

NORTHERN NEWS



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Northern

Making Great Communities Happen

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Financial District skyline from SF MOMA

Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP



We came, we planned, we were wrong

Pete Parkinson, AICP

You are all too familiar with the headline by now: **California Is Burning.**

Last fall, more than 6,000 homes were destroyed in Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino counties (including my own home near Santa Rosa). Homes went up in flames in rural, suburban, and urban settings, including 3,000 homes lost *within the city limits* of Santa Rosa.

CalFire had designated some of those areas as *very-high* wildfire hazard; others (including my neighborhood) were considered “only” *moderate* wildfire hazard. Still other areas — like the suburban Coffey Park neighborhood in Santa Rosa where over 1,300 homes were lost — were not considered wildfire hazards at all.

This year has brought no relief. As I write (in mid-August), we’ve seen new wildfires sweep into the city of Redding and threaten Yosemite National Park. The Mendocino Complex, the largest wildfire in California history (eclipsing a record set only a few months ago in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties) continues to burn 45 miles north of Santa Rosa.

Wildfire hazards have been a consistent theme in my career as a planner and planning director in three northern California counties (Napa, Sonoma, and Santa Cruz). I have overseen the preparation of General Plan Safety Elements, Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, and regulatory codes that addressed the full range of hazard management strategies, including road access, water supply, defensible space, and structural design. The underlying theme of these efforts was a belief that wildfire risks can be managed to an acceptable level of public safety, if not eliminated altogether. In fact, I cannot recall any development project that was denied, or where the density was substantially reduced, because of known wildfire hazards.



Journey's End mobile home park, with the Hilton Santa Rosa burning in the background, 10/9/2017, 9:11 AM. My mother-in-law lived at Journey's End, and it had been our evacuation plan destination.

We need to rethink our approach to development in fire-prone areas and wildfire hazard mitigation.

The firestorm that swept into our Santa Rosa community last October has fundamentally changed my thinking about development in California's fire-prone landscapes. Now, 10 months post-catastrophe, let me offer a few lessons learned from one planner's perspective.

Since the state's “Fire-Safe” standards were adopted in the early 1990s, communities and developers have relied on standards focused on adequate water supply for fire-fighting, adequate road access (getting firefighters in and residents out), and structural protection measures like interior fire sprinklers and the “hardened” structures prescribed under the 2008 Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) building standards. Even today, developers propose increasing residential density in fire-prone areas by relying on evacuation plans and

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HUD USER. At the root of the affordable housing shortage are outdated zoning and land use regulations. For low-income families and individuals, subsidies are critical for easing cost burdens. Policymakers can speed the development of affordable housing and insulate the affordable housing stock from foreign investors through public housing, community land trusts, and deed restrictions. [Page 4](#)

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APA California 2018 awards and Northern winners announced

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"How long are Californians commuting?" On average, Californians have relatively modest commute times, although a significant number spend considerable time traveling to and from work. Close to half (45%) of Californians commute for less than half an hour round-trip on a typical workday. About one-quarter (26%) travel between 30 minutes and one hour, while 22% report travel times of between one and two hours round-trip. Few Californians (7%) report travel times in excess of two hours round-trip on a typical workday. Average commute length varies drastically by region. More than 63% of residents of the San Joaquin Valley [but only] 40% of those in the Bay Area have a round-trip commute that is under half an hour." —PRRI 2018 California Workers Survey, <http://bit.ly/2NBXUUD>, page 36. The survey provides a portrait of the working lives of Californians, via a random probability survey of 3,318 California residents. The survey focuses on how experiences differ by region, race and ethnicity, gender, age, educational status, and other characteristics. Interviews were conducted online in both English and Spanish between May 18 and June 11, 2018.



Director's note

Sharon Grewal, AICP

Autonomous Vehicles and the City

Northern Section is proud to support the second national Autonomous Vehicle Symposium hosted by the University of San Francisco. The daylong symposium will focus on the many ways that technology and innovation are reshaping our cities' transportation, economics, and environment. We'll hear from national leaders in business, policy, and academia on how cities will innovate in the new mobility future. Attendees will participate in policy workshops focused on design and management strategies that they can apply in their own work. The symposium takes place on October 15 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the University of San Francisco McLaren Conference Center. See [page 6](#) for more information and to register.

Also, APA National has just released PAS Report 592, "Planning for Autonomous Mobility," by Jeremy Crute, Timothy Chapin, Lindsay Stevens, AICP, and our very own **William (Billy) Riggs, PhD**, AICP, LEED AP. The 84-page report previews coming changes and advises planners on how to prepare for and manage the transitions needed to ensure that their communities reap the benefits — and avoid the pitfalls — of AV technology. The report is free to APA members and can be downloaded from the National APA website at <http://bit.ly/2NTdZp0>.

