a lower stakes, temporary place for "government learning." In the three month window in which the LIZ was designed, permitted,

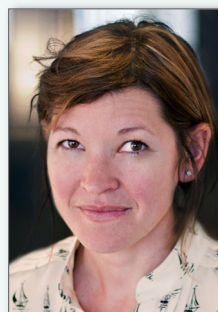


Testing out the LIZ on Market Street. Photo: Kate Howe

and constructed, over 60 people were involved with the project, including staff at the Planning Department, the Mayor's Office, Department of Public Works, Public Utilities Commission, Municipal Transportation Agency, The Mayor's Office on Disability, and architectural consultants, as well as private sector partners.

For anyone with experience working on projects with the City of San Francisco, to move anything ahead in this incredibly short period of time can be a trial. However, LIZ helps to encourage dynamism, and in so doing enriches and builds internal relationships. The LIZ team worked to imagine a different response to typical constraints — and allowed staff the ability to engage with notions of adaptability, flexibility, and building trust.

The City isn't sure what's next for LIZ, but we aren't worried. The projects themselves are only temporary interventions. Nine more are slated for Market Street, the idea being to continue to provide support, reduce barriers, and highlight innovative thinkers. We hope to see the City continue moving the principles of open government into — and onto — the street.



*Katherine Howe is Director, VIA Architecture, and member of the Northern Section Sustainability Committee. She holds a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Washington and a B.A. in Anthropology from Haverford. You can reach her at [khowe@via-architecture.com](mailto:khowe@via-architecture.com)*



# Norcal roundup

Assembled by Jennifer Piozet, associate editor

## Timber!

*Palo Alto Online*, February 28, 2014

**Gennady Sheyner**, <http://bit.ly/OBdf3O>

• “Caltrain officials have been advocating a switch from diesel trains to electrified ones as the best way to both help the environment and keep the popular, but cash-strapped commuter service financially viable. [But these benefits will be costly, resulting in the] removal of more than 2,000 trees and the addition of poles up to 50 feet high, safety walls built on existing bridges that cross the train corridor, and substations — including one in Palo Alto — to support the electrification.

The draft Environmental Impact Report argues that Caltrain’s long-planned electrification is a critical project for increasing ridership and for giving the Peninsula an ‘environmentally friendly and reliable service.’ According to the new report, Caltrain plans to have its new, electrified system in place by 2019, at which time about 75 percent of its train fleet would be electric and 25 percent would be diesel. The environmental review notes that the project would significantly reduce traffic on regional roads by 235,000 ‘vehicle miles traveled’ in 2020 and by 619,000 in 2040. The report estimates that about 2,220 trees would be removed for the project and another 3,616 pruned. Deadline for EIR comments is April 29.” More information at

<http://bit.ly/1j3tzNt>

**Where do we get our water?** “More than two-thirds of the Bay Area’s water supply comes from outside the region, which means in extreme drought years like this one, local water districts are competing with many others around the state for limited supplies.” This KQED article lists and maps the six major water sources. —Lauren Sommer, KQED Science, <http://bit.ly/1fxvWVw>

## Gabriel Metcalf on San Francisco

*San Francisco Magazine*, February 25, 2014

**Ellen Cushing**, <http://bit.ly/1eSx29I> • “The irony is that so many of the things that people do to fight gentrification are actually making the problem worse — like opposing the addition of new housing supply. ... All of the official affordable housing programs and middle-income housing programs that can be dreamed up will help only a small number of people, relatively speaking. The only way we’re going to help the vast majority of people, the only way we’re going to actually make it possible for this city to offer a diverse set of options for living here, is to fix the housing market and make it much, much easier to add housing supply in the city.” —Gabriel Metcalf

## The job growth behind the shuttle buses

*Oakland Tribune*, March 7, 2014

**George Avalos**, <http://bit.ly/1fc32Kg> • “The EDD annual revision of previously estimated job totals, released March 7, shows the Bay Area added about 117,000 jobs in 2013, 47,000 more than the original estimate. ‘The South Bay job market is not only the strongest in the state on a relative basis, the growth there now is strong in absolute terms,’ according to Jordan Levine of Beacon Economics. ‘Over the 12 months ending in January, total jobs expanded at a rate of 4.5 percent in Santa Clara County, by 3.2 percent in the San Francisco metro area, and by 1.7 percent in the East Bay. Overall, Bay Area jobs grew by 3.1 percent during the same period.’”

## Google: buses for all

*The Washington Post*, March 10, 2014

**Brian Fung**, <http://wapo.st/1fRUrxE> • “It’s no secret that Google — and San Francisco, more generally — has a PR problem when it comes to inequality. Much of the debate has focused on the company’s exclusive buses that shuttle employees to and from work. And housing prices in the area are skyrocketing. So in a move that appears to counter that narrative, Google announced in February that it would pay San Francisco \$6.8 million to let low-income students aged 5–17 ride city buses for free. Now advocates are lobbying for free bus rides for seniors and the disabled, too. It’s unclear whether Google or another tech company intends to pick up the tab for this idea.”

