

# NORTHERN NEWS



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*Making Great Communities Happen*

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Golden Gate Park, the California Academy of Sciences, the UCSF Parnassus  
campus, Sutro Tower, and Twin Peaks. Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

## Assessing San Jose's Diridon Station area

*SJSU MURP students*

San Jose State University's Master of Urban and Regional Planning students, in partnership with CommUniverCity and the city's Downtown Association, undertook a comprehensive assessment of the Diridon Station area in Fall 2018. Changes coming to the area include California high-speed rail, interest by Google in developing a corporate campus (on Dec. 5 the San Jose City Council unanimously approved the sale of \$110 million of public land to Google), and the extension of BART through downtown.

The city's economic development and planning staff asked the graduate team to take the 'temperature' of Diridon-area communities as they anticipate the transformative changes projected for central San Jose. The assessment comprehensively explored existing conditions and provided

an avenue for community members to contribute their concerns and aspirations.

Each phase of the work employed a number of research methods including conversations and meetings with public officials and non-profit organizations, walking tours led by community leaders, and an urban design analysis of the major transportation corridors in the area. The final assessment results are being compiled in a professional-grade report that will be available in late December via SJSU's department of urban and regional planning website. The finished work will serve to prepare the next generation of student urban planners to conduct rigorous data collection and innovative community engagement efforts, while providing central San Jose communities with an authoritative resource that catalogs a snapshot of the city at this time.



**SJSU Capstone Studio Class, Fall 2018.** Seated front row l-r, Christina Vu, Judea Grier, Laura Maurer, CommUniverCity Coordinator Matthew Gustafson; middle row l-r, Frank Arellano, Reyhane Hosseinzade, Alverina Weinardy, Clelia Busadas, Nathaniel Redmond, Tiffany Chao, Michael Flemming, Instructor Jason Su; top row l-r, Jake Potter, Mehedi Chowdhury, Michael Mulligan, Mathew Chacko, Fran Lopez Tapia, Evan Kenward, Alexandre Hughes, Instructor Richard Kos. Photo: SJSU Student Videographers Andrea Perez and Aiko Allan

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SJSU MURP students. Changes coming to the area include California high-speed rail, a new Google campus, and a BART extension through downtown. In partnership with CommUniverCity and the city's Downtown Association, a class of graduate planning students made a comprehensive assessment of the area. Here's what they found. [Page 1](#)

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## Where in the world

Photo by Jason Su. [Page 11](#)

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**LA County supes approve 19,000-home 'Centennial' development.** "Supervisors on Dec. 11 approved the Centennial project at Tejon Ranch, clearing the way for a hotly debated master-planned community in a private wilderness area about 70 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. All of the Centennial project site would sit within 'high' and 'very high' fire hazard severity zones as identified by state fire officials. Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who represents the district where Centennial will be located, said the development will help address California's housing crunch, bring economic opportunities to the area, and go 'above and beyond' existing environmental requirements. 'I remain deeply concerned about all communities located in high fire hazard severity zones and stand ready to act as swiftly as we can to ensure protection of life and structures,' Barger said. But, she said, houses at Centennial will be built with flame-resistant materials and surrounded by appropriate 'fuel modification' zones. The Centennial site is mostly flat grassland, though it also encompasses oak woodlands and some steep terrain. The 270,000-acre Tejon Ranch traverses a variety of ecosystems, including desert and mountain landscapes with Joshua trees, pine forests, and wildflower fields that are home to California condors, mountain lions, black bears, and elk. The Regional Planning Commission voted 4 to 1 in August to recommend that the Board of Supervisors certify the project's environmental impact report and sign off on the associated land-use plans and permits, with additional conditions that the developer set aside 15 percent of the units for affordable housing and commit to 30 percent local hiring for construction." —Nina Agrawal, *Los Angeles Times*, <https://lat.ms/2Qs1aY3>



## Director's note

Sharon Grewal, AICP

### Transition time

It's been an absolute honor and privilege to serve as Section Director for the past two years. I have been fortunate to work with an amazing board of talented planners who go above and beyond to provide services for our members. Their drive and dedication are remarkable. We're fortunate to have them.

I'm proud of the Board's accomplishments. We revamped, expanded, and created new professional development and network opportunities for our 1,800 Northern Section members. We upgraded the awards program, launched a new website, and expanded our mentorship program to more than 200 participants. *Northern News* reaches several thousand readers, our Young Planners Group (YPG) has expanded across the Bay Area, we created a Mid-Career Planner's Group (MPG), started a statewide diversity scholarship, and continue to partner with other professional organizations including AARP, AEP, SPUR, ULI, and the Silicon Valley Economic Development Alliance.

Our incoming Section Director, **James Castañeda, AICP**, has served on the Board since 2011 in a number of capacities. He has been Peninsula Regional Activity Coordinator (RAC), Communications Director, Administrative Director, and of course Director-elect. You can expect him to strive for excellence for our Section in the coming two years. Joining him are incoming Director-elect **Jonathan Schuppert, AICP**, and **Administrative Director Sophie McGuiness**, who were elected to two-year terms beginning January 1, 2019. Please see [page 6](#) for photos, details, and additional internal Board moves.

I will continue to serve on the Board as the Immediate Past Director and on the APA California board as Vice President for Professional Development starting January 1, 2019.

### We want YOU to join the Board

Do you want to be more involved with APA in the coming year? Are you ready to use your skills to benefit our Northern Section? Consider joining the board. We need a treasurer to serve out the remainder of Jonathan's term (2019) and a Young Planners Group co-director. Several committee positions are also available. For additional information on these positions and how to apply, please contact **James Castañeda, AICP**, at [directorelect@norcalapa.org](mailto:directorelect@norcalapa.org).

### NPC19 session call on emerging trends

Inclusionary zoning, midterm elections, wildfires, and prefabricated and smart homes — a lot has happened since we first asked for your help building the NPC19 educational program. This is your chance to submit a session proposal on an emerging planning issue and present it at the 2019 National Planning Conference in San Francisco. Submit your session **by January 4th** at [www.planning.org/conference/proposals](http://www.planning.org/conference/proposals).

### Register now for NPC19

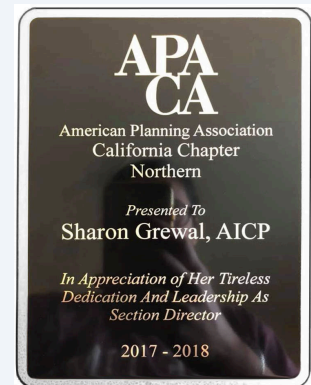
We're excited to host APA's upcoming national conference in San Francisco, Saturday, April 13, to Tuesday, April 16, at noon. Act now to snag tickets to must-attend events like popular mobile workshops and the inaugural Sunrise 5K and Yoga. Registration is open to APA members first at <http://bit.ly/2QsGG1s>.

### AICP Exam

Apply now to take the May 2019 AICP Certification Exam. The window is open **through December 28**. If you have any questions, download National APA's *AICP Exam Guide* at <http://bit.ly/2KAGxRQ>. It contains all the information you need to apply for and take the AICP Certification Exam.

