

NORTHERN NEWS



American Planning Association
California Chapter
Northern
Making Great Communities Happen

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

SEPTEMBER 2015



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Oakland: Adams Point from Lake Merritt
Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP



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Tracing the Urban Transportation Revolution

Sandy Smith, *Next City*

Over the last 30 to 40 years, a tectonic shift has occurred in the way Americans think about urban transportation networks, especially the streets and roads that are their backbone. After decades of designing streets as low-grade highways designed to move cars as quickly as practicable, officials in a growing list of cities across the U.S. have changed course and implemented policies and design standards that emphasize the movement of people, not just cars. Bike lanes, pedestrian plazas, ciclovias and more have proven popular where implemented, delivered significant public benefits, and generated momentum for further changes that reclaim city streets for everyone's use.

These officials couldn't have done what they did without support from above — the citizens to whom they report and who advocate for change — and below — the city transportation officials charged with developing the policies and strategies for their implementation and the public works bureaucracies whose job it is to do the implementing.

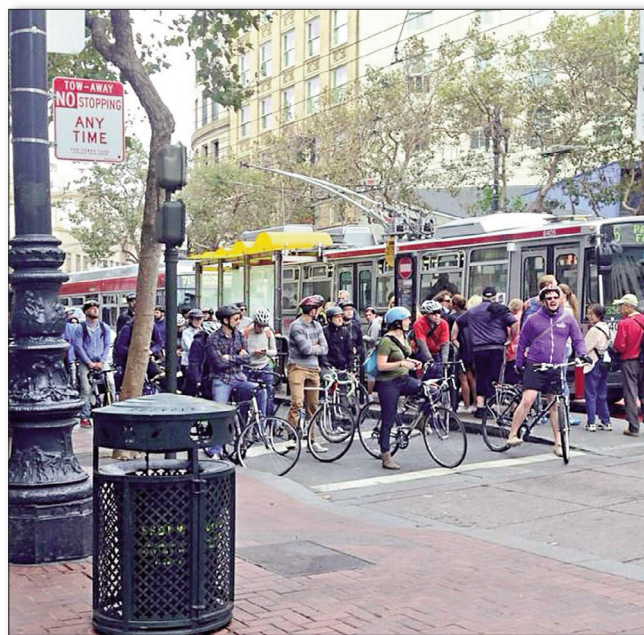
A report released this week by TransitCenter, a research and advocacy organization devoted to promoting urban vitality through better transit and transportation options, documents the role all three groups play in producing innovative urban mobility systems.

"A People's History of Recent Urban Transportation Innovations" looks at how the virtuous cycle of innovation works by examining the role all of the actors played in six cities: Charlotte, Chicago, Denver, New York, Pittsburgh and Portland.

The process begins with civic organizations that advocate for change and mobilize public support for policies. While planning groups like New York's Regional Plan Association and business leadership groups like Charlotte's Center City Partners can serve as "think tanks" that generate new ideas and turn them into plans that can be acted upon, the grass-roots advocacy groups are fundamental. According to the

report, groups like the Active Transportation Alliance in Chicago and the Bicycle Transportation Alliance of Oregon play the key role of raising public awareness of the issues and generating support for change. When groups with particular interests band together around larger goals, they become even more effective.

These groups create the space for city halls to rethink how their cities approach transportation and promote new policy directions. By offering candidates energized blocs of voters, the advocates give politicians an opportunity to incorporate innovative thinking on urban mobility into their larger policy agendas. Once in office, mayors or city councilors can then claim a mandate to develop programs based on the ideas of the advocates.



Weekday rush hour on Market Street, San Francisco.

Photo Janice Li, courtesy Streetsblog SF

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APA California members earn AICP | CM credits and receive a 10 percent discount on most land use and natural resources courses.

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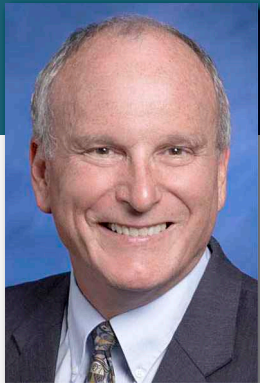
Excerpts from articles around the world, with links to the originals: Beijing needs proper urban planning, 'insane' building boom in Stone Age Britain, Bolivia to triple its cable-car system, new central district for Saigon, and more.

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Find JOBS and EVENTS CALENDAR at norcalapa.org



OPINION

Dan Marks, AICP

Whither Bay Area planning?

For more than 30 years, many other Bay Area planners and I have hoped and worked for a consolidated regional planning

agency that would combine the often disparate and conflicting planning related efforts undertaken by the five agencies that affect Bay Area land use: the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). In the past couple of months a largely unrecognized effort has been underway to begin to address this issue. But as the saying goes, we should be careful what we wish for. That effort, led by MTC, is to defund the planning function at ABAG by December 31, 2015, and consolidate it under MTC. I don't know if this is a step in the right direction for Bay Area planning. But I do know that it deserves careful discussion, and that a unilateral decision by MTC to "absorb" ABAG's planning function over the next few months is a troubling way to go about making this major decision.

In the past four years, under the requirements of SB 375 (<http://bit.ly/1gBn2JN>), a remarkable thing has happened: we have a Bay Area regional plan worthy of the name. Plan Bay Area isn't perfect, but it's as close as we've come to having a true regional plan in more than 40 years. It is a vision for how we as a region should — indeed, must — grow if we are to preserve what is special about the Bay Area and at the same time reduce our generation of greenhouse gases. I could argue about the details, but it is very hard to argue with the vision. Amazingly enough, with the help of the One Bay Area Grants, planning for Priority Development Areas (PDAs) is proceeding. And in the face of skyrocketing rents and a market place that now values homes in walkable environments, developers are responding.

Although ABAG and MTC have had a somewhat rocky relationship for a very long time, with the impetus of

SB 375, they managed to work together long enough and closely enough to produce Plan Bay Area. Equally important, the two agencies have shaken loose at least some of the Bay Area's transportation money and devoted it to the essential planning work for PDAs that can make Plan Bay Area a reality.

So, what is broken now that has led to MTC's power play? Staff have confided to me that it may be due to differences over regional housing policy. They believe the key issue is that, for the next Sustainable Communities Strategy, ABAG wants to continue to emphasize housing displacement, while MTC's focus is on not increasing the in-commute to the Bay Area — without reference to displacement. I am not party to these discussions, and cannot say which issues may be driving MTC's approach. But based on my observation of these organizations over many years, I believe that more fundamental issues are at work, and that there may be a straw that finally led to MTC's decision.

Is there anything wrong with MTC taking over the Bay Area's regional planning function? There is certainly a continuing need for better-coordinated regional land use and transportation planning. However, MTC's decision makes me uncomfortable, not only because of how the reorganization is being done, but because of what it implies for Bay Area land use planning.

Although we land use planners would like to think that transportation serves land uses — and therefore should follow from what "we" plan (as servants to the 110 local governments in the Bay Area) — until Plan Bay Area, the lack of any regional land use vision has left regional transportation planning and investment up to the region's engineers who have clearly seen it as their job to "fix the roads" and minimize congestion. With Plan Bay Area, the need to better coordinate regional land use with transportation has taken center stage and has led to some difficult transitions. For example, the land use issues my planning colleagues and I raised at the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency Technical Advisory Committee a few years ago as we began to address SB 375 were not well

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Dispatch from Shenzhen

Riad Steven El-Bdour

I hear many horns (good for jet lag sufferers), all the money has one guy on it, Internet speeds are slow as hell (it's a conspiracy by the pirated DVD industry), and every day random people point and say things they think I don't understand. I must be back in China again.

Bay Area and beyond

After a year and a half in Asia, I spent some time in Northern Arizona and Northern California. While there, I observed a few things — some better, some worse — that I might not have so readily noticed before. Call it “reverse culture shock,” it is far more distressing than any culture shock I've ever experienced.

There is no shortage of beautiful sunshine in California and Arizona. Not everywhere in the world is so lucky to have blue skies on most summer days. I've realized that in Asia I may have missed the sun more than anything else.

Selfie sticks are everywhere in the west. It used to be common on vacation to ask a stranger to take your picture. Some pleasantries and exchange of information would follow. But now? “Hi, can you take my picture?” “What's wrong with you? Don't you have a selfie stick?”

Everything has gone up in price — I mean everything. Even donuts. Also, \$80 a night for a really cheap motel in the East Bay is beyond ridiculous.

Convenience stores rarely seem to have anywhere to sit down and eat your food. I am grateful they still sell microwave burritos and nachos — the late night dinner of champions.

The scale of everything seems larger than when I was last in California. It takes a long time to get nearly anywhere. What once seemed close — like Fremont and San Jose, Palo Alto and San Francisco — now seems far apart.

With the exception of some downtown areas, there are few people walking along most city streets, especially at night. Where is everyone? Doesn't anyone live here anymore?

I saw flags — lots of them. In northern Arizona especially, I could go down any street and see an American flag. I also saw flags for POW MIA, Arizona State, various military branches, Mexico, Italy, and Israel. I'm not sure what this says about Arizonans, but I've never been anywhere where I have seen so many flags.

While there, I also noticed signs at a hospital, a school, and a library reading “no weapons allowed.” Is it just me, or was there a time not so long ago when we didn't need such messages in public places?

Back in the Bay Area, BART is extremely loud and bounces a lot. It's hard to work crossword puzzles under such inhospitable conditions. At least the seats are clean these days. And what's the deal with all the expensive transit fares? I got used to paying 16 cents to get to work in China.

Southeast China

I've been staying in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China, just across the Sam Chun River from the Hong Kong SAR. I taught English for a while at a relatively new, small school and am looking for something new. It is relatively easy for a native speaker to find a job teaching English here. The pay is quite good relative to the cost of living.

Shenzhen is an interesting place. I don't know of another city like this where a government (led by Deng Xiao Ping at the time) simply decided to build a massive city. Before 1980, there were fewer than 400,000 people here; now there are more than 10 million. Shenzhen is now bigger than Hong Kong, but its growth has slowed considerably.



Shenzhen's financial district. The Kingkey 100 (at left) rises 100 floors to 1,449 feet. The building houses a shopping mall, 22 floors of offices, and the St. Regis Hotel.

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Norcal roundup

Excerpts from articles around our Northern Section, with links to the originals

No private cars on parts of Market Street

SF Gate, August 9, 2015

Michael Cabanatuan, <http://bit.ly/1TnBp6m>

- “Anyone hoping to cruise San Francisco’s Market Street, whether driving through or gawking, will have to do it aboard Muni, in a taxi, on a bicycle, or on foot. As of Tuesday, August 11th, in the latest evolution of the thoroughfare, private vehicles are barred from turning onto Market between Third and Eighth streets — an effort to reduce the number of collisions injuring pedestrians and bicyclists. Commercial vehicles, including delivery trucks, taxis, and private shuttles, are exempt. Combined with existing forced right turns for eastbound private cars at Sixth and at 10th streets, the restrictions will keep most other vehicles off Market.