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

## From the ashes of RDAs, the Northside Library does not rise

*The Atlantic Cities*, March 18, 2014

**Jenny Xie**, <http://bit.ly/1iC3T7W> • “The sleek \$10 million Northside Library, located in Santa Clara, is 99 percent complete — so why has it been sitting empty since last July? Two years ago, California Governor Jerry Brown shuttered the state’s redevelopment agencies in the face of a massive budget deficit. These RDAs, which used local tax increment financing to fund neighborhood improvements like affordable housing and parks, had been criticized for lacking oversight. Cities had until February 1, 2012, to return any unused money, but they weren’t supposed to start new projects.

“However, a month before the deadline, the City of Santa Clara gave \$18 million in RDA funds to the Santa Clara City Library Foundation and Friends, a nonprofit tasked with overseeing the process of building the Northside Library. According to the city, the library had been in the city’s long-term plans since the 1960s. When construction for Rivermark, the city’s new master-planned community, got underway in the late 1990s, three acres of land were specifically set aside for the new facility. The county disagreed, arguing the city violated the law by starting construction with RDA assets after the agencies were shuttered.

As a result, “Northside Library is still missing essentials like books, bookshelves, and computers. City Manager Julio Fuentes, along with California Assembly Member Bob Wieckowski, are working with the state controller and Department of Finance to negotiate an agreement.”

## San Jose’s sewage will soon be drinkable

*KQED*, March 7, 2014

**Sheraz Sadiq** and **Olivia Hubert-Allen**, <http://bit.ly/1ikMGxG> •

“As California’s drought continues, cities across the state are bracing for what could be a very challenging year for the water supply. The Santa Clara Valley Water District wants to double the amount of recycled water it uses to 10 percent by 2025. So the water district and San Jose are finishing work on a \$68 million Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center. When it opens in May or June, it will be the largest water-recycling facility in Northern California, capable of purifying up to 8 million gallons of sewage water a day.

“What makes this plant special is the water it produces is really, really clean. Engineers say it is even cleaner than what Santa Clara County residents drink today. The plant turns treated sewage water into purified water through a three-step process: microfiltration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet disinfection. This technology has been used successfully in places like Singapore and also in Orange County, which has the largest water-recycling plant in the nation. For now, this ultra-clean recycled water will be blended with the existing recycled water supply that is already being used for things like irrigating lawns and cooling power plants in San Jose and neighboring communities. But one day, it may flow from taps as a sustainable source of water, safely recycled for drinking.”

## Village behind Facebook’s ‘West Campus’

*San Jose Mercury News*, March 18, 2014

**Bonnie Eslinger**, <http://bit.ly/1g7SOMB> • “Greenheart Land Co. wants to build seven 3-story apartments totaling 195 units on 6.5 acres at 721–881 Hamilton Avenue, between Carlton and Windermere avenues, just west of the ‘West Campus’ that Facebook is building in the Belle Haven neighborhood. Facebook’s main campus is on the other side of the Bayfront Expressway, where it intersects with Willow Road.”

(Norcal roundup *continues on next page*)

**“It’s not tech money ruining San Francisco.** Instead of the single-minded focus by anti-gentrification demonstrators to protest the tech shuttles run by companies that are not located in San Francisco, those folks might want to turn their attention and energy towards changing their own city’s policies. San Francisco’s phobia of tall buildings is not only stunting its economic growth, it’s poised to completely ruin its dense, environmentally sustainable urban culture. If residents don’t act fast, there won’t be much left to protect.” —Alissa Walker, <http://bit.ly/NZsxUm>



**Sonoma County plastic bag ban now in effect**

*County of Sonoma, February 20, 2014*

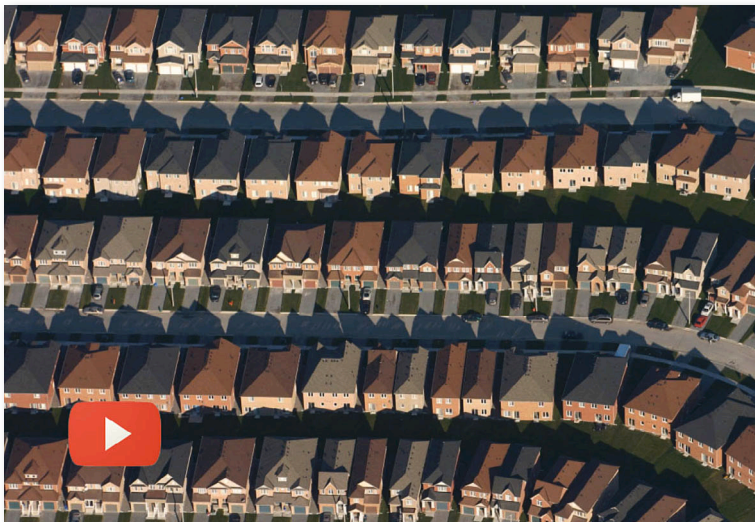
<http://bit.ly/1g0tdnE> • “The Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency voted unanimously in February to adopt an ordinance to reduce carryout bag waste throughout Sonoma County.