### Happy Holidays!

Northern Section hosted our Annual Holiday Party at the Oakland Museum of California on November 16 (planners plan ahead). We had fun AND raised \$1,000 for the California Planning Foundation (CPF) Diversity Scholarship. Special thanks to our Holiday Party coordinators, **Lindy Chan** and **Sarah Allen, AICP**, for putting together an amazing event.



On behalf of the Board, I wish you the best of holidays with your loved ones, and a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year! ■

# To understand urban planning, CivicSpark Fellows build childhood memories

James Rojas

Building a favorite childhood memory might sound touchy-feely, but for 18 CivicSpark Fellows it was a meaningful activity to articulate a sense of belonging, understand why urban planning matters, create sustainable places, feel good about one's self, and bond with the other Fellows.



“I loved the smell, the fall colors, and drinking apple cider while I was growing up in New England.”

*Tinuviel Carlson,  
CivicSpark Fellow*

CivicSpark is a California Governor's Initiative AmeriCorps program (<http://bit.ly/2RKN4h9>). It is dedicated to building capacity for local governments to address community resilience and justice issues through National Service by fostering authentic community engagement. CivicSpark Fellows work with local governments over the course of an 11-month service-year. California's Local Government Commission in partnership with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research administers the program.

On Friday, November 16, 2018, I facilitated *pro bono* a community engagement training for 18 CivicSpark Fellows assigned to San Francisco Bay Area local government agencies. We met at Emeryville City Hall to discuss “equitable community engagement.” I taught the Fellows a visual, spatial, and hands-on community engagement tool they can use at their assigned agencies.

I developed the “Place It” method specifically for people of color to enhance their social cohesion and sense of belonging in the community. Place It takes a people-based, rather than design-based, approach to community engagement to achieve —

- **Social Cohesion:** People are concerned with their families, friends, and neighbors.
- **Belonging:** How do they belong physically and socially in the landscape?
- **Healing:** Understanding their struggle.
- **Aspirations:** What are their targets?
- **Self-determination:** Encouraging people to plan for their own.

I taught the CivicSpark Fellows four tools that would be useful to a wide variety of participants — including, for example, visual and spatial thinkers:

- **Art-based strategy** applies the tenets of art production to the urban planning process. Like artists, the Fellows were asked to use their imaginations, construct their ideas, and reflect on what they created. That gave them license to think and be creative without physical constraints. Art helped the Fellows translate memories, emotions, and aspirations into planning data and tangible realities. They learned that the power of art lies not in experiencing it but in producing it.

- **Play-based brainstorming** removes barriers and promotes collaboration. The Fellows used “play” to understand the world around them. Through play, they reflected on their experiences to make sense of their world. Because play is self-facilitating, the Fellows were relaxed; there were no right or wrong answers, hence no fear of failure. Through play, they inquired about and experimented with the physical landscape of their communities.

- **Object-based planning** broadened the Fellows' problem-solving abilities and communication options. The urban landscape is a visual, spatial, and emotional experience best articulated through objects. The textures, shapes, and colors of small everyday household objects — hair rollers, buttons, artificial flowers, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners — helped them re-create, understand, and articulate their physical and emotional connections to the landscape, facilitate personal expression, and promote collaborative problem solving.

*(continues on page 16)*

# My favorite planning project — the Eastshore State Park General Plan

Larry Tong

It was a dark and stormy night in September 2001. Yet more than 400 invited stakeholders came to a regional workshop on alternative uses for a new state park along 8.5 miles of Bay shoreline from Oakland to Richmond.

The stakeholders were given paper workbooks on which they could write their comments on park alternatives. As they gathered at tables to work in small groups, they could watch, through the large windows of our second-floor venue, a dramatic lightning storm dancing across San Francisco Bay. We could hear and feel the rolling thunder, becoming louder by the minute.

Suddenly the entire room went dark. Within seconds, several participants pulled out small pocket flashlights and continued writing comments in their workbooks. The venue operators brought in lit candles to serve as temporary lighting. But with paper workbooks and lit candles at each table in a room with 400 people, we felt the situation was very unsafe.

We asked the participants to please stop writing and safely leave, but no one did. We pleaded, but they still refused. It wasn't until the Park District General Manager promised to have a makeup workshop as soon as possible that the stakeholders reluctantly released their workbooks and left the workshop. We held the makeup workshop soon thereafter, and again 400 key stakeholders participated.

Over the two-year planning process, the joint three-agency Eastshore State Park General Plan process produced a long term land use and management plan for Eastshore State Park, a new 2,200-acre recreational facility harmonious with its natural setting on the east side of San Francisco Bay.

That park, now known as McLaughlin Eastshore State Park, is recognized as an outstanding achievement in the history of open space protection. The East Bay Regional Park District, working jointly with California State Parks and the California Coastal Conservancy, conducted the planning process to prepare the park's general plan.

The process —

- recognized the extensive community interest,
- enabled broad participation,
- provided a concise schedule that allowed stakeholders to plan their participation, and
- offered ample opportunity for community input.

The process was transparent and built an enormous amount of stakeholder trust.

- It achieved consensus among 4,000 stakeholders,
- built a comprehensive and diverse constituency that has passionately supported the provisions of the General Plan for more than a decade,
- fulfilled part of a vision and 40-year citizen effort to prevent massive filling, and
- created a shoreline park along San Francisco Bay.



Larry Tong was lead project planner on the Eastshore State Park General Plan project. The plan can be viewed or downloaded at <http://bit.ly/2Qf3bqz>. You can reach Larry Tong at [tong.laurence1@comcast.net](mailto:tong.laurence1@comcast.net). ■



Looking southwest to San Francisco's Yerba Buena Island and the Financial District from Eastshore State Park, Albany.

Photo: Charlie Knox, AICP

## Internal moves on Northern Section's Board



**Jonathan Schuppert, AICP**, has been elected by the Northern Section membership for a two-year term as Director-elect of APA California–Northern, effective January 1, 2019. He has served on the Northern Section Board for six years and in several roles, including South Bay Regional Activities Coordinator (2013–14), Professional Development Director (2015), and Treasurer (2016–18). He is serving as Mobile Workshops Coordinator for the 2019 National Planning Conference and was Merchandise Chair for the 2015 APA California Conference in Oakland. Schuppert is campus connectivity manager at Facebook. He holds a B.S. in city and regional planning from California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo. In his free time, he is an avid bicyclist and photographer, and enjoys traveling, food, and coffee.



**Sophie McGuinness** has been reelected by the Northern Section membership for a two-year term as Administrative Director of APA California–Northern, effective January 1, 2019, a post she has held for the past two years. She is a planner with the Alameda County Community Development Agency. In her home state of Victoria, Australia, prior to 2017, McGuinness was a senior associate, associate, and planning law attorney for several private firms, representing private and government clients in planning and environmental law transactions. She holds a bachelor of arts in politics, sociology, and geography and a bachelor of laws from Monash University, Melbourne. McGuinness was admitted to the Supreme Court of Victoria and Federal Court of Australia in 2009.