“Ed Reiskin, transportation director for the Municipal Transportation Agency, said the turn restrictions are designed to keep traffic flowing across Market Street, while making the intersections safer by eliminating turns and reducing through traffic.

“During the first week, parking control officers will be at every intersection directing motorists. The MTA plans to extend the red transit-and-taxi-only lanes, which now end at Fifth Street, all the way east to Third Street. Officials hope the confluence of the red lanes and reduced traffic will speed Muni buses, which, citywide, creep along at an average of 6 mph. After the MTA started pushing eastbound cars off Market at Sixth and 10th streets, it saw travel times for Muni buses drop by 5 percent on Market, but increase 3 percent on Mission.”

San Jose has 59 mobile home parks; one begins closure process

The Mercury News, July 31, 2015

Ramona Giwargis, <http://bayareane.ws/1hymmpv>

- “The Winchester Ranch Mobile Home Community’s owners will file paperwork by the end of the year to close the park, the owners told senior citizen residents during a meeting July 29th. During the meeting, the owners confirmed plans to sell the 16-acre mobile home park to PulteGroup [for construction of] homes and a hotel. The full park closure could take at least two years, with new development beginning in a little more than three years, officials said.

“Winchester Ranch is the latest Silicon Valley mobile home park facing closure in a booming real estate market that can be appealing to developers eager to build high-density, high-end housing. In Palo Alto, the proposed closure of the city’s only mobile home park, Buena Vista, would uproot nearly 400 residents living in one of the Bay Area’s priciest cities. Santa Clara County and Palo Alto officials have pledged funding to preserve it, but it’s unclear if it will be enough to stave off a sale for private development.

“San Jose has a mobile home conversion ordinance that provides financial compensation to the park’s residents. The ordinance has been on the books since 1986, but city officials said it’s never been used. Winchester Ranch represents the city’s first mobile home park conversion. City leaders are now looking at updating the ordinance to preserve San Jose’s 59 mobile home parks and bolster protections for residents.”

Napa’s dry bypass public park opens

Napa Valley Register, August 4, 2015

Barry Eberling, <http://bit.ly/1JbAscJ> • “When officials gathered Tuesday, August 4th, to dedicate the Oxbow flood bypass, they celebrated an oddly shaped strip of land — a quarter-mile long, 300 feet wide, and 10 feet deep — that also doubles as a 10-acre city park. Its open design is intended to carry floodwaters without major impediments, such as trees, yet there are park-like amenities, including winding paths with unique perspectives on downtown and the Oxbow District. The project includes newly planted marsh and turf grasses and a concrete area fit for events. Most of the time, Oxbow Commons will be dry and

function as public space. Local flood control officials said the bypass landscaping as it grows will do more than look appealing. Its other purpose is to prevent erosion when the bypass floods.”

According to Napa Valley Register archives, “the Napa River-Napa Creek Flood Protection Project dates to 1998, when county voters approved a 20-year, half-cent sales tax for flood control improvements.” Napa received \$100 million in federal stimulus funds in 2009, and another \$16.6 million federal funds for the bypass through the US Army Corps of Engineers in 2013.

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Meet a local planner

By Sian Llewellyn, AICP

Hanson Hom, AICP, is Director of Community Development, City of Sunnyvale, where he oversees the city's building, planning, and housing divisions. He is a licensed landscape architect, co-chair of the APA California 2015 Conference Host Committee, vice president—programs of the California Planning Roundtable, and was Northern Section's Director in 2011 and 2012.



Tell us a little about yourself

I have spent 35 years as a planner in the Bay Area, mostly in the public sector. I find it stimulating despite the challenges. I enjoy the interactions with the community and contributing to making more livable places. I've worked for seven different public agencies, mostly in the East Bay.

How did you come to planning?

I started out at UC Berkley with every intention to become a civil engineer with an environmental focus — the correct balance between my interest in the environment and what my dad wanted me to be. Then I realized an environmental engineer designs wastewater infrastructure and, although a noble profession, I had second thoughts. I took a landscape architecture course with Garrett Eckbo, and his approach appealed to my idealistic side. After an internship with the National Park Service, I switched to landscape architecture with an environmental planning focus.

Later, I got my master of urban planning at San Jose State and a master of public administration at Cal State East Bay. The programs are tailored to working professionals, and I took classes while working full-time. It was demanding, but allowed me to combine academic and applied learning.

Tell us about your career

My first job out of Cal was with the East Bay Regional Park District. They were acquiring parkland and my job was preparing maps and exhibits. I also assisted in preparing a Regional Hiking and Bicycle Trails Master Plan, a precursor to the East Bay segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail. I learned about the different communities in the East Bay and appreciated the rich open space resources that are within easy reach of these urban areas.

On the other end of the spectrum, my second job was with the business-oriented Port of Oakland. They have three major operations: container port, Oakland airport, and commercial real estate. My focus was waterfront development, and included interaction with the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. I gained an exposure to urban planning while preparing master plans and design standards for shoreline development.

After my stints with these two agencies, my first city planning position was with the City of Vallejo during the booming 1980s. It was a time of tremendous housing expansion, and we processed plans for over a thousand residential units a year. My next position was with the City of Hayward as city landscape architect. It was an ideal job that combined my interests in landscape architecture, urban planning, and project management.

I reached a crossroads in my career: practice as a landscape architect, or pursue my core interest in urban planning. I chose urban planning and was drawn to the public sector. It was the right decision, and it has been rewarding to manage planning divisions/departments in Alameda, San Leandro, and, for the last eight years, Sunnyvale.

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

Sunnyvale is experiencing a sustained economic boom driven by the Silicon Valley tech industry. The city is a prime location for companies because of available development sites and a positive business climate. The economic cycles of high-tech are more volatile than other industries. Venture capital amplifies the cycle: companies build-up and grow at a terrific rate, merge, get bought out, or disappear. Swings in employment follow this corporate volatility. Premier companies like Apple, Google, LinkedIn, and Tesla are increasing their presence in the city, while established Sunnyvale businesses like Yahoo continue to transform and evolve. Meanwhile, new companies are starting up all the time — most with fewer than 100 employees.

It's an exciting and challenging time in Sunnyvale. Private investment brings economic gains but also raises alarm because the community is changing physically and demographically. We are planning for this change while also balancing the aspirations and values of residents. Residents

(continued on next page)

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

actively engage in community workshops to update general and specific plans that will guide future growth. Commercial development brings additional challenges related to affordable housing and growth capacity issues related to transportation, schools, and parks.

Silicon Valley companies and their employees are forward thinking, with interest in lifestyle choices, sustainability, and workplace amenities. Employees own fewer cars, and employers respond by offering alternative transportation options. These companies bring a lot of brainpower and progressive ideas to the table when they engage in community planning.

A current challenge is creating workplace districts that appeal to tech workers — mostly millennials — many of whom prefer to live and work in vibrant urban settings. In the fierce battle for tech talent, companies are transforming tired suburban business parks into innovative workplace districts. While self-contained office campuses are prominent among large companies, small and moderate size companies are seeking locations with convenient retail services, restaurants, and other amenities. The emerging trend is denser, walkable, bikeable, and transit-accessible employment areas.

What do you see as future trends for planning?

Advances in technology, information delivery, and social media are rapidly changing the way we plan. We will need to be more proactive and strategic when responding to immediate problems while maintaining a big picture outlook and balancing multiple perspectives. Planning is becoming more complex and contentious, which necessitates good intuition, problem-solving skills, and keen political acumen. More planning specialties are emerging, such as green building and climate adaptation planning, affordable housing, and technology (GIS, websites, social media). New regulations and court rulings also have contributed to the complexity of planning in matters involving CEQA, housing laws, air quality, storm water, and brownfields.

Any advice for planners starting out?

I've had role models over the years that I have tried to emulate. One such person was Brian Mattson, the Planning Director when I was in Vallejo. He was a proponent of good planning principles in the face of development pressure from strong real estate interests. I'm always mindful that a public servant must straddle a delicate line between being an ethical advocate for responsible planning while representing members of the public who may not be aligned accordingly. It requires patience and commitment because, in most cases, good planning happens slowly and incrementally. A passion for creating equitable communities and better environments, balanced with a sense of humor, are essential for sanity and survival.

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

I am proudly contributing to the future of urban planning in another way: my daughter is also a planner. I don't remember talking to my kids about planning, but apparently a planner's view of the world sunk in. She was studying to be an architect, but decided she wanted to be a planner instead. She is currently a regional transportation planner and has worked on resiliency and adaptation planning.

Interviewer Siân Llewellyn, AICP, lives in San Francisco and is a vice president at AECOM ■

Who's where



Ignacio "Nash" Gonzalez, AICP, is now a senior associate with Land Logistics, a Davis-based firm providing contract planning staffing, project management, mining compliance, and environmental services to public agencies in Northern California. He comes to Land Logistics from San Jose, where he had been director of planning and development for Santa Clara County. Prior positions include director of planning and building services, Mendocino County, and senior associate, Pacific Municipal Consultants. Gonzalez holds a BA in planning from Sonoma State University.



Wendy Lao has joined the City of Pacific Grove as an assistant planner. Her prior positions include land use and environmental planning intern for the City of San Jose and intern with the County of Santa Clara. She holds a master of urban planning from San Jose State University and a B.S. in environmental policy analysis and planning from UC Davis.



Stuart Poulter has joined EMC Planning Group (Monterey) as an assistant planner. Immediately prior, and while completing his graduate degree, Poulter worked as an environmental planning intern/technician for SWCA Environmental Consultants. His experience includes conducting background research and data collection on land use and environmental regulations. Poulter holds a bachelor's degree in history from Santa Clara University and a master of city and regional planning (concentration in environmental planning) from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. ■

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Twenty from Northern Section enter AICP ranks

Congratulations to our Northern Section workshop attendees who passed the Fall 2014 and spring 2015 American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) national exam:

Janet Chang	Suzanne Ise
Florentina Craciun	Steven McHarris
Kristen Hall	Erin Morris
Clare Hartman	Sarah Peters
Jonathan Hidalgo	Geoffrey Reilly
Lindsey Hilde	Georgia Sarkin
Claire Fliesler	David Vautin
Sanhita Ghosal	Brett Walker
Michelle Go	Joanna Winter
Shjaronjit Grewal	Ivana Yeung

Northern Section has offered these exam prep courses 40 times in the past 26 years. More than 600 planners have attended, and our overall pass rate is 98 percent. Nationally, the recent exam pass rate was 68 percent.