“This carryout bag waste reduction ordinance prohibits retail establishments (excluding public eating establishments and nonprofit charitable re-users, as defined by the ordinance) from providing customers with plastic carryout bags at the point of sale or other departure point. Bags exempt from this ordinance include plastic bags without handles (1) to transport produce, bulk food, or meat from a produce, bulk food, or meat department within a store to the point of sale; (2) bags used to hold prescription medication dispensed from a pharmacy; or (3) bags used to segregate food or merchandise that could damage or contaminate other food or merchandise when placed together in a reusable or recycled paper bag. Paper bags made of at least 40 percent post-consumer recycled content may be provided to customers for a minimum charge of 10 cents per bag. Reusable bags may also be provided to customers.

“Retail establishments will be required to maintain accurate records of the number of recycled-content paper bags purchased and sold for a minimum of three years. Violation of the carryout bag waste reduction ordinance would be an infraction, subject to fine, as defined by the administrative penalties ordinance.” The ordinance went into effect March 21st.

**Got five minutes?**

“Why Planning Matters” is a short (5:17) fast-moving video of images assembled by Barry J. Miller, FAICP, with music and lyrics by Arcade Fire, Sprawl II. [youtu.be/FnNH0yxISNE](http://youtu.be/FnNH0yxISNE)



**Arcata considers plastic foam ban**

*The Ukiah Daily Journal, March 19, 2014*

**Lorna Rodriguez**, <http://bit.ly/1ddd1c> • “The Arcata City Council reviewed a draft ordinance that would phase out plastic foam containers at food establishments. In 2008, city staff surveyed eating establishments in Arcata, and found that 84 percent of Arcata-based takeout food vendors support an ordinance, and 68 percent don’t use plastic foam containers — which account for 15 percent of the litter collected in storm drains. The ordinance hasn’t been pursued recently because the city thought there was going to be a statewide legislative solution.

“At least 80 other California jurisdictions have already adopted ordinances banning plastic foam. Packing materials, florist supplies, and construction materials wouldn’t be regulated by the ordinance.”

**Save the chimeric coast redwood**

*The Press Democrat, March 13, 2014*

**Lori A. Carter**, <http://bit.ly/Oqq71f> • “Transit officials in Northern California have suspended plans to remove a rare redwood tree to make way for planned railway tracks. The Santa Rosa Press Democrat reports that Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit officials announced the decision March 13, bowing to public pressure to save the chimeric coast redwood in Cotati.” ■

**“The trend toward downtowns and walkable suburbs.** I don’t see the fundamental future choice as between city and suburb but between more walkable, diverse, and healthy places, on the one hand, and more automobile-dependent, monolithic, and unhealthy ones, on the other. Whether those places are within or outside city limits is of relevance to cartographers and candidates for city office. The environment, economy, and increasingly, our social fabric don’t care.”  
—Kaid Benfield, <http://bit.ly/NZrtzK>

## Civic San Diego approves 37-story residential tower

*U-T San Diego*, February 26, 2014

**Roger Showley**, <http://bit.ly/1pNPokF> • CivicSD, the city-owned nonprofit agency that oversees downtown San Diego, has unanimously approved a tower residential project that could open in 2016–17 on a 3.5-acre parking lot east of the Padres' ballpark. "Left uncertain is whether the proposed 688 housing units would all be apartments or include 323 condos in the 37-story tower. Retail space would take up 55,357 square feet of the 1 million-square-foot project."

"A point of contention was the reduction in parking spaces planned. Earlier plans called for 1,175 spaces on three levels. That's been revised down to 942 on two levels — still higher than the downtown zoning ordinance requires. The change was in response to potential financiers who thought a third underground level would not be popular with residents and argued that downtowners, especially the young, don't drive as much as in the past. CivicSD Chairwoman Cynthia Morgan, a former downtown resident, said she backs less parking in light of the increased use of car sharing and interest in mass transit, biking, and walking."

The CivicSD decision can be appealed to the city planning commission, but not to the city council.

## Drought is disaster for nation's fruits, vegetables, nuts

*Mother Jones*, February 24, 2014

**Alex Park** and **Julia Lurie**, <http://bit.ly/1i5sWxS> • "Much of California's agriculture is concentrated in the parts of the state that the drought has hit the hardest. Monterey County, which is currently enduring an 'exceptional drought,' according to the US Drought Monitor, grew nearly half of America's lettuce and broccoli in 2012. Jay Lund, a water expert at the University of California–Davis, says that water problems mean that agriculture may soon play a less important role in California's economy, as the business of growing food moves to the South and the Midwest, where water is less expensive. Production rates for thirsty crops like alfalfa and cotton have already diminished significantly in the last few years. Between 2006 and 2010 alone, the amount of land irrigated for cotton fell by 46 percent."

## Park Service criticizes Mojave solar project

*KCET*, March 17, 2014

**Chris Clarke**, <http://bit.ly/1mhDFKS> • "The National Park Service isn't happy about a proposal to build a large solar facility on almost 4,200 acres next door to the Mojave National Preserve. The agency is citing the project's threats to wildlife, rare plants, groundwater, air quality, and wilderness characteristics of the 1.6 million acre unit."

"The Soda Mountain Solar Project, which would be built by Bechtel on either side of Interstate 15 along the northwest edge of the Preserve, would pose serious threats to bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, migratory birds, and one of the rarest fish in the world, according to a comment letter on the project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement filed by Preserve Superintendent Stephanie Dubois."