**Miroo Desai, AICP**, is now Mid-Career Planning Group Director for Northern Section, a new position on the Board of Directors. Desai, herself a mid-career planner, has been Northern Section's Diversity Director since 2010 and Membership Inclusion Director, Northern California, on the APA California board since 2012. Desai has worked for the city of Emeryville for 14 years and is their senior planner. She holds a master of urban and regional planning from the University of Hawaii, a master of international relations and Chinese studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), and a B.A. in economics from Delhi University, New Delhi.



**Cherise D. Orange**, who had been South Bay Regional Activity coordinator (RAC) for Northern Section since 2017, has been appointed Northern Section Diversity Director. She is an associate planner with the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department. Orange previously served as a junior planner for the U.S. Army Reserve at the Aberdeen Proving Ground and as a community planner working to enhance Army installation resiliency across the southwestern U.S. She holds a master in city and regional planning from Morgan State University (Baltimore) and a B.S. in finance and international business and economics from Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

# Planning news roundup

Excerpts linked to the original articles

## THE FIRES

### Battle against climate change going up in smoke

*Mother Jones*, December 10, 2018

**Rosa Furneaux**, <http://bit.ly/2QpKZus> • “California’s 2018 wildfire season released emissions equal to a year of power use, and vast, devastating conflagrations are becoming more common. According to the state’s most recent climate assessment, California could see a 77 percent increase in the average area burned in wildfires by 2100.

“Yet the carbon released during wildfires this year will not affect California’s official emissions score. The California Air Resources Board considers wildfires part of the earth’s natural carbon cycle, and as a regulatory body, can only regulate what can be controlled.

“But the agency is looking into ways to better track carbon emissions from conflagrations. The ARB uses data including the size of the fire and the kind of fuel burned to estimate its

carbon footprint. When a forest is burned for the first time, ‘between 5 and 20 percent of the carbon goes up,’ explained Nic Enstice, regional science coordinator at the state’s Sierra Nevada Conservancy agency. That’s because even a high-severity fire will not incinerate every tree in a forest. But if a second wildfire ravages an already-burned area, the dead trees are more readily consumed, resulting in even greater carbon release.

“California’s best hope for reaching its ambitious climate goals may lie in technology and rebuilding the state’s dilapidated forests. In May, the state announced its Forest Carbon Plan (<http://bit.ly/2QodLvw>), which included a pledge to double the rate of forest rehabilitation to an average 35,000 acres a year by 2020.”

### Wildfires displace low-income residents, change demographics

*Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 2018

**Sarah Parvini** and **Ellis Simani**, <https://lat.ms/2Qn2J9Z>

• “Destructive wildfires could worsen the inequities that the [greater Bay Area] has long grappled with. Homes lost to the 2015 Valley fire forced the poorest residents to leave the Napa area entirely, according to analysts. ‘Disasters tend to change the makeup of the population,’ said Walter Schwarm, demographer at the state Department of Finance.

“The Camp fire displaced tens of thousands in and around the town of Paradise. Altogether, 21,000 homes across Northern California have been lost in the last 14 months to fire. The disaster has triggered a sharp increase in housing costs as the region struggles to absorb those who were left homeless, [with many] having to leave the area.

“‘People who were worse off before a disaster are usually hit hardest by the disaster and are least equipped to recover,’ said Gordon Douglas, director of the Institute for Metropolitan Studies at San Jose State University.

“Displacement by wildfire points to a larger issue of ‘environmental equity,’ said Dowell Myers, a professor at the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

“Author Mike Davis, critical of regulations that allow development in fire-prone areas, said that new housing in fire-damaged areas is rarely built with low income residents in mind. After the 1991 firestorms in the East Bay Hills, houses were ‘rebuilt, and larger,’ he said. ‘The past is clear: Fire produces gentrification, and it’s just a taste of what will happen with a major earthquake.’”

*(The news roundup continues on [page 18](#))*

**SB 50 addresses concerns that killed SB 827.** “Senate Bill 50 evinces [SF’s State Senator Scott] Wiener and his allies in the legislature back in action, with many of these concerns anticipated and incorporated into its core structure. For example, SB 50 outright prohibits the use of its zoning changes to demolish properties that renters occupied in the past seven years, and extends this prohibition for owner move-in evictions enabled by the Ellis Act to 15 years. The bill more explicitly targets higher-income neighborhoods and ‘jobs-rich’ areas with high employment and well-performing schools even in absence of reliable public transit, while offering more local control and delayed implementation for ‘Sensitive Communities’ with concentrated poverty and minority populations. Additionally, the bill would enforce new affordability requirements for ‘inclusionary housing’ statewide for qualifying projects.” —*Diego Aguilar-Canabal, The Bay City Beacon*, <http://bit.ly/2Qt8jY4>



# Meet a local planner

By Catarina Kidd, AICP



This month, *Northern News* interviewed **Alexander Quinn**, Director of Sustainable Economics at Hatch.

## **Where did you go to school?**

I was in the Project Management track and earned a master's in city and regional planning at UC Berkeley in 1998. Earlier I studied micro- and macroeconomics, politics, international development, and environmental planning at UC Santa Cruz, earning a B.A. in politics. And I studied architecture one summer in Barcelona, which told me I should not be an architect. I grew up in Oakland, which informed my passion for urban planning.

## **What do you do at Hatch?**

I direct economic planning, real estate consulting, triple bottom line assessment, economic policy analysis, resource economics, and public finance services for both private and public clients.

## **Tell us more about 'triple bottom line'**

John Elkington wrote *Cannibals with Forks*, a book that explores how we should look at the triple bottom line in business. We call it the three E's (equity, environment, and economy) or sometimes the three P's (people, planet, profit). The principle is, to change policy and achieve the highest societal performance in your investments, balance your decisions so that you are thinking of all three factors when you make investments.

## **For example?**

What would be the impact of SB 375 on the State's economy? SB 375 required that regional planning agencies develop a regional transportation plan and a sustainable communities strategy. My look at the social, environmental, and economic consequences of the bill won a state media award.

In San Francisco, I led development of a triple bottom line evaluation for alternatives analyses of wastewater

infrastructure investments for SFPUC's \$2.7 billion sewer system improvement program. In their alternative water infrastructure solutions, SFPUC is accounting for environmental, societal, and infrastructure performance impacts.

I've also done this recently in Calgary, where the goal was to estimate the sustainable return on investment — something that's becoming more commonplace in our world. In addition to fiscal impact, we look at equity and environment in assessing projects, policies, and infrastructure investments.

## **How did you come to pursue your particular field of expertise?**

During grad school, I got my public agency experience working for the city of Oakland and Contra Costa County. I then worked for the consulting firm Bay Area Economics, where I realized I liked to work on the why and the how, rather than the what. I like understanding the underlying reasons for why things occur. That felt like a good role for me, rather than trying to plan for the actual building of things. EDAW recruited me, and I started an economic practice there when AECOM acquired EDAW.

In my volunteer time, I worked on one of the first Climate Action Plans — for the city of Berkeley — as a member of Sustainable Berkeley. From that, the opportunity arose to make climate action a core part of my economic consulting practice — analyzing the triple bottom line of development, land use, and infrastructure, and accounting for their environmental, social, and economic consequences. That became my niche at AECOM and now at Hatch.