If you are not yet certified as an AICP member and would like to be, the best way is to join the APA California Northern Section-sponsored AICP Exam Prep workshop program at UC Berkeley this Fall for the November 2015 or May 2016 national exams.

Our program will be held in Wurster Hall on Saturdays (September 12 and 26, October 10 and 24, and November 7) from 10 am to 3 pm. Each unique session presents a different expert guest speaker. Together, they cover all the domains of the national exam.

We will also offer an exam prep and information session in Oakland, after the California APA conference. Even if you have not applied for the November exam, you will be smart to start prepping now for the national exam next spring.

There is no need to purchase any expensive materials. We provide all the necessary study materials, readings, tips, glossaries, plus over 2,000 practice questions and answers with rationales, and the new national AICP exam guide 3.0 (a \$300 value). Your fee will be \$100 (\$50 for APA board members). The fee is waived if you are unemployed, a full time planning student, a UC employee, or have paid in the past. If you follow our strategy and do not pass, you may repeat the classes at no further cost until you are successful.

If you have questions or wish to register, please contact Dr. Don Bradley at (650) 592-0915 or Dr.DonBradley@comcast.net. Or send your check for \$100.00 to Dr. Bradley at 2995 Woodside Road, Suite 400, Woodside, CA 94062. ■

Fremont is urbanizing. “With a new regional rail BART station slated to open [at Warm Springs] this year, and service eventually planned for Santa Clara County, more workers will be coming into Fremont car-free. If the city is serious about encouraging transit-oriented development, it needs to better its inter-city transit.” —Rachel Dovey, <http://bit.ly/1J0Bacl>





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New survey reports on livability preferences in U.S. metro areas

“People with places to walk to are more satisfied with the quality of life in their community.”

“Women value walkability more than men do.”

But Americans are “split on preference between walkable mixed-use community, and conventional suburban community.”

These are among the many findings and charts in “Community & Transportation Preferences Survey, U.S. Metro Areas, 2015” (July 23, 2015, 46 pp., <http://bit.ly/1MiZaA>). “The research was conducted by the National Association of Realtors® and Portland State University, with additional funding from the National Institute for Transportation and Communities.”

“Methodology summary:

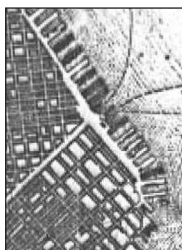
- “The sample included adults living in the 50 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the US.
- “The survey was conducted May 13–19, 2015.
- “1,000 respondents were interviewed by phone by American Strategies (679 by landline and 322 by wireless phone). Margin of error 3.1 percent.
- “2,000 respondents were surveyed online by YouGov. Margin of error 2.2 percent.
- “Responses were weighted to better match demographics according to the American Community Survey and the two samples were combined.”

The report highlights findings in several categories. For example:

“Highlights: Generation gaps in everyday travel.

- “Only 71 percent of Millennials like driving (the lowest of any generation), while 83 percent of them like walking. This 12-point gap is wider than any other generation. The gap for Baby Boomers is 2 points.
- “Millennials use transit much more than other generations (40 percent took transit in the last month compared to 28 percent for Gen X, 19 percent for Baby Boomers, and 8 percent for Silent Generation).
- “Overall, Gen Xers bicycle the most, but Millennials bicycle the most for transportation. Gen X is most likely to bicycle only for exercise.
- “Millennials are most likely to walk and bicycle for transportation, rather than for exercise.
- “For all generations, not having destinations nearby is a major barrier to walking and bicycling more.”

Millennials are those born 1981 or later; **Gen X** are those born 1965 to 1980; **Baby Boomers** are those born 1945 to 1964; and **Silent/Greatest Generation** are those born 1944 or before. ■



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Letters

Thanks for continuing to send Northern News my way. It's still the best Section publication in the State by a wide margin, and keeps ahead of the Chapter's publication a good share of the time. I'm already digging into this issue.

Steven A. Preston

City Manager, City of San Gabriel

I commend you for consistently producing the best planning newsletter I have ever read!

Woodie Tescher

Principal, PlaceWorks, Los Angeles

Counting down to the 2015 APA California Conference

Don't procrastinate; it's time to register.

Go to the conference website for rates and to register online: <http://bit.ly/1pRDeFe>. Even if you are paying by check, please use the registration site and follow directions. The standard registration rates end on September 1, 2015.

Student volunteers needed!

If you are a student interested in volunteering, please visit the conference website for more information: <http://bit.ly/1P6Xlfb>. Volunteer for eight hours and receive a \$50 refund on your student registration

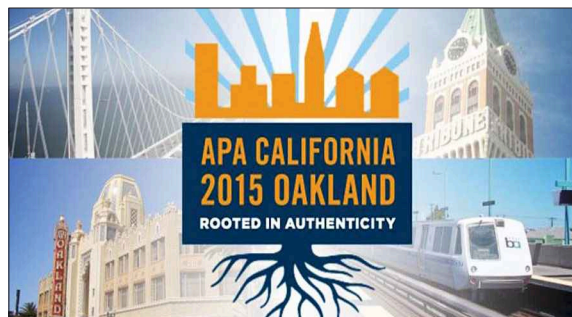
Submit a poster.

Students are encouraged to submit a poster for the competition that will be held at the Opening Reception. Guidelines and additional information are online: <http://bit.ly/1P6Xv6x>.

Hotels are filling up quickly.

All conference-rate hotel rooms at the Marriott Oakland City Center are booked. At publication time, rooms were still available at the Waterfront Hotel (<http://bit.ly/1DyQmLZ>) and at the Courtyard Oakland Downtown, (<http://bit.ly/1DyQpr7>).

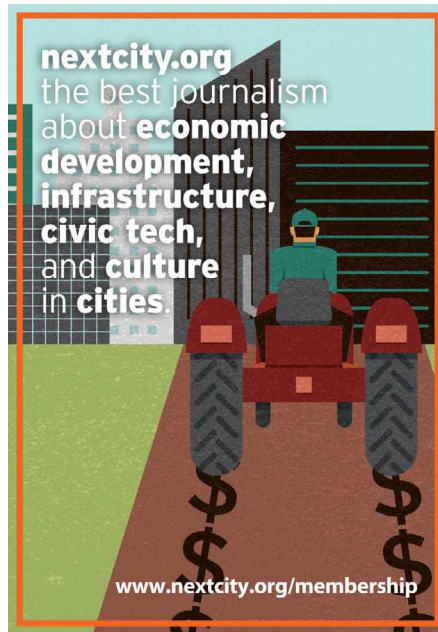
Book now to lock in your conference rate.



Here mayoral appointments to leadership positions play a crucial role. Putting top transportation officials in place who understand the goals of the plans and programs means that those goals get translated into workable policies.

And that's where the bureaucrats below the commissioners come in. Whether they're staffers who have come from the advocacy community or career civil servants, they share a knowledge and commitment. An advocate may bring an understanding of community politics to the task in order to help projects overcome objections, or may know the ins and outs of bureaucratic procedure and thus can develop effective rules that others will follow after they're gone. In this last realm, the development of new street design standards in places like New York form not only the basis for lasting change at the local level but also a platform that other cities can adopt.

All three of these elements, the report concludes, are essential to producing durable reform. The report notes how the lack of all three elements kept Pittsburgh from fully realizing the reform goals of Mayor Tom Murphy or taking maximum advantage of a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation grant program that encouraged regional cooperation on land use and transportation planning.



However, even cities like Pittsburgh have benefited and will continue to benefit from the new approaches to urban transportation put in place elsewhere. Organizations like the National Association of City Transportation Officials are producing manuals and design standards that upend the auto-above-all-else approaches that continue to dominate thinking at both the state and federal levels.

In another 30 years or so, city residents may come to take for granted the pedestrian- and bike-friendly practices and designs now taking hold in today's cities. If so, they will have this triad of activists, elected leaders, and bureaucrats to thank.

The Works is made possible with the support of the Surdna Foundation, <http://www.surdna.org>. This article was originally published in *Next City*, July 31, 2015, at <http://bit.ly/1K0667t>. Republished with permission.

Philadelphia freelance writer Sandy Smith runs the Philly Living Blog (<http://bit.ly/1K06a7g>) for Noah Ostroff & Associates, a Philadelphia real estate brokerage. A veteran journalist with nearly 40 years' experience, Smith writes extensively on transportation, development, and urban issues for several media outlets, including *Philadelphia* magazine online. ■

Where in the world?



Photo by Jonathan Schuppert, AICP. (Answer on page 15.)

"Choice is the key to a high-functioning transit system. ... Uber is a seductive topic — cars delivered to your door at the tap of a screen have become metonym (<http://bit.ly/1GShShT>) for a forward-looking, prosperous city. But it's the wrong conversation. It's time to talk about a robust ecosystem of mobility options and stop fixating on one multi-billion dollar company's beguilingly easy rides."
—Ariella Cohen, Editor-in-Chief, *Next City*

This is often called China's Silicon Valley. Most things seem very new, and it is obvious that a lot of planning thought has gone into much of the place. Already the most expensive city in mainland China, Shenzhen mimics Silicon Valley in terms of real estate prices and living costs. Rents in the densely populated area nearest the Hong Kong SAR border have nearly doubled in the past year.

Although growth has slowed, the whole city feels like a construction site. I hear the pounding of equipment everywhere. Just looking out the window, I can see 10 cranes for buildings of 30+ stories.

The subway is the most modern I've ever ridden. It has more than 100 stops on five lines, and three more lines will be completed in the next few years. The major streets have wide divided sidewalks with one side for bicycles and the other for pedestrians, but people don't always use the correct side. Electric bikes are very common (gas powered motorbikes are illegal).

In a park in the middle of the city, you can climb to the top of a big hill and see a huge statue of Deng Xiao Ping. Nice views from the park, of course. But shopping is the biggest tourist draw here. Lots of shiny new shopping malls look like they could have been cut and pasted from the US (except they have very small parking areas, and those are underground).



Dong Men Shopping District. Here, 10 to 20 minutes east of Kingkey 100, are international department stores, restaurants of all flavors, and a catacomb-like area of smaller stores (many selling knock-offs).

There is little else here to attract western tourists. Shenzhen is mostly thought of as a place to make money. There is little of what one would typically associate with Chinese culture (like temples). And I have yet to see anyone burning the ghost money on the street — something you would commonly see in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or other parts of Southeast Asia. It is easy, though, to find roasted ducks hanging in restaurant windows.

Although this area is generally industrial, a lot of factories have been moving to Vietnam and other places with lower cost labor.

There is quite a black market in smuggled iPhones, baby formula, and other imported things. The school I worked for was near one of the border crossings, and I saw the smugglers bringing things over everyday. They didn't even try to hide what they were doing.