Northern Section winners of 2018 Chapter awards

We are excited to applaud and announce the nine 2018 California Chapter award winners from Northern Section. You can see the list and read quotes from the winners on [page 13](#). As Section Director, I'm extremely proud of our awardees. Congratulates to all; I can't wait to celebrate your achievements at the 2018 California Chapter Conference in San Diego, October 7–10. We send you our best wishes for success with the National awards, which will be presented in San Francisco April 13–16.

And speaking of the 2018 Chapter Conference in San Diego

You can see the program-at-a-glance at <http://bit.ly/2PG24eG>. The San Diego Section and the Chapter's VP of Conferences, our own **Hanson Hom, AICP**, have been working tirelessly on the conference for

the past three years. The opening reception will be held Sunday evening, October 7, aboard the historic USS Midway. Meet your old friends and make new ones while enjoying a grand party among vintage WWII aircraft. Todd Gloria — Assembly Member from the 78th District and current majority whip — will give the opening keynote. Dr. Mary Walshok, an associate vice chancellor at UCSD, will give the closing keynote. Come celebrate the 70th anniversary of the California Chapter and earn all the AICP CM credits you need. Register now at <http://bit.ly/2PIwvRG>.

Diversity in the planning profession

The American Planning Association is committed to providing opportunities for all to achieve excellence in planning by fostering diversity and inclusion in the organization and the planning profession. APA is committed to being responsive to changes in communities and the challenges being faced in achieving just, equitable, and inclusive communities. Of course, it helps to have diversity and empathy in our own firms and agencies. **Linda Dalton, FAICP**, and **Miguel Angel Vazquez, AICP**, discuss "California's leadership in diversifying the planning profession" on [page 5](#).

New Board members

At our September 6th Board Meeting, Northern Section appointed **Libby Tyler, FAICP**, as Ethics Director, **Sunny Chao**, as Sustainability Director, **Shannon Hake, AICP**, in the new post of Distance Education Coordinator, and **Tom Holub** as Webmaster. We are privileged to have them share their professional experience in support of all we do for you and the planning profession in Northern California. You'll find photos and brief bios in "Who's where" on [page 11](#).

If you're interested in getting involved in our activities and programs and helping your colleagues and the profession, or if you would just like more information regarding our committees and vacant board positions, please contact me at director@norcalapa.org. ■

'State of the Nation's Housing,' 2018

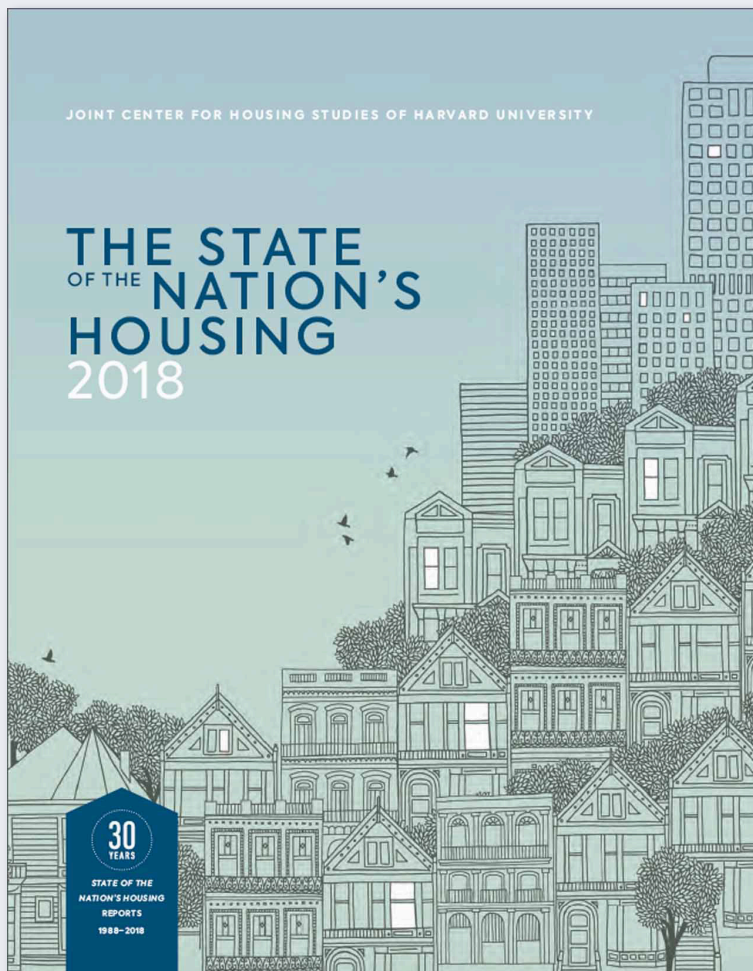
HUD USER, <http://bit.ly/2MMLUiR>

The Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University (JCHS) recently released its annual "State of the Nation's Housing" report for 2018 (view or download at <http://bit.ly/2KT5Gau>). This year's report marks the 30th anniversary of the center's comprehensive research on trends in the U.S. housing market. To celebrate the report's release, JCHS held a panel discussion on June 19, 2018, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, with housing experts and economists who reflected on the strides made since the release of the first report in 1988 and the challenges that remain. The panelists discussed current trends in the housing market, demographic shifts, and solutions to increase the affordable housing supply. (Video 1:30:12 at <http://bit.ly/2KTkeXJ>)