## **Tell us about a favorite project**

Several come to mind. San Francisco's Central Market Economic Action Plan had the objective of increasing investment around Market Street in the Tenderloin neighborhood. In less than three years, the plan reduced the office vacancy rate from 30 percent to less than 10 percent. It increased economic activity in an area where there had been very little. The plan won an economic development award from APA and an award from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. It was a great project, and an interesting one.

Separately, for San Francisco's Urban Forest Financing Strategy, we first valued the overall benefit of street trees to San Francisco and then determined a financing mechanism that would grow the urban forest by 20,000 trees.

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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.

**Michael Baker**  
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## Meet a local planner *(continued from previous page)*

A local ballot measure (Prop E) was passed to fund the growth and operation of the urban forest. It became a national model for similar efforts.

In both San Francisco examples, I was the geeky economist who quantified the needs and articulated the benefits.

I worked on a project in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, that resulted in BMW locating a new manufacturing facility there. Attracting a major investment to the city brought an influx of workers.

For the U.S. Water Alliance, I have twice provided expert testimony to the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment of the U.S. House of Representatives (most recently in 2017) regarding the economic importance of water infrastructure and its impact on national GDP — both when we are investing in water infrastructure and the cost to GDP when it breaks.

### ***Any advice about how to select a consultant?***

Which candidate seems more passionate about the project and the work? Who seems really interested in what you're working on? There is always a slog and a budget issue with public projects, so you need a consultant committed to the effort. You can find many who can technically do the work. But whoever shows the most interest will work harder and do more than the other candidates.

Second, who seems more committed and accountable? That is really useful to have. If it's hard to tell the difference among candidates, talk to their references to get their insights — it can make a big difference. You want someone who will be in it together with you on the challenge of the work, and who will have your back, rather than a consultant focused on profit and loss.

### ***What good advice have you applied to get great results?***

One of my valued mentors admonished us to limit false precision in our work. Recognize your limits to project and to estimate when analyzing and communicating data. Be humble enough to do that, and make sure numbers aren't used incorrectly. Also, have fun; like what you do. I enjoy my assignments. I have avoided projects that don't meet my basic beliefs or don't align with my principles of triple bottom line. Find things you believe in.

There are times we have to say "Thanks, but no thanks." As an example, a potential client approached me, wanting to rationalize the shipment of coal out of a particular port to China. They had the wrong person. I said no.

### ***Have you been put in the position of having to manage politics? How do you handle that?***

Sometimes the consultant is the fall guy. City staff can't be in that role — they would likely be fired — but you are there as the consultant to provide the unabated facts. Your analysis must be on point and transparent. Despite that, there are times when you will be impacted by politics.


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Meet a local planner (continued from previous page)

In Philadelphia, they asked me to evaluate the viability of two public golf courses. I recommended closing one course (not politically popular). A lot of people thought I would recommend closing the course in the poor neighborhood and keeping the one in the wealthy neighborhood. I recommended the opposite: The wealthier neighborhood had viable alternative plans for the site if the course closed. The poor community did not. The city had higher priorities than subsidizing golfers. I had done the research to explain the why. In the end, those who weren't yelling at me saw that my research was transparent in explaining the realities. If you are fair and explain and stick to your methods, eventually even the unhappy side can recognize that.

**How would you advise planners who realize they are not doing the work they want to do and are considering a change?**

There are so many paths in urban planning. Some in my class became developers, others went into economic development, planning, urban design. If you are in the public sector, you get to see those specialties in action. Talk to those specialists to learn how you might pivot to a niche where your passion lies. Maybe all you need is direct experience.

We found people who were strong on quantitative skills and became analysts for well-known, global firms, providing research and advice. Some took real estate classes through the ULI; others just learned on the job. But there are many urban planning graduates at Hatch and other economics firms. For example, I initially hoped to be a policy planner, but found that I like finite economic analysis. I'm using data and analysis to advise people what to do. But if you want to be involved in construction, working for a developer makes sense. If you're interested in implementation, working for a city makes sense.

If you want to re-direct your career, do it early and be creative.



Interviewer Catarina Kidd, AICP, is Northern News' associate editor. All interviews are edited. ■

**How California can address the housing crisis.** "There is a recent 'Blame CEQA' fad among developers and planners. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) didn't cause the housing crisis, and undermining the law's critical environmental and public health protections won't solve it. Sprawling projects in fire-prone areas, and polluting projects that harm residents, need to address their impacts. This 1970s law encourages transparency and public participation and is critical to ensuring that people affected have a seat at the table, particularly in order to prevent environmental injustice and fight climate change." —Murtaza Baxamusa, San Diego UrbDeZine, <http://bit.ly/2QqCCP8>

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## Call for Proposals, 2019 APA California Conference

The Central Coast Section will be hosting the APA California 2019 Conference, *A Resilient Future*, from September 15 to 18 in Santa Barbara. The Call for Proposals opened December 1 and will close on January 31, 2019, at 5:00 pm.

For more information and how to submit your proposal, go to <http://bit.ly/2Rpxwn>.

If you have any questions, please contact the 2019 Programs Subcommittee at [Calapa2019programs@gmail.com](mailto:Calapa2019programs@gmail.com).

## Where in the world



Photo by Jason Su. (Answer on page 13)

**Residents object, but Cupertino project moves ahead under SB 35.** “Four petitions by slow-growth group Better Cupertino opposing a Vallco redevelopment plan gathered enough valid signatures to qualify as voter referendums. City Council members will meet Dec. 18 to discuss the results and Cupertino’s next course of action, according to a news release. The council could opt to repeal the ordinances and resolutions regarding its Vallco plan, or put the matter up for a vote in a special election next year or the general election in 2020. But no matter what happens with the referendums, the Vallco redevelopment likely will proceed. That’s because developer Sand Hill Property Company already has gotten the OK to go ahead with a slightly different plan for the mall — one that includes less housing and allows for taller buildings. And that plan is immune to ballot challenges and other roadblocks, thanks to SB 35, a new state law designed to fast-track housing construction. Demolition on the mall site began in October, and Sand Hill has vowed to move full-speed ahead.”  
 —Marisa Kendall, *East Bay Times*, <https://bayareane.ws/2QpiMUx>



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## Who's where



**Della Acosta** has joined Rincon Consultants, Oakland, as Senior Planner for Rincon's long-range planning team. Her focus will be on contributing to general plans and climate action plans, as well as other long-range planning projects. She had previously been a comprehensive planner with Michael Baker International for four years. Acosta holds a degree in city/urban, community and regional planning from Sonoma State University and an associate of science degree in biology/biological sciences from Northwest Arkansas Community College.



**Greg Holisko, AICP**, is now Senior Land Planner at Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco. He had been a senior environmental planner with Michael Baker International since February. Before that, Holisko worked as a senior technical director for AKRF, an environmental consulting firm in New York. Originally from Vancouver, Canada, Holisko holds a master of urban planning from New York University and a B.A. in English from the University of British Columbia. He is Communications Director for APA California-Northern.