Riad Steven El-Bdour holds a BS in mathematics from UC Davis and a master of urban planning from San Jose State University. In between degrees, he served in the US Army, attended the Defense Language Institute in Monterey for Mandarin, and taught Math in Sacramento and English in Taiwan.

El-Bdour has been living and working in Okinawa and China for the past two years. He can be contacted at relbdour@yahoo.com. ■

"Is New Orleans safe?" Right now the city is safer than it was pre-Katrina, but it's hardly secure, and it's growing more dangerous every day. Even in the face of rising seas, however, it can be made much safer. The state has enough money to start its program, even if it doesn't have nearly enough to continue, much less complete, the necessary work, once the BP settlement runs out. If the city and state focus on the one existential threat they face, New Orleans could have a sustainable future. But if focus dissipates, if politics blocks action, the [city's] 300th anniversary [in 2018] will most likely be the last centennial the city celebrates. —John M. Barry, <http://nyti.ms/1K051wl>

received by many of the public works directors and transportation agency representatives who were the vast majority of city representatives. I'm no longer in that arena, but I suspect that the tension continues.

As virtually every planner (and engineer) knows, planning culture and engineering culture are very different. Each has its strengths and weaknesses and we professionals need to work very closely together to ensure appropriate community growth. But, as I have observed over three decades as a planner, community development director, and consultant, planners and engineers have a hard time talking to and understanding one another. We all know the stereotype pie-in-the-sky planner who prepares plans that can't be implemented, and the rigid engineer focused on standards and specifications to the detriment of community design. From experience I know how challenging and dysfunctional that relationship can be. And while there are many exceptions to the stereotypes, there really is a gulf between our two cultures.

Bridging that gulf requires a major and ongoing effort from both sides. When we work together and take what is best from both points of view, we arrive at plans — and ultimately developments — that achieve our mutual goal of well designed, functioning communities.

Which brings me to MTC, the “super transportation agency” for the Bay Area. If MTC absorbs the land use planning function, how will it bridge the gulf between the two cultures and make land use planning an equal partner in the process? How will it ensure that planners will continue to do what we do best: coordinate and integrate the messy and always challenging public and political process to create a coherent vision? How can MTC ensure that planning does not become a small cog in the transportation development/funding machine that has been MTC?

In other words, before there is a final decision on where the Bay Area's regional planning function will reside, we need to know:

- What exactly will be the role of the land use planning function within MTC? How will MTC ensure that Plan Bay Area in its future iterations is about land use and that the plan is grounded in a vision of a sustainable future?
- How will MTC ensure the continued engagement of the many stakeholders and wide range of issues involved in preparing a land use plan for the Bay Area? The plan must be about both “in-commuting” and displacement.
- Why does MTC believe the land use planning role can be better accomplished within the structure of MTC rather than continue as a more independent function through ABAG?
- Should our regional leaders be pressing the legislature to finally create the unified agency that has eluded the Bay Area, unlike every other metropolitan area in California? A unified agency would then be a conjoining of land use and transportation rather than one absorbing the other.

I fully support better institutional integration of the land use and transportation planning functions (and the other regional planning functions and organizations) in the Bay Area. The issue is not whether we get there, but how we get there, and how we ensure that land use planning — and the long term vision that our profession is charged with setting forth — continues to be the driving force in the Bay Area's planning future.

Dan Marks is the former director of planning and development for the City of Berkeley and is currently a special advisor to Management Partners, a local government management consulting firm.

Northern News provides a forum for communication and exchange of information about planning related matters. Opinions expressed above are solely those of the author. Comments are welcome. Email the editor, knoxnaph@gmail.com, or contact the author at dan@dansmarks.com. ■

How dirty is your city? “A team of Yale University environmental researchers just released a map tool that shows concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) across the whole world in pretty astounding detail: each pixel represents a 10-by-10 kilometer square. The map draws from satellite measurements to calculate average particulate matter. Users can also toggle on citywide PM 2.5 counts, which come from the WHO's ambient (outdoor) *air pollution in cities* database from 2014.” (Julian Spector, <http://bit.ly/1DOJGsS>) [Here, from the map, are some PM 2.5 readings in micrograms per cubic meter for a few California cities: Riverside 21, Los Angeles 20, Fresno 45, Salinas 6, Santa Clara County and San Francisco 10. —Ed.]

Plan for Success — Take a course from UC Davis Extension this summer

APA Members: Get a 10 percent discount on UC Davis Extension courses

APA California members receive a 10 percent discount on most Land Use and Natural Resources courses at UC Davis Extension. You can earn **AICP | CM** credits, stay up to date on the new policies, laws, and practices, and learn from experts in the field. If you are registering online please use code: **APA2016**.

Financial Aspects of Planning

Gain an understanding of how planning decisions impact the economic feasibility of a proposed project for the public agency and developer. Learn how money flows into a governmental agency, what they can or can't do to increase that flow, and how debt fits into the whole equation.

Instructors: Russ Branson, Michael Coleman, Stephen Des Jardins, John Sprague, and David Zehnder. **AICP | CM 28.0**

Held in San Francisco – Land Use Planning for Non-planners: An Introduction to Planning in California

Drawing on years of experience, instructors cover the intricacies of planning, translate the jargon, and explain how state and local planning practices and policies are developed and how they impact all aspects of our lives. Learn how to more effectively participate in planning processes and how to understand the impacts of the complex legal issues associated with both land use and environmental planning. Instructors: Vivian Kahn, FAICP, and Thomas Jacobson, FAICP.

Online Tools for Community Engagement and Communication in Planning

Learn the benefits, drawbacks, and best practices of online community engagement. Students will leave with the skills to measure the success of an online engagement program in order to continuously improve outreach strategies. Instructor: Nora DeCuir. **AICP | CM 6.0**

Vested Rights, Vesting Maps, and Development Agreements

Development agreements are an effective avenue for a community and developer to come together and process a project. Learn the legislative and judicial aspects of development agreements.

Instructors: Steven Rudolph and William Abbott. **AICP | CM 6.0**

Updating Transportation Analysis in CEQA: How to Effectively Implement SB 743

Materials presented will explain the key differences between VMT and LOS, provide an overview of VMT calculation methodologies, and give examples of the factors to consider in developing significance thresholds. Instructors: Chris Ganson, Christopher Calfee, and Ron Milam. **AICP | CM 6.0**

For course details and to enroll, visit www.extension.ucdavis.edu/land

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

Seoul, South Korea. Seoul Tower and Namsan seen from Bukchon Hanok village.

Photo: Jonathan Schuppert, AICP.

Cities change. “I know that the San Francisco I came here for was only a brief moment in the life of the city, and I know that cities are always changing. I also know that something new is emerging, and I plan to be here to find out what it is. Perhaps we are witnessing the birth of a new hybrid culture, drawing on aspects of the city's earlier radicalism and a youth culture focused on business innovation — a fusion of the counter culture and Silicon Valley.” —Gabriel Metcalf, <http://bit.ly/1VGbFAI>

Long article about Bay Area sea level rise is worth reading

San Francisco Public Press, July 29, 2015

Kevin Stark, Winifred Bird, and Michael Stoll, <http://bit.ly/1Hd93iP> • “San Francisco Bay is virtually guaranteed to rise several feet in coming decades. But that has not deterred real estate developers from proposing and building new homes and offices in bayfront areas that current climate change predictions show could flood by century’s end.

“Land-use records reveal that the building boom is moving too fast for regulators to keep pace. Most cities and regional agencies have not yet adopted tools to address flooding in areas where thousands of acres are threatened by sea level rise.

“Developers are planning or currently building at least 27 major commercial and residential complexes around the bay on land lower than 8 feet above high tide. And more than a dozen Bay Area cities continue to issue permits for plans that address future flood risks vaguely, if at all.

“In many areas new development includes desperately needed housing. Projects now in the pipeline in San Francisco would add 25,000 new apartments. On Treasure Island alone, developers are ready to break ground on a forest of residential towers that could house 12,000 people.

“A few local governments, including Mountain View, are beginning to spend money on sea level rise infrastructure projects that can protect waterfront business districts.

“San Francisco is in its second year of interdepartmental planning to address sea rise. But the city has yet to update its flood plain ordinance or planning and building codes to address increasing flood risk.”

Caltrain electrification approved

KRON 4, July 30, 2015

Bay City News, <http://bit.ly/1UBXQSZ> • “The Bay Area Air Quality Management District board has approved \$20 million in funding for a Caltrain electrification project expected to greatly reduce emissions and allow for expanded passenger service. The funding, to be paid out in installments over the next several years, will go toward the electrification of 51 miles of track between San Francisco and San Jose and the replacement of Caltrain’s 29 diesel locomotives with electric models. The project will allow Caltrain to increase service from the current 92 trains a day to 114 a day, taking additional cars off the road, while reducing emissions by up to 97 percent by 2040. Caltrain also expects to reduce fuel use by an estimated 3.4 million gallons a year. The \$1.53 billion project still needs \$430 million in additional funding the agency is working to secure from state and federal sources later this year.

“Caltrain has seen ridership, which was at 58,000 boardings a day as of February, increase 71 percent in the past five years. Projections show boardings could exceed 100,000 a day by 2040 with the new electrified system in place. Funding for the \$20 million grant to Caltrain comes from a \$2 per vehicle motor vehicle registration surcharge collected by the air district. The California High-Speed Rail Authority has committed more than \$700 million to the Caltrain electrification project, and the electrified system is designed to be compatible with high-speed rail.”

Oakland sued over public art ordinance

California Land Use & Development Law Report, July 30, 2015

Geoffrey Robinson, <http://bit.ly/1Hd4pS3> • “The Building Industry Association of the Bay Area has filed a lawsuit in federal court in the Northern District of California challenging the City of Oakland’s recent adoption of a public art ordinance on constitutional grounds.

“The challenged Ordinance (<http://bit.ly/1Hd4XHA>) requires developers to install art works (worth at least ½ percent of the total cost of residential projects or 1 percent of commercial projects) as part of their developments, using artists approved by the City. Builders may opt out of the public art requirement only if they pay an in-lieu fee to the City to be used to fund installation of publicly owned art on City property.