"The project would generate a maximum of 350 megawatts of power by putting solar panels on more than half the project's total footprint: about 2,200 acres. But ... despite two transmission lines running near the site, Bechtel has been unable to secure an agreement with any utility to buy power from the project."

"The Park Service is asking for a meeting with BLM staff to discuss the project further. BLM's maps of the Soda Mountains project used in February's public meetings didn't show the boundaries of the Mojave National Preserve."



**Mojave and nearby National Park Service areas.**

Credit: National Park Service

(California continues on next page)

## California drought not caused by climate change

*The New York Times*, March 9, 2014

**Martin P. Hoerling**, <http://nyti.ms/1iqHQmY> •

“California is in the third year of one of its worst droughts on record. It’s natural to wonder what role climate change has played. The answer is, scientific evidence does not support an argument that human-induced climate change has played any appreciable role in the current California drought.

“The drought has many attributes of historical [California] droughts — in particular, a lack of storms and rainfall that normally arrive from the Pacific Ocean with considerable frequency. It resembles the droughts of 1976 and 1977 — years at least as dry as the last two for the state as a whole.

“What’s different this time is that the demand for water has greatly increased in the state, and it may be that the stress created by the failed rains is more severe than for similar rainfall deficits 40 years ago. It is at least intuitive that growth patterns, population increases, and the rising value of the agricultural sector have increased California’s vulnerability to drought and reduced its ability to cope with less precipitation.

“That is not to say that a warmer climate cannot act to decrease soil moisture and amplify the severity of future naturally occurring droughts. But the current drought, like its ancestors, continues to be strongly driven by shifts in the location of storm tracks that may or may not deliver rains to the narrow strip of the West Coast.”

## Residents surveyed on future development

*Next City*, March 4, 2014

**Stephen J. Smith**, <http://bit.ly/1ibE157> • “For anyone who attends public meetings on new development, the stereotype of those who speak against increased density in cities is pretty obvious: old and white. A new survey conducted in Santa Monica confirms this stereotype. Commissioned by the city, the survey found that old and white residents tend to be the most resistant to development.

“The most ardent supporters of any major ethnic group — the only major ethnic group to declare itself in favor — was Latinos: 70 percent said a development by Houston-based developer Hines around a future Expo Line light rail station would improve the character of Santa Monica. This doesn’t necessarily bode well for future development, with only 13 percent of Santa Monica self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino, according to the 2010 Census. It does, however, point to an interesting trend as Los Angeles (and the rest of the country) becomes more Hispanic and less white.

“In the survey, Godbe Research conducted a total of 500 telephone interviews of adult residents (18 and older). The error rate is plus or minus 4.4 percent for the sample. Interviews were conducted from January 11 through January 20, 2014. The average interview time was approximately 22 minutes. Twenty-two interviews were conducted in Spanish.”

A PDF of the more than 600-page report (4.3MB) can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/MMxxuK>

## Closing America’s largest landfill

*NPR*, February 22, 2014

**Liyna Anwar**, <http://n.pr/1jXrEq6> • “The covering of the Puente Hills landfill east of downtown Los Angeles — America’s largest landfill — is underway. Over its more than 50 years in operation, the landfill grew higher than 500 feet. All those years’ worth of garbage will be covered and remain underground. The land will one day be a park, but critics argue the move merely masks a larger issue.

“The average American makes 7 pounds of trash per day. That’s about 50 percent more than what we made back in the 1960s. Not all of that garbage stays put on U.S. soil, though. Trash is the country’s largest export by volume. China takes America’s trash as raw material to build

cardboard and packaging. They pay very little, and the environmental impact of long-distance shipping isn’t great.

“Puente Hills decided [to] at least tap into the methane gas emitting from the decomposing trash. Since the 1980s, that gas has gone to the onsite Gas-to-Energy Facility [which] produces 50 megawatts of electricity. That’s enough to power about 70,000 homes in Southern California. The facility will continue to operate for a number of years despite the landfill closure — there’s still plenty of gas [to be] extracted. But there’s no need to be nostalgic: The Sanitation District already has plans for a new, and even larger, landfill in a remote area of the desert.” ■

## Telecommuting on the rise

*The New York Times*, March 8, 2014

**Alina Tugend**, <http://nyti.ms/1fctPpT> • “The typical telecommuter is a 49-year-old college graduate — man or woman — who earns about \$58,000 a year and belongs to a company with more than 100 employees, according to numbers culled from the Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey. Being clear about what we mean by telecommuting is important. The most complete definition is someone employed full time at a private, nonprofit, or government organization, who works at least half the time at home. It is not predominantly women who telecommute. Men, women, parents, people without children, young and old — all participate. Those who work at home tend to put in longer hours and are often more productive. Telecommuting has risen 79 percent between 2005 and 2012 and now makes up 2.6 percent of the American work force, or 3.2 million workers, according to statistics from the American Community Survey.”