**Sung H. Kwon, AICP**, Tiburon's planning manager since March 2018, has been promoted to Community Development Director effective January 1, 2019. Before that, Kwon held senior planner and planner positions for the cities of Saratoga, Orinda, and Oakland, and for Tulare County. He holds an MBA from the University of Rochester, a master of city and regional planning from Cal Poly SLO, and a B.A. in architecture from UC Berkeley.

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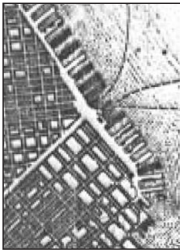
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**Express buses set for San Mateo County.** "SamTrans is planning to launch six new express bus routes in three phases, with a pilot project set to launch by the summer of 2019. One pilot will travel between Foster City and downtown San Francisco via Highway 101 and the other between Palo Alto and western San Francisco via Interstate 280, terminating at Divisadero Street and Geary Boulevard. The express bus project [six routes] is expected to cost \$55.6 million in capital and \$16.5 million annually for operations and maintenance. A \$15 million grant has been awarded. Other potential funding sources include Senate Bill 1, Managed Lanes, Regional Measure 3, and Measure W." [Measure W, a half-cent sales tax that goes into effect July 1, 2019, is expected to generate \$2.4 billion over a 30-year period. It required two-thirds of the vote and passed by a margin of 541 votes, or 66.87.] —Zachary Clark, *San Mateo Daily Journal*, <http://bit.ly/2Qv68DL>



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### Answer to Where in the world (Page 11)

Bitan pedestrian bridge, Xindian District, New Taipei City, Taiwan. Photo: Jason Su

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



**Peter Pirnejad** is now the Director of Community Development Strategy at Oracle. He had recently been assistant city manager, Napa, and during the previous 10 years, director of development services for the city of Palo Alto and assistant director, economic and community development, Daly City. He holds a doctor of policy, planning and development (DPPD); a master's in policy, planning and development; and a graduate certificate in GIS, all from the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy. His B.A. is in environmental studies and geography from UCSB, where he was on the NCAA gymnastics team.



**Darcy Smith, AICP**, is now Community Development Director, city of San Bruno. Smith had been with the city of San Mateo for more than 15 years, most recently as principal planner – zoning administrator. During the previous five years, she was an associate planner for the city of Campbell and an urban planner at Dyett & Bhatia, San Francisco. Smith holds a master of urban planning from San Jose State University and a B.S. in earth systems from Stanford.



**Kelly White** has joined the impact assessment and permitting group at GHD, Inc., San Francisco, as a Senior Environmental Planner. She has 16 years of CEQA, NEPA, and permitting experience, including 11 years at ESA where she was a senior management associate. White, who specializes in water supply planning and water resources management projects, holds a B.A. in environmental studies from UC Santa Cruz and is an American Management Association certified Project Management Professional (PMP). ■

**Sacramento passes citywide TOD ordinance removing residential parking minimums and banning car-oriented uses.** "New gas stations, drive-through restaurants, and warehouses will soon be banned within a quarter-mile of Sacramento's 23 light-rail stations," the city council agreed unanimously Dec. 11. "The ordinance eliminates parking requirements for new housing developments within a quarter mile of a station, and requires conditional use permits for cannabis cultivation and manufacturing businesses opening within a half-mile of a station. The goal of the ordinance is to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, increase transit ridership, and encourage high-density housing near light rail stations, the city's project manager told the council. Businesses banned within 1/4-mile of light rail stations also include auto sales, storage, rental, service and repair shops; mini storage; and distribution centers. The new rule will not apply to projects that submitted plans to the city before Oct. 1." —Theresa Clift, *The Sacramento Bee*, <http://bit.ly/2QBqHhB>

The graduate team also hopes their presentation of findings will help make the coming urban planning process more transparent and unambiguous.

The urban montage was one undertaking in this work. Small teams were assigned to each of the four corridors that pass through the Diridon area: West Julian Street, West Santa Clara Street/The Alameda, Park Avenue, and West San Carlos Street. Each of the corridors — ranging from one to three miles long — were explored at least twice, on foot.

Embracing an approach that says urban planners must fully experience the communities they study, each group conducted on-the-spot interviews with pedestrians and business owners, picked up materials along the way — leaves, brochures, bus schedules — and recorded smells and sights. Group findings were assembled on pin-up boards to capture the sense of place within each corridor.

City officials and representatives of local organizations attended a presentation of the students' observations and a display of poster-collages with their findings. The session gave the graduate teams a rich learning experience in effective visual communication, even as they built

skills in contemporary professional planning and design software.

The class then divided into four teams — stakeholder engagement, open house event planning, graphic design, and report production.

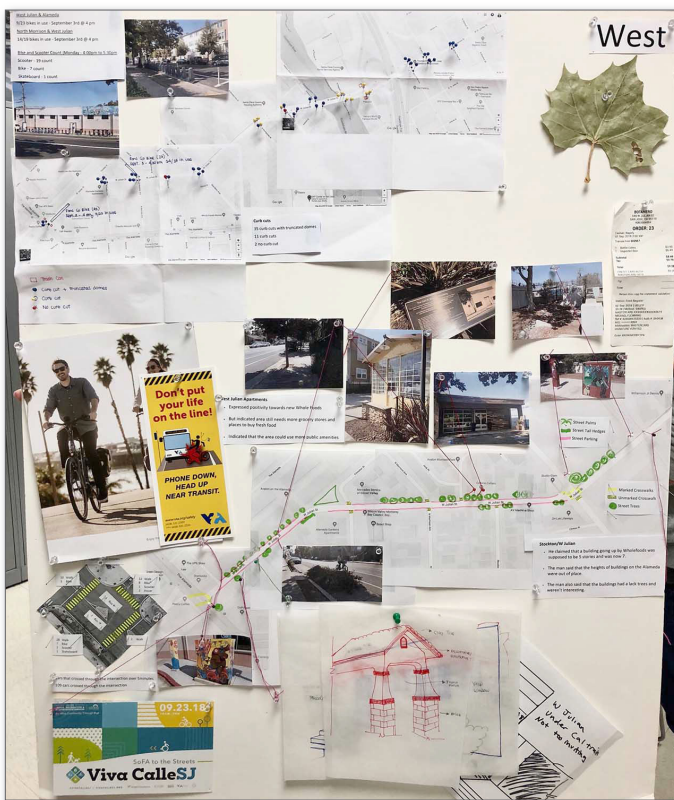
**The stakeholder team** worked closely with Lori Severino, the Civic Engagement Manager for Diridon Station. She helped the students convene a series of five focus groups comprising local residents, business leaders, SJSU undergraduates, and others with an interest in the future of central San Jose: transportation advocates, advocates for the environment, residents from surrounding communities, San Jose State students not affiliated with the class, and advocates for community development.

One takeaway from the focus groups was that transportation should be accessible, affordable, and connected, which potentially could lead to higher walkability and less congestion. A second takeaway was that the community wants Diridon Station and surrounding development to create a sense of place while providing affordable housing and quality jobs.