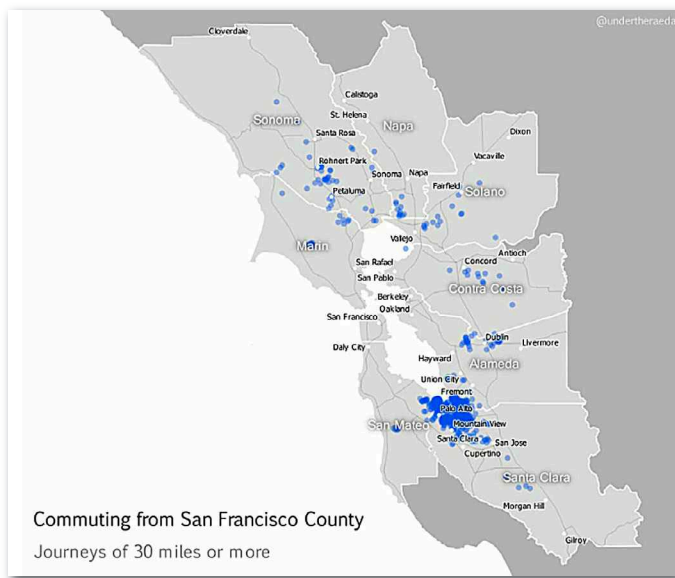
“BIA’s complaint in the case (filed July 23rd, at <http://bit.ly/1Hd4OE0>) contends that the Ordinance’s requirements violate the Fifth Amendment by imposing exactions that do not have a sufficient nexus to an identifiable adverse impact of development, and thereby amount to unconstitutional conditions. The lawsuit also claims that the Ordinance’s requirement that developers install art works as part of their projects, and that such art be approved by the City, violates their rights to free expression under the First Amendment. BIA seeks an injunction preventing implementation of the Ordinance.”

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

How do you map a city with no center?

CityMetric, July 28, 2015

Alasdair Rae, <http://bit.ly/1MySqX3> • Commuting patterns in the San Francisco Bay area: An animated cartographic “look at commuting flows of 30 miles or more between census tracts in the nine counties of the Bay Area, from Sonoma County in the north to Santa Clara County in the south.” Simply put, “the commuting patterns in the Bay Area — a metro area of around 7.5 million people — resemble a nexus of mega-commuting.” Dr. Alasdair Rae is a senior lecturer in the geography department of the University of Sheffield.



SF Chinatown, facing tech boom, clings to roots

NBC Bay Area, July 25, 2015

Associated Press, <http://bit.ly/1P5vzQv> • “For a century and a half, San Francisco’s Chinatown, the nation’s oldest, has sheltered waves of immigrants seeking a new life. It’s the birthplace of Chinese America, and to some extent, the broader Asian America that descended from immigration over the Pacific Ocean throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, Chinatown faces powerful economic and demographic challenges that could upend its identity as the city undergoes an unprecedented growth in tech jobs.

“Rising rent elsewhere in the city has entrepreneurs eyeing Chinatown for offices, entertainment, and housing. A \$1.6 billion subway set to open in 2019 could provide an economic boost, bringing customers from outside while taking residents out to jobs. But speedier transit also brings added development pressures, especially in a pocket of the city coveted for its location.

“Some civic leaders say traditional values and zoning regulations should protect the neighborhood of 15,000 to 18,000 people against too much development. Plus, they say, who would want to put a tech startup company in an older building without elevators or commercial janitorial service?

“Take 1920c, a fledgling co-sharing business launched in April, which offers work space to freelancers and to socially conscious startups. The influential Chinatown Community Development Center protested the business, saying its use violates zoning laws, which allows for retail and restaurants and certain professional services. Gen Fujioka, the center’s policy director, said the neighborhood ‘is not intended for tech offices.’”

Bay Area traffic woes: Warriors’ arena edition

San Francisco Chronicle, July 26, 2015

Matier & Ross, <http://bit.ly/1hyriL2> • “Most of the debate over the Warriors’ proposed arena has centered around car congestion in Mission Bay, but the city’s environmental impact report also raises the specter of ‘significant and unavoidable’ traffic impacts all the way to the Bay Bridge.

“According to the report, the 60-plus ‘peak’ events a year at the arena — basketball games, concerts and the like — could draw more than 3,000 additional cars into the area. Most would be rolling in between 6 and 8 pm. That would amount to an extra 1,000 cars coming over the Bay Bridge and another 1,000 driving up Interstate 280 and Highway

101 — all converging on Mission Bay. The result will likely be ‘a significant impact’ on as many as 11 key intersections in the South of Market, according to the environmental impact report.

“It will also mean ‘significant and unavoidable’ backups on the already heavily used downtown freeway ramps at Fifth and Harrison and Fifth and Bryant streets, as well as on the ramps coming off I-280. The report also concluded that ‘no feasible mitigations are available’ to ease the problem — at least from an infrastructure standpoint — because there’s no room to widen the freeway ramps or city streets.”

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

Silicon Valley meets Salinas Valley

KAZU Monterey, July 28, 2015

Krist Almanzan, <http://bit.ly/1IrgAvk> • “The new Taylor Farms building anchors downtown Salinas. It’s a company built on three generations of farming, a fixture in the Salinas Valley; but perhaps just as important to the future of this region is what happened recently in the temporary tent set up just out front: Forbes’ ‘Reinventing America: The AgTech Summit’ (<http://bit.ly/1IrhF6o>), a gathering of farmers, entrepreneurs, and investors [and] a coming together of the Salinas Valley and Silicon Valley.

“Silicon Valley is interested in the farm sector. Investment in ag tech rose from \$900 million in 2013 to \$2.25 billion in 2014 and is expected to hit \$4.2 billion this year. To get in on that, entrepreneurs need to be where the farmers are.

“That means understanding the needs of people like Bruce Taylor, CEO of Taylor Farms — the company with the new building downtown. It produces bagged salads and fresh-cut vegetables. He says the industry is looking for all sorts of solutions, from ways to reduce pesticides to dealing with the labor shortage.

“The new Taylor Farms building will [house] a new Center for Innovation and Technology, to be run by the Western Growers Association. It will be a place where ag tech entrepreneurs can find mentorship from the farm industry and make contact with potential investors.

“Silicon Valley will have a permanent home in the Salinas Valley when the innovation center opens in September.”



The newly opened Taylor Farms building in downtown Salinas as it appeared early in January. Photo courtesy Belli Architectural Group, Salinas.

Transforming Treasure Island with public art

KQED, July 21, 2015

Sarah Hotchkiss, <http://bit.ly/1KksLRb> • “The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) hopes to draw locals and tourists alike to Treasure Island — and not just for its views. Its population will swell from about 2,000 residents to an estimated 19,000, it will gain a ferry station, up to 500 hotel rooms, and, perhaps most remarkably, \$50 million in public art. The SFAC’s Public Art Trust and Special Initiatives will manage pooled funds from the development’s one percent for art fee, the city’s mandate that a building project expend one percent of the construction cost towards public art. Treasure Island will host a deeply considered and generously budgeted public art program, all sited on publicly accessible open space.

“For Tom DeCaigny, the SFAC’s director of cultural affairs, the Treasure Island development project isn’t just about ‘placemaking’ — a buzzword in the world of urban planning — but, rather, ‘placekeeping.’ SFAC’s arts master plan will pinpoint sites for activation and detail a three-year schedule to jump-start a longer-term process. The city’s decision to consider public art alongside street parking and building setbacks represents a very different understanding of what it takes to build a thriving urban community. In this context, public art is cultural cachet for residents, tourists, and the city itself. And for Treasure Island, it means yet another costume change in its eight decade history — this time, from being in the wings to taking center stage.” ■

California roundup

Excerpts from articles around the state, with links to the originals

'California's severe housing crisis – supply too low, prices too high'

The Sacramento Bee, August 8, 2015

Dan Walters, <http://bit.ly/1UzKegP> • “The state’s population is still growing, albeit slowly, and as it adds about 350,000 bodies each year, it needs at least 150,000 new units of housing to keep pace. [But h]ousing construction, as high as 213,000 units in 2004, plummeted to 36,000 in 2009. It now approaches 100,000 units, mostly rental apartments, but that’s still well short of demand.

“Therefore, the demand-supply gap still widens, particularly in coastal areas. Many coastal communities are very hostile to new projects they see as generating more traffic and other environmental effects.

“During the 2010–14 period, for example, Los Angeles County’s population grew by nearly a quarter-million, but it added fewer than 40,000 housing units. During the same period, San Francisco, despite its geographic limitations, grew by nearly 50,000, but built fewer than 10,000 housing units. The obvious solution would be to build more housing.

“California politicians ... may be inclined to force developers to set aside some of their new units for sale or rent at below-market prices. About 200 cities already have some form of ‘inclusionary housing’ to require set-asides. Their use has increased because housing money no longer flows from redevelopment.

“At best, given the overall low rate of housing construction, such laws have only a tiny impact on the vicious supply-demand-cost circle. And they could ... even discourage development” (as Gov. Brown suggested two years ago when he vetoed AB 1229, <http://bit.ly/1Kf1b2E>).

Santa Barbara will start up 1990s desal plant

Next City, July 22, 2015

Jenn Stanley, <http://bit.ly/1JQJPZN> • “With the California drought continuing, officials are looking at a last resort option in Santa Barbara. City Council members approved a \$55 million project to renovate the Charles E. Meyer Desalination Facility, which they hope could provide one-third of the city’s drinking water. According to the *Los Angeles Times* (<http://lat.ms/1JQJZQS>), the plant was built in the early 1990s during a drought, but never made it past the testing period when the rain returned.

“There are downsides to desalination that keep it from being a preferred solution in California’s dry times. Turning to the ocean as a water source for cities is energy intensive and expensive, and the environmental costs are not entirely known.”

An eco-friendly development is an unexpected effect of the drought

NPR, July 29, 2015

Ezra David Romero, <http://n.pr/1IRbTlb> •

“Planning is under way in Reedley, 20 miles southeast of Fresno, for one of the first eco-friendly communities in California’s Central Valley. The town is home to a community college and a thriving downtown, recently said no to Wal-Mart, and just updated their general plan.

“On 40 acres that used to be peach and plum trees, Kings River Village sits near the edge of town and has a view of the Sierra Nevada. Modern-looking low-income housing sits on one side, and a sports park on the other.

“This development is a big deal for a farm town of 26,000 in California. It will run on solar power and will feature small, drought-resistant yards in line with new state regulations. There will also be a system for treating and sending wastewater back into the aquifer underneath the city.

“Not everyone is convinced the development will use less water. A local water district is suing Reedley over the development’s environmental review, questioning whether the new community will actually help restore the aquifer underneath the city.