## The new normal: bigger, unwieldy ‘megafires’

*The Washington Post*, March 8, 2014

**Darryl Fears**, <http://wapo.st/1nyCKUC> • “Megafires are not defined by size but by their threat to life and property. States such as California are getting parched more frequently by drought; housing developments are pushing more deeply into forests; and the U.S. Forest Service is generally suppressing fires rather than letting them burn naturally, which would reduce the brush that fuels future fires. In 1993, the average cost of fighting wildfires was \$350 million a season. Now, it’s \$2 billion, and one reason is the extreme amount of resources that has to be put into putting out fires near an urban interface. People are building and living in dangerous locations and are not taking adequate fire protection measures.

“Global warming is accelerating climate change in the West, resulting in winters with less precipitation and a drier landscape. The wildfire season that historically started in June and ended in September now starts in May and ends in September. Firefighters in the West should increase the number of controlled burns to get rid of the fuel on which fires feed. States in the South are more apt than those in the West to use that method to control fires and protect private land.”

## Housing policy hurts the middle class

*The Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 2014

**Michael Milken**,

<http://on.wsj.com/1hRSPTT> • “Subsidized mortgages did create three things, none of them good: 1. The largest housing price bubble in American history. 2. Misguided economic priorities. 3. Damage to the environment and public health.

“The size of the average American house grew by more than half — about 900 additional square feet — over the past three decades, while the number of people in the average house decreased. Larger houses need larger lots that are usually farther from the homeowner’s job. Construction, heating, cooling, landscaping, and extended commutes consume more natural resources. Because breadwinners spend more time in cars, they have less time for their families.

“Homebuilders didn’t create the problems. Policies made in Washington distorted the banking system and discouraged personal responsibility by subsidizing loans that borrowers couldn’t otherwise afford. ... Investments in quality education and improved health will do more to accelerate economic growth than excessive housing incentives. That will give everyone a better chance to achieve the real American dream.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

“**Google Maps Gallery** ... is full of interactive digital maps from a variety of businesses, governments, and nonprofit organizations, such as National Geographic, World Bank Group, and the US Geological Survey. The topics covered in the maps run the gamut, including construction projects, historic battlefields, Internet users worldwide, US congressional districts, climate change data, public school ratings, and much more. Before being published on the Web, many of these maps were mostly inaccessible to the public.” — Dara Kerr, CNET, <http://cnet.co/1fxkY4>

## Rail trails: The sky is falling (or not)

*Grist*, Letters, March 12, 2014

**Ben Adler**, <http://bit.ly/1iaScnX> • “It was alarming news for trail advocates when the Supreme Court ruled March 10th in favor of a private property owner, and against the federal government, as to who owns the rail-line right-of-way on his property.

“But the effect will be limited. The ruling involves a small subset of rail trails: those built along rail lines created by an 1875 law under which the federal government gave easements to rail companies to build cross-country lines. Over time, the land crossed by these rail lines was sold off to private owners.

“Marvin Brandt is the owner of one such plot. He sued the government, arguing that the easement for the rail right-of-way on his land expired when the rail line was taken out of use. It was an illegal taking of his property, he claimed, to turn the right-of-way over to another public purpose. The court agreed, and remanded the case to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which initially had sided with the government.

“The 10th Circuit now has to rule on the property claim. In the meantime, no rail trails will be closed. No one knows how many trails fall into the relevant category. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy estimates that it’s a fairly small number. A property owner claiming land under this ruling would have to sue. Many owners may not take on the expense and hassle, given how narrow railroad rights-of-way are and how little their fair market value would be.”

## Louisiana’s coastline disappearing too quickly for mappers to keep up

*The Atlantic Cities*, March 4, 2014

**Stephanie Garlock**, <http://bit.ly/1fxyL8Z> • “Climate change, coupled with better engineering (which brought effective channeling and stronger levees), has turned the Louisiana coastline into one of the most rapidly eroding areas of the U.S. In the area around Buras, gone are the formerly distinct waterways of English Bay, Bay Jacquin, and Scofield Bay, leaving a vast expanse of water between the mainland and the barrier islands. Each year, this part of the coastline loses around 16 square miles of land. And until quite recently, even the most advanced maps of the area did little to reflect the changing environmental reality. But in the last few years, renewed mapping efforts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have begun to catalog these changes. These new maps show water where there was once marshy land, and bays where there were once small inlets.”

## Highest transit ridership in 57 years

*American Public Transportation Association*, March 10, 2014

**Virginia Miller**, <http://bit.ly/1cp8UjV> • Americans took public transportation in greater numbers in 2013 than in any year since 1956, according to the American Public Transportation Association in a report released March 10. Vehicle miles traveled on roads (VMT) went up 0.3 percent in 2013, but public transportation use increased by 1.1 percent. SamTrans was one of the public transit agencies reporting record ridership system-wide or on specific lines. Since 1995, public transit ridership is up 37.2 percent, outpacing population growth, which is up 20.3 percent, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which is up 22.7 percent.