**The event planning team** organized an open house for 80 on Saturday, December 1, at a local bistro. The town hall meeting was essentially a party designed for data collection. A three-piece jazz band of SJSU music students set the mood. PowerPoint presentations were “outlawed,” and the class instead designed engaging graphics and activities to get attendees on their feet and talking. The graduate teams collected data from the community using a large map with transparent layers, each showing a key aspect of the Diridon area. Other data was collected via informational posters that helped community members list ideas or concerns. Here are the findings from just two of the eight posters:

One activity poster asked people about their commuting habits. Thirty-one people — 43.1 percent of those present — said their commute was 20 minutes or less. Of those 31, seven people walked, two rode scooters, six bicycled, 12 went by car, two took the bus, and two took the train. Seventeen people, or 23.6 percent of those present, said their commute was 21–40 minutes. Of those 17, five people walked, 10 used a car, and two went by bus. Another 13, or 18.1 percent, said their commute was between 41–60 minutes. Of those, seven used a car, two used the bus, three used the train, and one used a combination of bus and train. In the final category, 11 people (15.2 percent) said their commute

(continues on next page)



The collage presentation board for West Julian Street, filled with on-site materials, notes, photographs, and findings. Photo: Matthew Gustafson

takes more than an hour. Of those, one person walked, one used a bicycle, two drove a car, and seven took the train.

A second activity poster displayed people's perspectives on safety at the Diridon Station. Twenty-six of 37 people felt safe using Diridon Station, while nine out of 37 said they sometimes felt safe. One person sometimes felt safe in some situations but not at other times; and one person did not feel safe at Diridon Station. While most participants felt safe using the Diridon Station, the fact that several did not, suggests the need for improvements to alleviate public safety concerns at the station.



A community member examines the refined collage-posters at the December 1 event. Photo: Judea Grier

**The graphics team** was responsible for producing materials and graphics for the December 1 event and the focus group sessions. The team worked closely with each of the other teams, using a petition system to prepare engaging material. Their ultimate task, however, was to create the final report using Adobe InDesign. They worked alongside the writing team throughout the year, helping them polish their synthesis of materials.

**The report writing team** was responsible for collecting and synthesizing the disparate materials into a single cohesive document. This involved close communication with the other teams to receive materials at specific dates and to produce rough drafts on which the graphics team could offer feedback. The report writers' final materials, once approved by class instructors Rick Kos and Jason Su, went back to the graphics team so that they could put the completed work into Adobe InDesign. The final product

was the combined effort of 17 students who worked hundreds of hours, plus the community, whose members volunteered their time to help make this a collaborative and relevant project.

SJSU graduate planning tradition dictates that the 2019 class will build on this semester's work, continuing to grow the foundation of community engagement. The next class will use a new online tool — ArcHUB, tested by students in the stakeholder team — that includes live maps and other platforms to collect community feedback, distribute research surveys, and passively collect online data.

Living in Silicon Valley is special. The university's graduate urban planning classes always look forward to offering unbiased support to San Jose's communities. We bring together people and groups and help them plan for a brighter future. But the urban and regional planning master's program is only one layer. Without the support of partners like CommUniverCity and the community around the Diridon station, the process and work outlined here could not have been accomplished.



Graduate team members discuss the Big Map before the December 1 event. Counterclockwise from top left: Frank Arellano, Evan Kenward, Alverina Weinardy, Judea Grier, and Reyhane Hosseinzade. Photo: Francisco Lopez Tapia ■





“The objects triggered me to dream up new urban designs. It was a great lesson about the role of art and creativity in urban planning.”

Tal Litwin,  
CivicSpark Fellow

• **Building stories** with physical objects helped Fellows illustrate in 3D a memory, need, aspiration, or moment in time, as if in a movie or on a stage. Storytelling is common for conveying information and learning. Building a story helped the Fellows understand where and how they belong and why planning matters to their lives. By building their stories, the Fellows unlocked personal knowledge of their environment they might not have known they had. They also learned how to examine and articulate their physical and emotional needs in the built environment.

The training created an inclusive, safe space for the Fellows to be themselves, collaborate and not compete, and most importantly, create sustainable, enduring communities. They began the engagement process with personal cherished memories.

### Building your favorite childhood memory

For an icebreaker, the Civic Spark Fellows were asked to take 10 minutes to build their favorite childhood memory by choosing from hundreds of small objects placed before them. With gusto they sifted through the objects and placed or assembled objects.

When time was up, the Fellows presented that enduring time and place in their lives to the group.

They told compelling, entertaining stories illustrated through the objects and colors in front of them, and remembered details. Everyone intently listened to the memories. They smiled, laughed, sighed, and clapped — they were visually, orally, and emotionally engaged.

To wrap-up the activity, the Fellows were asked to name common themes, locations, and activities that were consistent with their own memories. Even though they came from a variety of places and backgrounds, the Fellows quickly found common ground.



CivicSpark Fellows Melissa Brownlie, Yeshe Salz, and Edgar Barraza.  
Photo: James Rojas.

Mostly, the memories —

- were located outdoors in nature and open space,
- consisted of physical activities,
- involved other people such as family and friends, and
- were about problem solving.

Through memory building, the Fellows learned to share and care. By articulating intuitive knowledge, the Fellows realized they are their own urban planning experts and capable of creating meaningful spaces.

### Team Building for a sustainable, equitable, community

After the icebreaker, the Fellows worked in six teams for 15 minutes using the found objects to build a sustainable, equitable, gender-friendly community. There were no constraints. The teams were given complete autonomy in the planning process. All solutions were welcomed.

The removal of constraints and the creative nature of the effort encouraged everyone to participate, regardless of language, gender, ethnicity, or professional background or training.

The objects' tactile, visual, and spatial qualities helped the Fellows communicate, illustrate, and test their ideas and design interventions. Through this process, new

(continues on next page)

ideas emerged and, with the help of others, developed. The scenarios quickly took form and filled the tabletops. In developing solutions, the teams reflected their collective values.

When time was up, each team took two minutes to present their sustainable future community to the group. When the presentations were over, each team member was asked to pick a day and time for using the model to articulate a particular activity.

On concluding this activity, the Fellows were asked to state common themes, solutions, and activities. These were:

**Mobility:** Access for all through walking, biking, and public transit (no cars or parking).

**Shelter:** Affordable and diverse housing for all.

**Nature:** Access to parks, open space, and water.

**Food:** All food locally grown in community and roof top gardens.

**Energy:** Renewable, solar.

**Services:** Health care and jobs for all.

Women were the majority of the Fellows, and they created spaces for themselves. Overall, the Fellows created nurturing, healing, interconnected systems. The activity promoted social cohesion and solutions based on shared aspirations.

## Conclusion

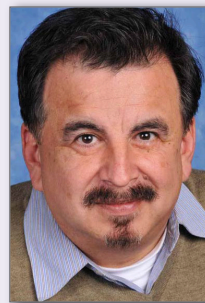
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“I learned the urgency to prioritize diversity in the decision-making process and planning.”

*Edgar Barraza, CivicSpark Fellow*

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The tools they were taught will help the Fellows humanize community engagement and build trust and relationships with residents and stakeholders. The Fellows learned a new way to participatory planning — a new way to frame an approach: Instead of starting with bricks and mortar, try to understand the lives and aspirations of residents and stakeholders. And by recognizing the need to belong, humanize the facilitation process and thus help local governments in their mission to create nurturing and healing environments.