“The developer of Kings River Village believes that the environmentally conscious community is a win for the region, because change isn’t always adopted so quickly in places like Reedley. The Reedley City Council approved the plan on April 28, and the project is under environmental review. The developer hopes to break ground in 2016.” *Ed. Note: You can view a 3:30 flyover video at <http://bit.ly/1Uf68zr>.*

(California continues on next page)

A capital slide show. CNN recently published 13 stunning photos of Astana, Kazakhstan, which, according to CNN, “has become the self-appointed home of futuristic architecture in recent years.” (<http://cnn.it/1KE37nR>) According to Wikipedia, Astana means ‘the capital’ in Kazakh. A planned city with a 2014 population around 835,000, it is the second largest city in Kazakhstan. It is located in central Kazakhstan in a very flat, semi-arid steppe, at an elevation of 1,138 feet. Astana is the second coldest capital city in the world, a position formerly held by Ottawa. (Wikipedia, <http://bit.ly/1JzCp16>)

The American city that fell in love with the bicycle

The Guardian, August 3, 2015

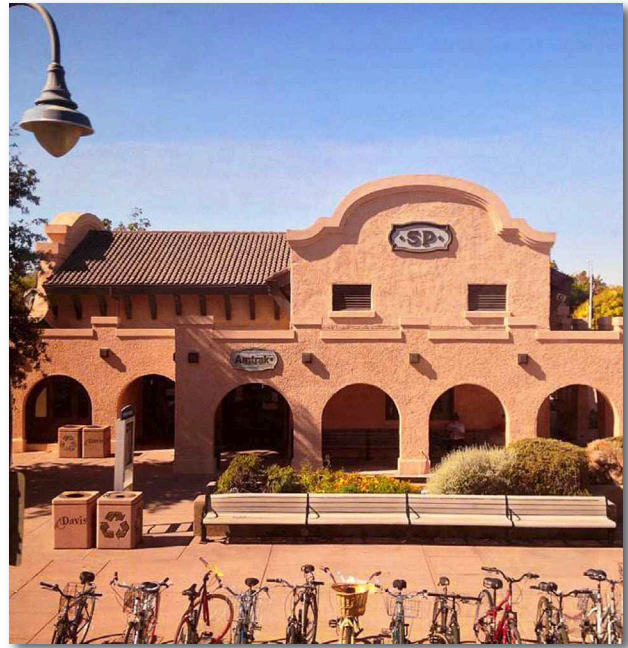
Carlton Reid, <http://bit.ly/1hiFisf> • “The university city of Davis is in thrall to the bicycle: people dot around on bikes. There are bike paths on the campus and in the city. In most American cities, the modal share for cycling struggles to reach 2 percent; in Davis it’s 20 percent (25 percent is the average modal share for cycling in the Netherlands).

“The cycling infrastructure was commissioned by Emil Mrak, who, in 1959, was made chancellor of the University of California–Davis, which was to be expanded from a student population of 2,000. The bicycle-loving chancellor directed architects to ‘plan for a bicycle-riding, tree-lined campus.’

“Car-use was restricted on campus, with drop-down barriers and a ban on student car ownership still in force. Bicycle routes were striped on the roads to the downtown core.

“Today, 98 percent of the main streets in Davis have some form of bicycle provision. Cycle use is highest on the campus, with 50 percent modal share.

“Cycling’s modal share in the city of Davis dropped to 14 percent in 2007, the slack taken up by car and public bus use. But this could be about to change. A reinvigorated campaign group has been working hard to elevate the profile of cycling in the city and on the campus. The next mayor is a bicycle activist, and he takes office in 2016.



Amtrak Station, Davis. Photo, Juan Borrelli, AICP

“Earl Bossard, an urban-planning professor at San Jose State University and a Davis resident since 1986, says Davis is starting to think big. It [knows] it will have to up the ante if it truly wants to increase cycling’s modal share.”

‘Snapchat tech titans are harshing the mellow in Venice Beach’

The Washington Post, August 10, 2015

Rob Kuznia, <http://wapo.st/1WjGEmH> • “For decades, Venice has been the epicenter of weird. Now, thanks to real estate speculators and a tech boom featuring the likes of Google and Snapchat, Venice’s mellow charm is under siege.

“As skyrocketing real estate prices push longtime residents out, corporate chains are replacing funky shops, and tech geeks are emerging as a dominant part of the scene. Meanwhile, the area’s already robust homeless population is rising.

“Similar trends are transforming much of coastal California. But in bohemian Venice, the shake-up has been particularly upsetting. Snapchat’s presence here has swollen from 14 employees to 200 in two years, expanding this spring into office buildings throughout the densely populated, three-square-mile hamlet. One building near the beach spans an entire block.

“The main thoroughfare, Abbot Kinney Boulevard, has been transformed from a lineup of artisan shops and antique stores to a ritzy outdoor mall of upscale corporate brands.

“Residential bungalows are also being emptied and flipped to highflying investors, many from overseas. In five years, the median home price has surged from \$832,000 to \$1.4 million.

“Rents have also skyrocketed. Intensifying the housing squeeze is Airbnb, the sharing-economy app that enables people to rent out houses and apartments to short-term visitors (i.e., tourists).

“As a district of Los Angeles, Venice has no mayor, city council, or police force. It has just one elected local official, Los Angeles City Councilman Mike Bonin.”

(California continues on next page)

Can normal people with normal incomes live in our towns?

CP&DR, July 27, 2015

William Fulton, <http://bit.ly/1Sj3OtR> • “The solution isn’t easy — or, at least, it isn’t simple. Yes, you need to build way more new housing than we’ve done in California. But that housing needs to come in more types, forms, and even tenures than we have seen in a long time. Yes, some needs to be market-rate — but we need to recognize that this will be snapped up by highly successful folks and won’t necessarily bring about market equilibrium. Yes, some needs to be subsidized — but we need to recognize that we will never build enough affordable housing and so therefore to some extent we are creating housing for lucky lottery winners.

“Maybe most important, we need to build — and, more important, be politically accepting of — a wide variety of housing types. Apartments of all sizes. Duplexes and triplexes. Micro-units. Even boarding houses, which will allow urban singles to live more cheaply and comfortably than they do now.

“The growth control policies in coastal California began when everybody lived in a single-family house and most NIMBYs (and even environmentalists) believed that less was better. The solution today is not simply to restrict supply to preserve a neighborhood’s character, because [this] will strangle our cities — and our emerging middle-class. Nor is it to let the private market loose, because this will turn the cities over to the uber-rich. The solution is both-and. We have to do everything we can.”

Fresno County hopes to purchase land for HSR maintenance facility

The Fresno Bee, August 2, 2015

Tim Sheehan, <http://bit.ly/1JPK37A> • “Fresno County leaders and the California High-Speed Rail Authority are forging ahead with plans for facilities to support the state’s bullet-train line through the central San Joaquin Valley, with some important steps toward developing passenger stations and a major maintenance station potentially being taken by the end of this year.

“In late July, The Fresno County Council of Governments gave an informal green light to a plan to advance \$750,000 from Measure C transportation sales tax money to reimburse a local developer for buying options on the property needed for a proposed site for a heavy maintenance facility. Such a facility, which would serve as a central work site for assembling, testing, and maintaining electric train sets for the statewide high-speed rail system, is coveted by Valley communities as an economic golden goose. [The facility would bring] an estimated 1,500 jobs and attract rail-related support industries to the region.”

“Renewed competition from Kern County is inspiring the request from Fresno COG for the Measure C money. There’s a concern that Kern County, back with a site that’s under one ownership, might put Fresno at a competitive disadvantage.

“As Fresno County moves to shore up its chances for the maintenance facility, the rail authority anticipates that it may issue a request by the end of the year for contractors to submit proposals for the development of passenger stations in Fresno, Hanford, Merced, and Bakersfield.”

San Diego BRT isn’t rapid

Voice of San Diego, July 20, 2015

Zoe Schaver, <http://bit.ly/1ONQh7W> • “El Cajon Boulevard has a ways to go before it becomes the transit corridor planners envision. Now close to a year old, the Mid-City Rapid 215 isn’t much faster than the regular bus it replaced, even while the boulevard community undergoes a development boom.

“The Rapid project, which took a decade to develop, was meant to follow the bus rapid transit, or BRT, model. Initial plans promised a dedicated lane for buses and transit stops with ticketing machines that would speed up the boarding process. Instead, it has a dedicated lane for a short stretch, but shares the road with other cars for most of its route.

“The other four routes in the Metropolitan Transit System’s BRT network are significantly more reliable [and]

stay on schedule 89 to 96 percent of the time. [But] community pushback kept the Rapid 215 from getting its own lane.

“A traffic engineer for the transportation consultant said El Cajon Boulevard could support a dedicated lane for transit. The boulevard has the capacity to carry up to 50,000 vehicles per day but now carries only about 21,000, [and] cars can easily get up to 40 mph and above. [At that speed,] people feel unsafe, so they’re less likely to walk to and from the transit stops.

“If we want transit to get more popular, we can’t allow transit access to be a death-defying experience, said the active transportation director at City Heights Community Development Corporation.” ■

U.S. roundup

Excerpts from articles around the country, with links to the originals

What's behind the home rental boom?

Time.com/Money, August 6, 2015

Bob Sullivan, <http://ti.me/1J0Cdcu> • “Homeownership is on the decline around the country — a trend begun during the Great Recession that has not changed during the recovery. The Census Bureau reported last month that the share of homeowners in America dropped to its lowest level since 1967.

“This is not good news for renters. The more competition for rental units, the higher the prices. Zillow reported recently that rental prices were up 4.3 percent in June year over year. Rent increases are far outpacing wage increases.

“When rents rise like this, renters normally turn to purchasing homes. Mortgages offer one clear advantage over renting: fixed monthly payments. But housing prices are rising in many markets too, and the for-sale inventory is shrinking, meaning there aren't many home bargains out there.

“One hidden consequence of the housing bubble burst is 3.2 million more American households rent their single-family home, rather than owning — a figure that accounts for nearly half the jump in all rentals post-recession.

“[Meanwhile,] hot housing markets are a big target for investors — contributing to rising prices and rents. Investor activity continues to represent a disproportionately high share of all home sales activity in this housing recovery.”

Private firm seeks highway air rights to build Minnesota HSR line

Next City, August 4, 2015

August 4, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1DJuHQV> • “The Rochester Post-Bulletin (<http://bit.ly/1DJveT3>) reports that the North American High Speed Rail Group is seeking the exclusive right to lease highway air space from MnDOT for two years to determine the project's feasibility and line up private investors.

“The private line closely follows MnDOT's proposed ‘Zip Rail’ high-speed line, but would employ dramatically different technology at a cost of \$4.2 billion. One-third of that cost — \$1.4 billion — would come from Chinese investors.

“If built, the line would cover the 84 miles between Rochester and Bloomington [which abuts the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport on the south] in as little as 29 minutes using trains running at speeds up to 260 miles an hour. A Republican state legislator quoted in the story decried what he called covert behavior by government, but a Democratic-Farmer-Labor representative said she was willing to let the company give it its best shot.”

Memorable streets draw more pedestrians

Next City, August 3, 2015

Josh Cohen, <http://bit.ly/1M7UPb6> • “Decades of modern urban design have given us a pretty decent idea of what makes streets attractive for people. Now, a study published in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* attempts to further quantify streetscapes to determine which design elements are bringing the crowds and which are just corollary.