“There is a fundamental shift going on in the way we move about our communities. People in record numbers are demanding more public transit services, and communities are benefiting with strong economic growth,” said APTA President and CEO Michael Melaniphy. “When more people are employed, public transportation ridership increases, since nearly 60 percent of the trips taken on public transportation are for work commutes.” ■

**San Francisco Tech shuttles in time-lapse.** This video shows “tech shuttle activity at the Municipal Railway’s eastbound 21-Hayes bus stop at the corner of Hayes and Steiner streets (looking west on Hayes). Paul Supawanich, who posted this on Vimeo, indicated this was shot Thursday, March 6, between 6:15 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. He says that only one private company operates shuttles from this stop.” —Dan Brekke, KQED news fix, <http://vimeo.com/88424080>

## Unclogging Buenos Aires' iconic street

*Citiscopes*, March 3, 2014

**Marcela Valente**, <http://bit.ly/1fDckdI> •

“Avenida 9 de Julio is a triumphant boulevard — by some accounts the widest street in the world — with a towering Obelisk commemorating the founding of Buenos Aires. In the past year, work crews ripped out four traffic lanes in the middle of the 20-lane roadway, and gave the space entirely to buses and the people who ride them.

“Buses used to be stuck in the mix of traffic on 9 de Julio. Now, they have their own lanes for 3 km before peeling off into traffic to get to their destinations. More than 200,000 commuters enjoy a faster ride that also makes a subway transfer obsolete. The new system, called Metrobus, [provides] spacious, well-lighted shelters with seats and wi-fi. Platforms are raised to the same level as the bus floor for easy boarding, and screens provide real-time travel information.

“Bus rapid transit systems with features like this are nothing new in South America. But what Buenos Aires did is about as bold as it gets when it comes to making can't-be-missed statements about what urban mobility means today. The transformation was controversial. The loudest opposition came from groups of architects, city planners, and environmentalists who didn't want to see 1,500 trees and the small green spaces surrounding them removed. (Most of the trees were replanted elsewhere.) Some said the project should be built on the outer edges of the avenue, not in the middle of it.”

## In a different direction, a new British garden city

*The Telegraph*, March 16, 2014

**Steven Swinford**, <http://bit.ly/1iTk0k3> • Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has “announced plans to ‘build for Britain’ by creating a new city with 15,000 homes on the Thames Estuary” in Ebbsfleet, Kent, 25 miles east-southeast of London. “The new settlement will be modeled on popular garden cities built at the beginning of the last century including Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City, and Milton Keynes” (1967), all north of London.

Progress has so far been slow. “The first planning application was made in 2003, but just 150 homes have been built. The government will set up an urban development corporation of private and public companies to help build the city.”

“A Treasury spokesman said ‘the area has long been identified as having great development potential, but investment and progress have been stalled for decades. The government wants to create a powerful new body — similar to what happened in Docklands in the 1980s — to really drive and promote the area, coordinate investment from government, and solve the issues that have held back development.’

“Mr. Osborne praised Ebbsfleet's potential. ‘There is the land available, there is fantastic infrastructure with a high speed line, it's on the river, and it's in the South East of England where a lot of the housing pressure has been.’”

## Marshall Islands swamped

*RTCC*, March 5, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1lcShYM> • “Over 1,000 people were evacuated in the Marshall Islands early in March — primarily on the capital of Majuro — as ‘king tides’ wiped away the island's coastline. The Marshall Islands is a presidential republic in free association with the United States, with the US providing defense, funding grants, and access to social services. A large percentage of the islands' gross domestic product comes from United States aid, and the US dollar is the standard currency. As King tides rose across Majuro, they damaged buildings and infrastructure along the shoreline. The government sees the problem as long-term and may be considering permanent moves for people who are already much too close to the shoreline.”

*(World continues on next page)*

**Silicon Valley CEO Business Climate Survey, 2014.** “This year, 222 executives responded. In 2013, 62 percent added jobs in Silicon Valley, with only 9 percent subtracting jobs. In 2014, 59 percent expect to add jobs in Silicon Valley, with only 4 percent anticipating job losses.” —Carl Guardino. View or download the survey at <http://bit.ly/1pjj7yV>

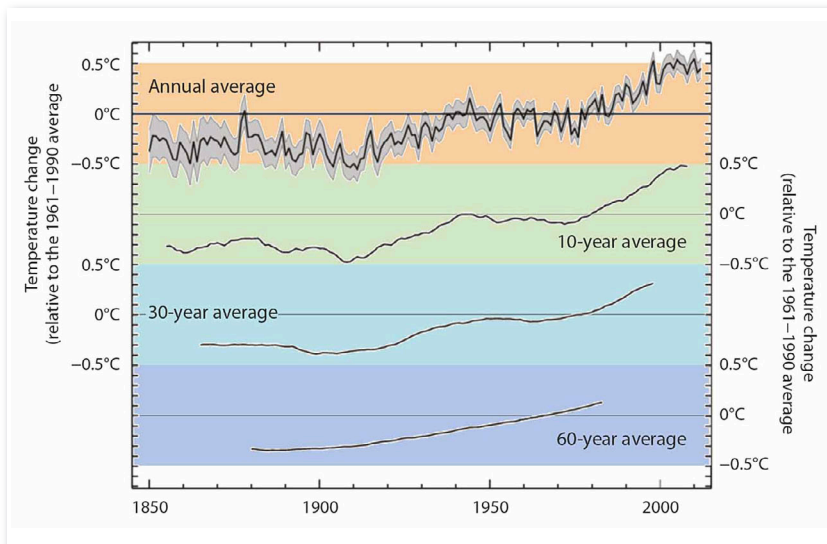
## A primer on greenhouse-driven global warming

February 27, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1g14F01> • “*Climate Change: Evidence & Causes* is a new publication produced jointly by the US National Academy of Sciences and The Royal Society. The publication is intended as a brief, readable reference document for decision makers, policy makers, educators, and others seeking authoritative information on some of the questions that continue to be asked.