*James Rojas is a globetrotting planner who developed Place It, a visualization method to engage the community in the urban planning process. He is a member emeritus of the California Planning Roundtable and a founder and member of the Latino Urban Forum. You can contact him at [jamestrojas@gmail.com](mailto:jamestrojas@gmail.com).*



## Register now for the Spring AICP EXAM PREP workshops

*Don Bradley, Ph.D. AICP*

The next AICP exam prep workshops sponsored by APA California–Northern Section will be held at UC Berkeley on six **Saturdays**:

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## THE FIRES (continued)

### A tale of two wildfires

*The Guardian*, December 5, 2018

**Mike Davis**, <http://bit.ly/2Qo9g3T> • “California’s catastrophic wildfires have exposed and in some cases reinforced the socioeconomic inequalities that rend this state—nation of 40 million people. If Malibu defines one side of the class fault line, Paradise clearly represented the other. The median value of the homes destroyed in Malibu was \$3,470,000; in Paradise, \$200,000.

“The Los Angeles Times broke taboos by suggesting that the state’s continuing fire emergency requires rational limitations on real estate construction in tinder-dry rural landscapes. Boldly it proposed that Paradise not be rebuilt. [See below] Malibu, however, was a bridge too far.

“Although the upper quintile of the population may face temporary dislocation and more expensive insurance, it is working-class Californians in their desperate quest for afford-

able housing who will bear the greater cost of adjustment. Indeed, wildfire often generates gentrification, as homes are rebuilt larger than before while trailer parks, rental units, and under-insured housing are never restored.

“In San Diego county, 15,000 new homes, mainly gated communities, are in the pipeline to be built in rural, high-fire-hazard areas. These are 4,000-sq-ft homes and the like — well beyond the reach of average households.

“The plan for Otay Ranch Village 14, in a rugged site near the Mexican border — coolly observes: ‘The total of 68 fires in this area over the last 105 years within 5 miles of the Proposed Project is not considered a high number for southern California.’

“A fire every two years? Live with it.”

### Rebuild Paradise?

*Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 2018

**Editorial Board**, <https://lat.ms/2Q6sAms> • “Officials are already discussing how to get people home and back to normal quickly. But California is facing the new abnormal, with climate change expected to fuel more frequent, more destructive fires.

“To rebuild Paradise as it was would be land-use malpractice. The question is whether Paradise — and other towns that have burned — can be rebuilt to withstand the next, inevitable wildfire. If not, how does California relocate communities and restrict new construction while respecting property rights and not worsening the state’s affordable housing crisis?

“Are there some areas of the state that are just too dangerous to build or rebuild in?

“Lawmakers can’t stop people from rebuilding, given the 5th Amendment’s protections for property owners.

But California could offer to buy out property owners to prevent them from rebuilding in high-risk areas and use the land for park space. The federal government already has a program that buys out homes that have repeatedly flooded. Participation is voluntary, and it’s a humane way to compensate property owners and deter them from rebuilding again in harm’s way. Policymakers should develop a similar effort for wildfire-ravaged communities in California.

“Other experts suggest creation of a state commission, much like the California Coastal Commission, that would have authority over new development in hazardous fire zones. It’s clear that a patchwork, parochial approach to approving development in high-risk fire areas has failed to protect the public.

“California can’t continue to sprawl into increasingly dangerous wildfire terrain.”

*(The news roundup continues on next page)*

## ELSEWHERE ...

### Muni to the Marina?

*San Francisco Business Times*, December 10, 2018

**Lindsey J. Smith**, <http://bit.ly/2Qo10Rr> • “The Marina District has long rebuffed San Francisco’s efforts to bring more public transit to the tony neighborhood by the Bay. But that may change, as the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency explores the possibility of extending the new Central Subway line [there]. More and better transit is needed in the neighborhood — buses like the 30-Stockton are perpetually packed.

“With the Central Subway Project close to completion, the city’s transit agency has its sights on possibly extending

the line beyond the new Chinatown Station at Stockton and Washington Streets.

“ ‘Possible destinations include North Beach, Fisherman’s Wharf, the Marina District, and other neighborhoods in the northern portion of San Francisco,’ according to a statement on SFMTA’s website.

“The lack of public transit in the Marina has opened doors for others to step in. The Marina is one of the most popular neighborhoods for private transit company Chariot, which has approximately a half-dozen routes running through it at present.”

### Minneapolis is doing away with single-family zoning

*SLATE*, December 7, 2018

**Henry Grabar**, <http://bit.ly/2QnETdV> • “Minneapolis will become the first major U.S. city to end single-family home zoning, a policy that has done as much as any to entrench segregation, high housing costs, and sprawl over the past century.

“On December 7, the City Council passed Minneapolis 2040, a comprehensive plan to permit three-family homes in the city’s residential neighborhoods, abolish parking minimums for all new construction, and allow high-density buildings along transit corridors.

“It may be as long as a year before Minneapolis zoning regulations and building codes reflect what’s outlined in the 481-page plan.

“Opening up Minneapolis’ wealthiest, most exclusive districts to triplexes, the theory goes, will create new opportunities for people to move for schools or a job,

provide a way for aging residents to downsize without leaving their neighborhoods, help ease the affordability crunch city-wide, and stem the displacement of lower-income residents in gentrifying areas.

“Several things made this possible, observed Paula Pentel, coordinator of the University of Minnesota’s urban studies program. First was the election of a very progressive city council dedicated to making room for more housing. Second, various activist groups came out to community meetings, put up lawn signs, and voiced their support for reforming the system wholesale. Third was the city’s extensive years-long effort to make sure public outreach didn’t involve only the usual suspects. Instead of waiting for residents to come to planning meetings, planners found residents where they were — at weekend street festivals, for example.”

### Guidelines released for streamlined approval of affordable housing projects

*California HCD*, November 29, 2018

“Chapter 366, Statutes of 2017 (SB 35, Weiner) requires the availability of a streamlined, ministerial approval process for housing developments in localities that have not yet made sufficient progress towards their allocation of the regional housing need. Several projects have been approved using this process and many more are known to be in the pipeline.”

The State of California has issued new guidelines, effective January 1, 2019 (<http://bit.ly/2RuhMew>), “that

establish terms, conditions, and procedures for a development proponent to submit an application for a development to a locality that is subject to the streamlined, ministerial approval process.” (That’s most of us.)

“In addition, HCD will be releasing a series of tools in the coming months to help localities and developers successfully navigate the process.”

*(The news roundup continues on next page)*

**For good health, walk in the park**

*The New York Times*, December 4, 2018

Jane E. Brody, <https://nyti.ms/2QcaU8V>

• “According to the Trust for Public Land, Minneapolis leads the nation’s metropolitan areas in providing the best overall access for the most people to well-equipped and serviced public parks and recreation. Its neighbor, St. Paul, is a close second.

“Minneapolis-St. Paul is also ranked the healthiest urban region in the country. Their residents are out there ice skating, cross-country skiing, sledding, cycling, running, walking, you name it.