“For the article, ‘Streetscape Features Related to Pedestrian Activity,’ <http://bit.ly/1M7VfhK>, a group of researchers measured 20 streetscape features — such as plazas, historic buildings, long sightlines, street furniture, windows, building color — and conducted pedestrian counts on 588 blocks in New York City to try and determine what it is about a given street that attracts people. The authors put those features into five broader categories: imageability (how memorable a street is),

enclosure (the degree to which buildings enclosing the street make it feel room-like), human scale, transparency (the proportion of first-floor windows), and complexity.

“They controlled for the standard ‘D’ variables of urban design: density, diversity (number of different land uses in a given area), destination accessibility, and demographics.

“In the end, [the researchers] found that only three of the 20 streetscape features had a positive impact on pedestrian activity: the proportion of windows on the street, the amount of ‘active street frontage,’ and the quantity of street furniture. The results help quantify some common-sense notions about urban design — in this instance, that people want interesting-looking streets at a human scale with places to go.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

Roundabouts spreading across U.S.

The New York Times, July 30, 2015

Eric A. Taub, <http://nyti.ms/1fd9jYH> • “Once seen only in countries like France and Britain, the roundabout, favored by traffic engineers because it cuts congestion and reduces collisions and deaths, is experiencing rapid growth in the United States.

“First built in the United States in the early 1990s, roundabouts have doubled in the last decade, to around 5,000 today, according to Richard Retting, a former transportation researcher at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. ‘There are hundreds if not thousands more in the planning stages,’ he said.

“In New York State, the increase is even more striking. From 18 in 2005, the state now has 112. And New York City is getting its first one this month, when a three-way intersection in the Bronx completes its conversion.

“Compared with stop signs and traffic lights, roundabouts are significantly safer, engineers say. For example, crashes that result in serious injuries or death are reduced by 82 percent versus a two-way stop, and by 78 percent compared with an intersection with traffic lights, according to Jeff Shaw, the intersections program manager for the Federal Highway Administration.



Keene, New Hampshire: Winchester, Main, and Marlboro Streets.

Source: New Hampshire DOT, <http://1.usa.gov/1MEOZgD>

“Mr. Retting of the insurance group said that the reduction in injuries and fatalities was ‘unmatched by anything else we can do in traffic engineering.’

“Community and driver objections are beside the point, said Peter Doctors, a traffic engineer and designer of an early roundabout in Santa Barbara. ‘Even if people are confused about how to use them, they’re still working.’”

Honolulu growing, even as many residents leave

Civil Beat, July 31, 2015

Eric Pape, <http://bit.ly/1DiZHah> • “When it comes to the high cost of living, ... [those who] assert that, if the middle class were under such intense pressure, the islands would be hemorrhaging residents in search of lower prices and higher salaries on the mainland, ... have a point. Plenty of residents are leaving Honolulu County, where more than two-thirds of the state’s population resides. In a 12-month period [according to Bloomberg Business], 0.74 percent of Honolulu’s residents — nearly 7,400 in a population of almost 1 million — moved out of the most expensive metropolitan areas in the nation. Only struggling El Paso and a pair of pricey areas in New York and neighboring Connecticut saw a larger proportion of residents take off.

“[But] Honolulu [is] growing despite net domestic migration. So who compensates for them and boosts the metropolitan population? Some on Oahu can afford median home prices that hover around \$700,000 or market rents, on a basic two-bedroom apartment, of \$1,810. [And] some foreigners — willing to seek out more modest housing arrangements, like cramming more people into a single dwelling — move here to live less well on incomes similar to some of the low-salaried people who depart.

“In the end, Hawaii remains the nation’s most expensive state, Honolulu is one of the least affordable cities for residents, and many locals’ incomes fare terribly in the rental and real estate markets.

“But the view is terrific.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

Seattle booms; City works to cut downtown driving

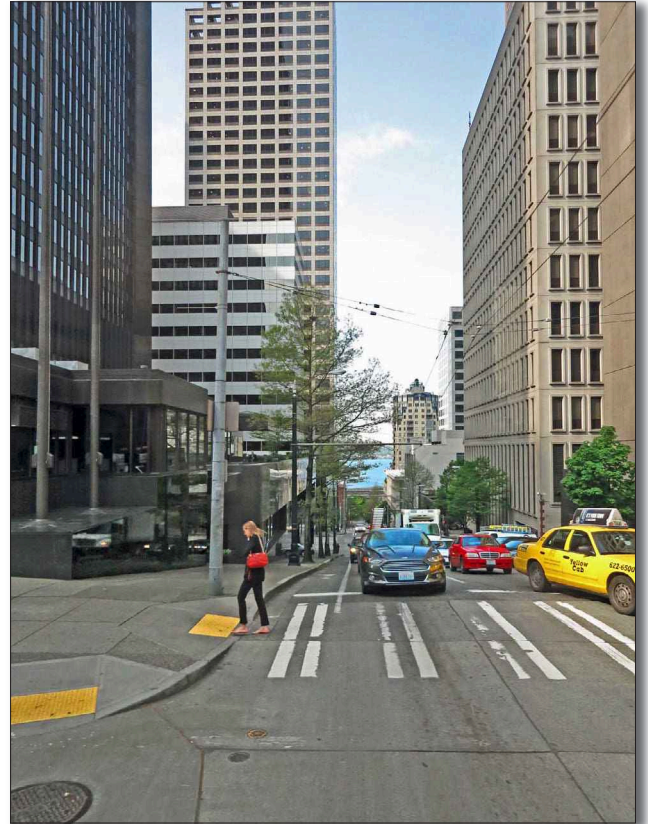
Next City, July 27, 2015

Josh Cohen, <http://bit.ly/1MEJxu7> • “Sometimes it feels like growth is all anyone in Seattle talks about. The city’s exploding population has been a centerpiece of this year’s city council race. Construction cranes dot the horizon. Rarely an evening rush hour goes by without the Google traffic map filling up with the dark-red lines of gridlocked streets. Depending on whom you ask, these are either exciting times in a burgeoning city or a harbinger of a city that will soon be a homogenous playground for the rich.

“The Downtown Seattle Association expects 36 projects to be completed by the end of the year, the largest number in the past decade. The majority of those new projects are residential. Downtown is getting 3,487 new rental units by the end of this year and another 8,500 by the end of 2018. Seattle’s been growing by 14,000–18,000 residents a year for the last few years.

“DSA’s report follows the release of Seattle’s draft 2035 comprehensive plan, <http://bit.ly/1MEJ9M5>. A big piece of the plan’s transportation strategy (<http://bit.ly/1MEJfmM>) is to reduce solo driving for downtown work trips to 25 percent of mode share by 2035 [compared to 31 percent now].

“SDOT is designing a center-city protected bike lane network, <http://bit.ly/1MEJn5X>. Safe bike connections through downtown would be a boon for bicyclists. For those who can’t or won’t bike and walk, last fall’s Prop 1 increased some bus service downtown.”



Downtown Seattle. Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

Atlanta Public Transit to offer free Wi-Fi and partner with Uber

Skift.com, July 26, 2015

Associated Press, <http://bit.ly/1VQCJgR> • “Leaders of Atlanta’s public transit authority say they’re launching a partnership with Uber and offering free Wi-Fi to improve service.

“The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority announced in July that the agency is launching wireless Internet on 50 buses on several routes and is also partnering with Uber to offer passengers opportunities to transfer to private vehicles in areas without train or bus service.

“Wi-Fi is being offered at no cost to customers or the agency because they’re able to power it with unused band-

width from 4G surveillance camera systems aboard MARTA buses. The system was installed in recent years at a cost of roughly \$17.3 million.

“MARTA CEO Keith Parker acknowledges that buses and trains can’t get passengers everywhere they need to go, and Uber can help fulfill passengers’ needs. Parker said the initiatives are part of MARTA’s efforts in finding ways to retain customers as the price of gasoline fluctuates and driving becomes more attractive for some.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

Revised ‘General Plan Guidelines’ for California coming soon. The current general plan guidelines are 12 years old. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research has announced that it hopes to share a public draft of the revised guidelines for review and comment this fall. “Upon that release, we will reach out to invite you all to workshops, meetings, and discussions about the draft. We will also update our website with more information soon, as dates are more concrete.” Meanwhile, you can subscribe to the General Plan Guidelines Listserv at <http://bit.ly/1WjDYou>

Virtually every big American city is less affordable than it once was

Medium.com, July 20, 2015

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

• “Could it be possible that the average American living in a city has actually gotten poorer during the current economic recovery? It may sound crazy, but it’s not — because housing prices have skyrocketed recently while wages have barely budged.

“I first started researching these figures after I posted a couple months ago about leaving the Bay Area — my home for 11 years, with a job I loved as a reporter at the San Jose Mercury News — largely because my girlfriend and I were priced out.

“Since 2011, it’s gotten less affordable to rent a home in 94 percent of the nation’s 50 biggest cities, and less affordable to buy a house in 80 percent of them — even when you factor in wage growth. And averaged across the nation’s 50 biggest cities, since 2011, rent has grown four times faster than incomes, and home prices have shot up more than five times faster than pay.

“The problem is considerably worse in several cities — especially, strangely enough, in places where the economy is booming — with the place going through the worst mess



San Diego

of all: California. Even in Silicon Valley, where it seems new millionaires are minted every day, the average pay increase — tops in the nation — is just a few percentage points more than inflation.” ■

“Making the most of natural assets. In the first decade of this century, Minneapolis completed several award-winning, noteworthy public and institutional buildings in its downtown — the Guthrie Theater, the Walker Art Center addition, the Minneapolis Public Library, MacPhail Music Center, and Mill City Museum, to name just a few. In the second decade, the city has now begun to connect these buildings with equally worthy publicly accessible open spaces, which in the end will have an even greater effect on the experience of everyone who lives, works, or just visits here.” —Thomas Fisher, <http://strib.mn/1Ph8xqN>

Solving global housing, the California commune way. “Europe isn’t alone in its affordable housing crisis — much of the world is struggling. Many people are having to choose between rent and basics like health care. McKinsey estimates that some 350 million households are living in substandard digs, and 60 million households in the developed world are financially over-stretched. In Europe, the recent financial crisis has had devastating effects on housing affordability on the continent. The Czech Republic weathered the crisis better than some other European countries. But youth unemployment almost doubled from 2007 to 2010, to 18 percent; now it’s plateaued at 15 percent. A 2013 survey suggests that some three-quarters of Prague residents cannot find housing at a reasonable price. Which is why a place like Klinika, a big building with the Czech word for ‘freedom’ on the front door that blends in well with the semi-eroding rest of the neighborhood, is so appealing to some.” —Nathan Siegel, <http://bit.ly/1hrXboq>

World roundup

Excerpts from articles around the world, with links to the originals

'China eyes world-class utility tunnel system by 2020'

China Daily Europe, August 11, 2015

Xinhua, <http://bit.ly/1MiZ2HI> • "China aims to build a world-class utility tunnel network by 2020 to improve urban planning and achieve quality growth, according to the State Council, China's cabinet. The tunnels will help solve the problems of 'road zippers' and 'overhead spider webs' according to a guideline issued by the State Council.