“The publication makes clear what is well-established and where understanding is still developing. It echoes and builds on the history of climate-related work from both national academies, as well as the newest climate-change assessment from the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It touches on current areas of active debate and ongoing research, such as the link between ocean heat content and the rate of warming.”

Below is one of 15 images from the booklet.



The climate system varies naturally from year to year and decade to decade. Reliable inferences about human-induced climate change must be made with a longer view. A ‘running average’ over longer timescales [exposes] long-term trends. For the global average temperature 1850–2012 (using the data from the UK Met Office Hadley Centre relative to the 1961–90 average), the plots show: (top, left scale) the average and range of uncertainty for annually averaged data; (2nd plot), right scale, the temperature given for any date is the average for the ten years about that date; (3rd, left) the equivalent picture for 30-year; and (bottom, right) the 60-year averages. *Source: Met Office, based on the HadCRUT4 dataset from the Met Office and Climatic Research Unit (Morice et al., 2012).*

## Global warming slowdown?

*The Atlantic Cities*, March 12, 2014

**John Metcalfe**, <http://bit.ly/1iTgo1F> • “For those wondering why global warming has been slower these past years, scientists have posed a number of possible reasons. One is that the ocean is sucking up some of the excess heat, as the atmosphere can only hold so much at any given time. One NASA oceanographer told *Scientific American* that the world’s seas, not surface temperatures, should be the current barometer of climate change because their temperatures are going up ‘like gangbusters.’ Other suspects include several recent sky-dimming volcanic eruptions and an abnormal pattern of trade winds in the Pacific.

“Whatever’s putting on the brakes, the national science academies of the U.S. and U.K. warn in a February report not to expect it to last. Although there might be ‘slowdowns and accelerations in warming lasting a decade or more,’ they write, the clear long-term trend is ‘substantial increases in global average surface temperature and important changes in regional climate.’

“Future warming will be much worse than described in the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (which took the slowdown into account when making its projections).”

(World continues on next page)

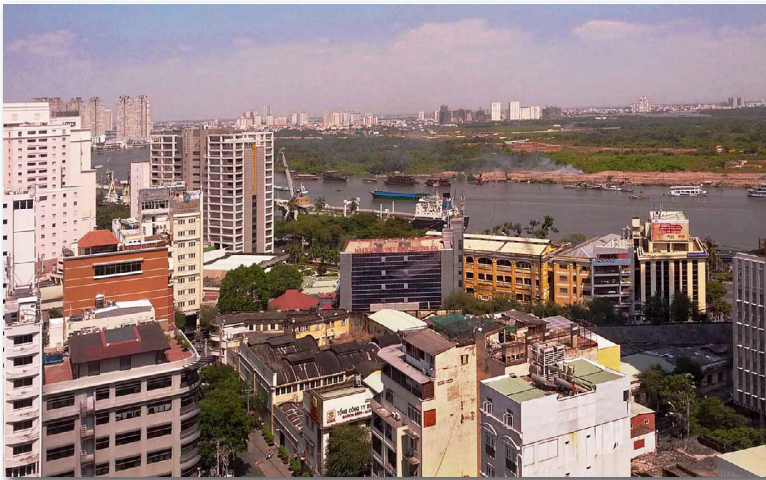
**Funding critically important to public housing agencies.** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is sending nearly \$1.8 billion to public housing authorities in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to make major large-scale improvements to the nation’s 1.1 million public housing units. California is getting \$69.7 million of the total.

## When to protect from flood and when to retreat

*The Guardian*, February 28, 2014

**Beth Gardiner**, <http://bit.ly/1pNLxnC> • “Rotterdam is Europe’s largest port. Ho Chi Minh City is a fast-growing megacity clogged with motorbikes. Perched near coasts astride major rivers, these two port cities are on the front lines of climate change. Now they are sharing coping strategies as their positions grow more perilous. Rotterdam, with long experience in flood management, is advising Ho Chi Minh City on the development and implementation of a climate adaptation plan to help the Vietnamese city avoid disaster as sea levels rise and the frequency and severity of storms increases.

“Both cities seek to strike a balance between bolstering expensive, hard protections while also ‘making room for the river’ — creating space for water to run without damaging developed areas. Added to the mix are new ideas such as dotting flood zones with playgrounds that can hold run-off water when needed. Dutch experts are urging Ho Chi Minh City officials to plan carefully as the city’s population booms, ensuring that newly developed areas include lots of green space, which can act like a sponge during deluges, and special pavements that absorb water rather than speed its runoff.”



**Ho Chi Minh City and Saigon River.** French boulevards and elegant but decaying old buildings mix with communist-era blocks and modern skyscrapers. Photo: Aliza Knox

## Needed: typhoon- and earthquake-proof housing

*Next City*, March 3, 2014

**Aurora Almendral** | **Resilient Cities**,

<http://bit.ly/1i1Lwbl> • “Tacloban is filled with the sound of pounding hammers and the grinding of handsaws, three months after this Philippine city was destroyed ... but people don’t know how to build back better. While wood fares better than masonry in an earthquake, the opposite is true for a typhoon. With the right construction and quality materials, either type of house can be built to withstand winds of up to 200 miles per hour, as well as a major earthquake.