“Ninety-six percent of Minneapolisans and 98 percent of St. Paulites live within a 10-minute walk of a park, compared with 70 percent of residents in the 100 largest cities overall. New York City, with 99 percent of residents enjoying easy access to a park, playground, trail or other open area, ranks ninth overall in terms of public outdoor access when park size and other factors are considered.

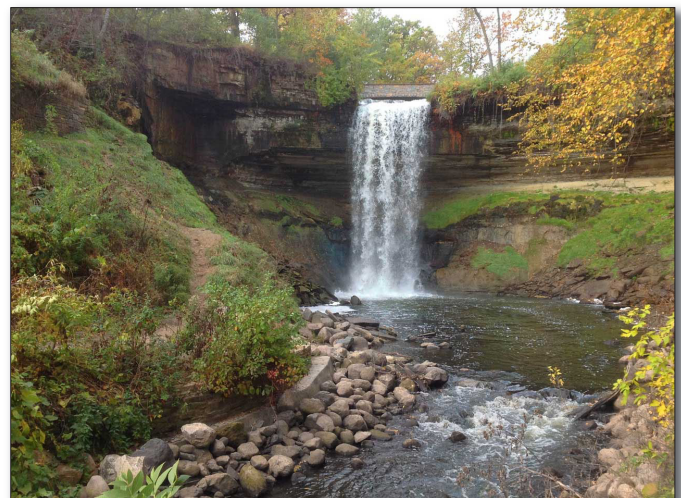
“The trust’s ‘ParkScore’ index ranks metropolitan areas based on the percentage of residents living within a 10-minute walk to a park; the median size of local parks and their percentage of city area; the dollar investment in parks per resident; and the availability of basketball hoops, off-leash dog parks, playgrounds, water-play structures, recreation and senior centers, and restrooms.

“[Other] most livable urban areas in the country are Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., San Francisco, Portland, Ore., Cincinnati, Chicago — and New York, because there are so many playgrounds: Under Robert Moses, park playgrounds increased from 100 in 1934 to 658 by 1960, and now number about 1,000.”



**Southeastern Minneapolis.** Detail from the Summer Park System Highlights map.

Source: Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, <http://bit.ly/2RTPR15>



**Minnehaha Creek, Minneapolis.** A path on a stone bridge crosses above the falls. Photo: A. Niv

*(The news roundup continues on next page)*

**“America really is a nation of suburbs.** The geography of America is shifting. Population and job growth are happening faster in suburbs than in urban neighborhoods. ... There are two conclusions to be drawn from our initial review of the 2017 American Housing Survey neighborhood question results [released in November 2018]. First, there is enough evidence to promote the statement ‘America is majority suburban’ from anecdote, or stylized fact, to fact. Second, existing federal definitions of urban and rural obscure the fact that most Americans describe their neighborhood as suburban, and this is true when looking nationally or at specific Metropolitan Statistical Areas or Census Urbanized Areas.” —Shawn Bucholtz, director of Housing and Demographic Analysis at HUD, and Jed Kolko, chief economist at Indeed, in CityLab.

<http://bit.ly/2QI8aMJ>

### New State Senate bill builds on SB 827

December 4, 2018

**Ethan Elkind**, <http://bit.ly/2Qd5ZV9> • Last year's SB 827 "would have limited local restrictions on housing near transit. Now Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) is back with Senate Bill 50," <http://bit.ly/2QdHHul>.

Introduced December 3, it "retains most of the heart of SB 827 but with changes to address concerns over low-income tenants who might be evicted with new infill development.

"Like SB 827, [SB 50] would address restrictive local zoning in job-rich areas [while promising] a more inclusive process to bring on board more supporters.

Among other things, SB 50 "would eliminate local restrictions on density and on on-site parking requirements greater than 0.5 spaces per residential unit within one-half mile of rail and ferry stops [and] within one-quarter mile of major bus stops. It sets minimum height [and FAR] restrictions to 45 feet [and 2.5] within one-half mile and 55 feet [and 3.25] within one-quarter mile of rail and ferry stops. These limits are lower than those in SB 827.

"And notably, [SB 50] applies to [new] housing [built] not just on residentially zoned land but [also on] land zoned commercial or mixed-use that also allows housing.

"This bill does not apply to properties that have or have had tenants within the last seven years. It also delays implementation until 2025 in 'sensitive communities' at risk of displacement, giving them from 2020 to 2025 to develop community-led plans to address growth and displacement."

*Hat tip to environmental and land use attorney Al Herson, Sacramento.*

### The Bay Area's largely unknown underground threat

*Maven's Notebook*, November 2, 2018

<http://bit.ly/2PxUxD6> • "The threats that sea level rise poses to coastal development from direct inundation are better understood than the threats from rising groundwater levels. Rising sea level will raise the level of groundwater in coastal aquifers, resulting in damage to buried infrastructure and increased potential for flooding from groundwater inundation.

"At the Bay Delta Science Conference on November 18, Abby Mohan, Marine Geographer and GIS Analyst at Silvestrum Climate Associates, spoke about modeling the shallow groundwater layer for the Island of Alameda, Bay Farm Island, and the Oakland-Coliseum area around the San Leandro Bay. 'All three cities surrounding San Leandro Bay will face significant challenges to their sewer systems and to building and roadway stability,' she said.

"She was asked, 'How is the rising of the groundwater affected by an impervious surface?'

"Ms. Mohan responded, 'If ... a concrete parking lot was two feet deep, and previously the groundwater table had been below that ... but the groundwater is now immediately underneath that concrete, water finds a way to get into the cracks and it would probably push the parking lot surface up and break [it] apart.'

"'When you have a concrete basement and a groundwater table is now directly underneath it, that water is going to start to seep into that concrete and cause infrastructure instability. If there are new building regulations to address that, FEMA flood insurance [could be] required which [would] add to the cost of housing in this area' she said."

### U.S. Okays modern, European-style train cars

*Streetsblog USA*, November 23, 2018

**Angie Schmitt**, <http://bit.ly/2RiPLpm> • "The Federal Railroad Administration finalized new safety rules (194 pp., <http://bit.ly/2RqIXGZ>) that bring American standards more in line with those used in Europe — changes that will save American commuter rail operators money and passengers time. The regulation has been making its way through the federal regulatory process since 2013, and received a final push during the waning days of the Obama Administration.

"Under the new rules, old, heavy trains can now be replaced with lighter, sleeker, more-modern models.

"Meeting the Federal Railroad Administration's onerous and antiquated safety rules has been a big problem for

passenger rail operators that use the Federal Railway System (commuter rail and inter-city rail like Amtrak). The U.S. doesn't have a very large domestic train car market, so importing train cars from Europe and Asia is often the cheapest and lowest-risk option.

"Rather than just bulk up, European and Asian trains are designed to absorb impacts and avoid collisions in the first place. And they have better safety records.

"American trains will now be more energy efficient and cheaper thanks to the changes, said Sandy Johnston, a Boston-based transportation planner and writer of the blog *Itinerant Urbanist*." <http://bit.ly/2RpSQVm> ■

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