"Road zippers are ditches that are often dug for repair and installation work, and which disrupt traffic and local life. The spider webs are the unsightly power lines and telecommunications cables.

"Water and heating cables, as well as well as sewerage pipes, and telecommunications and television cables, will all be laid underground.

"While improving city life, the projects are expected to help stimulate investment and create new growth momentum, the State Council said.

"Underground infrastructure is the common weakness of Chinese cities despite their fancy and glimmering images from the outside. In cases of extreme downpours, many cities are easily flooded that trigger widespread public mockery and anger."

Beijing needs proper urban planning

China Daily, Opinion, August 10, 2015

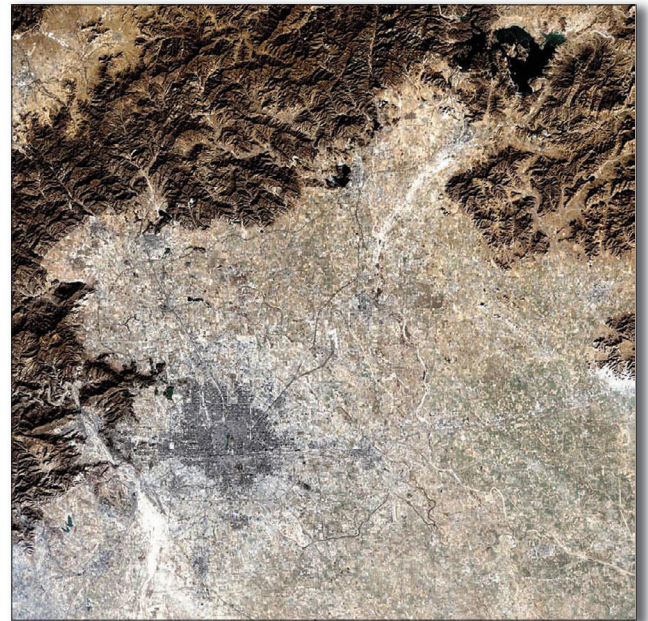
Zhao Jian, <http://bit.ly/1MiZYvB> • "To focus on its role as China's capital and shift some non-capital functions from the city center, Beijing has decided to make its Tongzhou district [20 km SE of the core] a 'subsidiary administrative center.'

"But it is doubtful whether Tongzhou can prove to be a permanent cure for Beijing's dense population that is testing its urban infrastructure.

"What is really wrong with Beijing's urban planning is the lack of infrastructure, especially transport. Although it is home to at least 20 million people, Beijing has only about 527 kilometers of subways — way less than Tokyo's more than 2,500 km and New York's 3,342 km. As a constantly expanding metropolis, Beijing needs more than 2,000 km of subway lines and rapid bus transit lanes. Unfortunately, Beijing's focus has been on road transport to facilitate real estate development.

"Sky-high property prices in Beijing in recent years have curbed the increase in its population. On the other hand, the uneven distribution of local inhabitants has dealt a blow to Beijing's healthy development. The population density in four of Beijing's six districts (with a total area of 92 sq. km) with core capital functions is 23,758 people per sq. km, while in the other two districts, Haidian and Chaoyang (1,276 sq. km), it is just over 7,900 people per sq. km.

"Given these facts, a subsidiary administrative center has to



Beijing. Landsat satellite image, NASA, Feb. 2006

be an integral part of Beijing's comprehensive urban planning, not a temporary plan to accommodate some of its residents."

(World continues on next page)

Maps show Amsterdam's many faces

The Guardian, July 30, 2015

George Arnett, <http://bit.ly/1M80spG> • “Maps of cities are great. By visualising information about a place you can see geographical patterns that can yield dozens of insights.

“The city of Amsterdam clearly agrees. The municipal authority has put together a collection of about 70 maps of the capital of the Netherlands.

“The batch of cartography covers everything from the city’s solar panels to its Airbnb prices and even the breeding grounds of swifts, sparrows, and starlings.

“The collection was started by Klaas-Bindert de Haan, a mapping specialist who has worked for the city of Amsterdam for 15 years. He says the maps are not just used by interested citizens but also by colleagues looking at city planning and sustainability.

“A neat feature is the ability to choose up to three maps to display alongside one another. You can then see, for example, current house prices alongside the parts of the city that were attacked during the second world war.

“While the majority of the maps on the site are produced by the municipal authority itself, there are some external ones featured. These include an animation showing the development of the city’s canal system over the course of the 17th century.

“And one of the most intriguing maps on the site is another animation, showing the development of Amsterdam over time. It uses the ages of different buildings to show how the city swelled rapidly after 1860.”

Interactive kaarten van Amsterdam, <http://bit.ly/1M7Zkm6>

What caused an ‘insane’ building boom in Stone Age Britain?

National Geographic, August 6, 2015

Roff Smith, <http://bit.ly/1JPG9vs> • “The sheer size of Marden Henge makes it hard to notice from the ground, even when you’re standing in the middle of it. It appears to be nothing more than peaceful, undulating farmland. But 4,500 years ago this was a bustling showpiece of Neolithic engineering, the biggest henge (circular earth-works) in ancient Britain — 10 times the size of Stonehenge, a few miles to the south.

“No one knows why Marden Henge was built, or what caused the frenzied construction boom that produced it and other Neolithic monuments located within a few miles of each other along the River Avon. Certainly something big was going on [here] during the late Neolithic. They were clearing, felling, digging, and consuming their environment at an unsustainable rate in building huge projects. Religious fervor may have played a role, or perhaps a desire by increasingly hierarchical communities — or their leaders — to flaunt their wealth.

“A stone building constructed of chalk blocks seems to have been the scene of feasting on a lavish scale. A layer of ash near the center of the building indicates a very hot fire was kept burning here for long periods of time. It may have been for roasting the many pigs, or possibly, ... this may be where people of the late Neolithic made the first tentative attempts to smelt metal.”

Bolivia to triple the size of its cable-car system

Reuters, July 27, 2015

Sarah Marsh, <http://reut.rs/1JzFUEQ> • “Bolivia already has the largest urban cable car system in the world. Now the booming country is tripling the size of the network and will soon have nine lines whizzing above the administrative capital of La Paz.

“The Andean city of 1.8 million has long struggled with chaotic transport. Minibuses and taxis with handwritten signs in their windscreens pick up passengers randomly along winding, congested routes.

“But in the last two years, aided by growing state revenues from natural gas and mining, [the] government has built a cable car system it sees as the cornerstone of a modern transport network: a subway in the sky.

“State company ‘Mi Teleferico’ (‘My Cable Car’) now operates three lines, including two linking La Paz with the satellite city of El Alto. It has started work on new routes that will take the network from 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) to 30 kilometers.

“The silent, electrically powered cable cars with built-in wifi and panoramic views of the Andes might make transport systems in other metropolises look outdated. Though cities such as Colombia’s Medellin also boast cable car lines, none are as extensive.

“Still, the project has its detractors. Some complain that commuters can peer from the cable cars into the homes and gardens below. Locals joke that curtain sales have gone up.”

(World continues on next page)

Germany breaks its Renewable Energy record

TakePart.com, July 28, 2015

Emily J. Gertz, <http://bit.ly/1M7YnKE> • “Germany’s transition from coal- and oil-fired power to carbon-free electricity hit a new milestone on July 25 when solar, wind, and other sources of renewable energy met 78 percent of the day’s energy demand.

“Helping set the record was an unusual weather pattern that brought heavy winds where most of the nation’s wind turbines are located. As the turbines generated more power, utilities ramped down coal- and gas-fired power plants.

“But the power mix a few days earlier was even more encouraging. During the night of July 22, even with darkness reducing solar output to zero and no big winds in the forecast, renewables — wind, biomass, and hydropower — generated nearly 25 percent of Germany’s electricity.

“Germany’s experience shows that solar and wind can keep the lights on in a highly industrialized nation, said Osha Gray Davidson, author of *Clean Break*, a book about Germany’s transition to carbon-free energy.

“Germany is a model for the United States, he said, ‘because manufacturing accounts for much more of the German economy than the American economy, and they have 80 million people — much larger than a country like Denmark, which gets more of its power from renewables but has a much smaller industrial base, and has a population of five and a half million.’”

“The U.S. currently gets around 10 percent of its electricity from renewable sources, according to the federal Energy Information Administration.”

South Korea bikeway has solar roof

fastcoexist.com, July 27, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1MwC7d8> • “South Korea’s solar bike highway, which runs between Daejeon and Sejong, is covered for its entire 20-mile-length with a roof of solar panels. Those panels not only generate lots of electricity but also shield cyclists from the sun. And like a regular highway, it’s fine for getting from one place to another as quickly as possible.

“If you watch the video (youtu.be/LuYsYLqjUtU, 3:04), you’ll see spots where the panels and the path seem to disappear. These are the underground access points, so you can get on or off the bikeway without crossing traffic.

“The solar panels provide more than enough electricity to power the highway’s lighting system, as well as charging points for electric cars.”

A new central district for Saigon

GlobalSitePlans.com, April 30, 2015

Joey Donovan, <http://bit.ly/1gCK83v> • “Ambitious plans are afoot for Thủ Thiêm (<http://bit.ly/1gCJLWs>) — the lush wetland has provided a stark contrast with the dense development lying across the Saigon River — until now. The 737-hectare site (2.85 sq. miles) is to be transformed into Ho Chi Minh City’s new central business district, incorporating a new international airport, and port facilities serving the Đồng Nai River. It is a fundamental realignment of the city, relocating its center from its historic heart in District One.

“Resistance to development in Saigon’s historic quarter is one reason that population growth is more noticeable in the municipality’s periphery. To some extent, Thủ Thiêm represents a response to this. But more than anything, Thủ Thiêm symbolizes a break with the past. It is the new Vietnam: dynamic, outward looking, and eager to unburden itself of the shackles of history.

“Questions are being raised about inclusivity. It is unlikely that the proposed homes for 130,000 residents will be affordable. Conservative figures for the projected number of jobs created by the scheme (350,000) are likely to silence such critics.

“A harder question to answer is whether the redevelopment of a large wetland area will have any significant ecological impact. The master plan makes allowances for the preservation of some areas, as well as the construction of managed wetlands. Whether these decisions are purely aesthetic or will have actual value as green infrastructure remains to be seen.

“For the time being, the project continues apace, part of the larger ambitions of the rapidly developing Socialist Republic of Vietnam.”



Ho Chi Minh City. Looking southeast from Nguyễn Huệ (the main street of colonial Saigon) across the Saigon River to Thủ Thiêm. Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

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