“**Build Change** is getting information out about gusset plates, diagonal bracing, and the importance of deep and heavy foundations [to] people who live in slum areas and are rebuilding their houses themselves. But even simple fixes like metal strapping to hold down a roof costs money. People have to choose between building a safer house, installing an indoor toilet, buying a mattress, or even purchasing food. [And] cultural preferences often dictate construction. In the Philippines, concrete houses are viewed as modern and better. But poor-quality concrete is significantly less safe than a wooden house.

“For poor Filipinos with fewer options, a native bamboo hut is well-suited for the country’s disasters. Storm winds move through the thatch roof, and if that roof falls on a family during an earthquake, it is unlikely to kill or injure the way a shoddy concrete house might. And if the hut is damaged, it’s relatively cheap to build a new one.”

*(World continues on next page)*

**Plan Bay Area tweaked.** ABAG and MTC have settled a lawsuit over Plan Bay Area filed in Superior Court in August by the Building Industry Association. “In the settlement, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission agreed to focus more on finding residential locations within the Bay Area to accommodate expected future growth, rather than assuming a certain amount of in-commuting from the Central Valley and Monterey County.” —CP&DR Staff, <http://bit.ly/1ibBGaj>



## Tokyo's carbon cap

*Citiscopes*, March 10, 2014

**Maya Kaneko**, <http://bit.ly/1kQjFi0> • “With a population of 13 million, Tokyo consumes about as much energy as Norway [and] if you want to cut greenhouse-gas emissions in Tokyo, it makes a lot of sense to look at office buildings. There isn’t much heavy industry in Tokyo, so the city’s commercial sector accounts for almost 40 percent of the city’s overall carbon dioxide output. [A four-year-old] cutting-edge policy — focused primarily on emissions from 1,400 of the most energy-hungry of those office buildings — [has] worked: Building owners have slashed power consumption and reduced their emissions by 23 percent below a baseline level, [although] some of that is due to Fukushima, which triggered legal curbs on electricity consumption.

“Tokyo was the world’s first city to try a ‘cap and trade’ system for carbon emissions at the municipal level. City officials are declaring the system a success [even though] only 22 [trades] had taken place as of December. Tokyo’s system wasn’t designed to be particularly robust. There is no bourse for carbon trading, and emissions credits are basically exchanged on a negotiation basis, often through brokers. Instead of trading their emissions credits, building owners are holding on to them, although they cannot be carried over beyond March 2020.

“Tokyo has since been joined by pilot cap-and-trade systems in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen [and] officials from Taiwan, South Korea, and Thailand have all expressed interest in Tokyo’s experience.” ■

## California easement GIS data released

By **Larry Orman**, Executive Director, GreenInfo Network, [www.greeninfo.org](http://www.greeninfo.org)

GreenInfo Network has just released the first official statewide GIS data set detailing conservation easements in California. The California Conservation Easement Database (CCED) is a single source of aggregated easement data for the entire state. The first release of the CCED data is version 2014a (March 2014). A complementary data set is the California Protected Areas Database (CPAD), which highlights lands in fee ownership and contains 49 million acres held by 1,000 agencies and organizations.

You can learn more about both CPAD and CCED, download the data sets, and sign up for update notices at California Protected Areas Data Portal,

[www.CALands.org](http://www.CALands.org)

CCED and CPAD aim to eliminate the need for frequent *ad hoc* inventories by multiple agencies by supporting a wide range of statewide and regional

planning analyses. The hope is to encourage data sharing among the hundreds of agencies, organizations, consultants, and others seeking information on the location of conservation easements.

CCED currently contains 3,200 easement parcels held by 95 agencies and organizations and totaling 1.7 million acres. Of these, 200,000 are overlapping easements, leaving 1.5 million acres actually conserved. However, this first edition of CCED does not yet contain all easements. GreenInfo estimates at least 200,000 easement acres are still to be incorporated in CCED, including significant holdings of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Rangeland Trust, data for which were not yet available for CCED version 2014a. Future editions will add these and other holdings to create a complete easement database for California. For more information, email [cpad@calands.org](mailto:cpad@calands.org) ■

**‘Fly California.’** The California High-Speed Rail Authority is “in very preliminary talks with airlines about operating the statewide \$68 billion rail system,” according to the authority’s Northern California Regional Director, Ben Tripousis, in a February interview in the Silicon Valley Business Journal. —Lauren Hepler, <http://bit.ly/1ibCqMH>

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

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

APA California Northern publishes *Northern News* 10 times each year in PDF for the exchange of planning ideas and information. Current and back issues are available for download at <http://bit.ly/JOV1Kn>. Entirely the effort of volunteers, the News is written and produced by and for urban planners in Northern California. Circulation (downloads per issue) 4,000.

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

Deadlines for submitting materials for inclusion in *Northern News* range from the 12th to the 16th of the month prior to publication. The 2014 schedule can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/193plf2>.

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