Current housing trends

Daniel McCue, senior research associate at JCHS, began the discussion with an overview of the rental market and homeownership trends presented in the report. *Median rental housing costs* have grown steadily for decades while median renter incomes have remained relatively stagnant. As a result, nearly half (47.5 percent) of the nation's renters are cost burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. *Vacancy rates* in high-end rentals have increased, but vacancy rates for low-cost rentals have declined. Although rental demand and construction of multi-family units increased following the Great Recession, a shortage of low-cost units persists. Unlike multifamily rental housing, the construction of single-family housing has slowed because of a shortage of buildable land, rising construction costs, and shifts in demand and personal preferences.

According to the report, *baby boomers and millennials will drive housing demand and construction in the future*. Seniors aged 65 and older make up a large share of homeowners, and many prefer to age in place (<http://bit.ly/2KTR2j7>), which will reduce turnover in the housing market. As a result, more construction will be needed to increase housing inventory. In addition, seniors will need to modify their homes to better meet their needs as they age. Chris Herbert, managing director of JCHS, stated that housing experts should consider seniors' wishes



to "age in community" close to familiar services, social networks, medical facilities, and neighborhood amenities.

Millennials are fueling an uptick in household growth, although at a slower rate than past generations at the same ages. Yet *homeownership rates among young adults aged 25 to 34 are lower than they were 30 years ago*, not only because of rising housing costs but also because higher education attendance rates have increased and marriage and childbirth rates have decreased. The 2017 homeownership rate for young adults has declined by 6.3 percent since 1987, with student loan debt hindering prospective buyers' chances of qualifying for mortgages and negatively impacting credit scores if they default. Young adults repaying student loans may also have difficulty saving for a downpayment and transitioning from renting to owning.

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Expanding California's leadership in diversifying the planning profession

Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP, and Linda C. Dalton, PhD., FAICP

For the past two years or so, the topic of diversity has taken center stage nationally at levels not seen since the civil rights movement. Its meaning and impacts on economic, political and social structures seem to be debated on a daily basis. Fueling such debate is our nation's tumultuous history bound by centuries of demographic shifts, territorial expansion, advances in technology, cultural diffusion, and policymaking.

It is not uncommon today to find tech giants like Apple and Google as well as everyday corporate brands like Starbucks, Target, and Johnson & Johnson dedicating time and resources to foster cultures of diversity and inclusion within the workplace and out into their service areas.

APA Diversity Vision Statement

The American Planning Association is committed to providing opportunities for all to achieve excellence in planning by fostering diversity and inclusion in the organization and the planning profession. The American Planning Association is committed to being responsive to changes in communities and the challenges being faced in achieving just, equitable and inclusive communities where the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are achievable by all.

Similarly, for the first time in its history, the American Planning Association (APA) recently adopted a *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy* (<http://bit.ly/2N5zgP5>) which includes a detailed definition of what diversity means to APA:

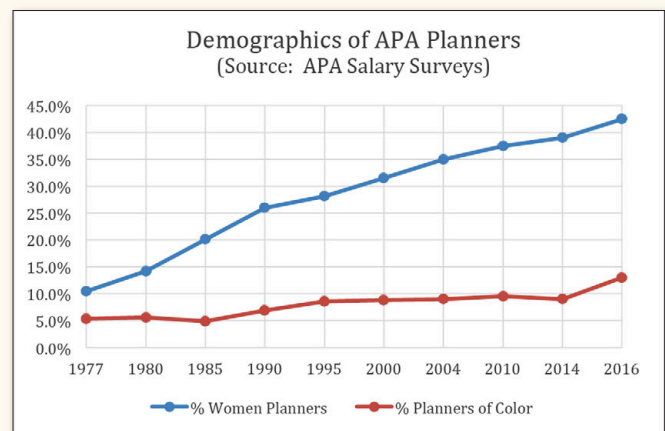
"Diversity is an inclusive concept which encompasses, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, educational attainment, spiritual beliefs, creed, culture, tribal affiliation, nationality, immigration status, political beliefs, and veteran status. With greater diversity, we can be more creative, effective, and just, and bring more varied perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents, and interests to the practice of planning and to the communities we serve. We recognize that achieving diversity and inclusion is an evolutionary process that requires an ongoing renewal of our commitment."

Reaching this milestone did not happen by accident. This achievement builds upon the advocacy of trail blazing planners from every corner of the nation, who for decades have expressed the need for our profession to focus on the issues affecting those feeling — and living — marginalized. While this article does not address every diversity trait suggested in the APA's definition, gender and race data provide a window into understanding diversity trends.

This article briefly explores some issues associated with diversity in the profession — including findings from Dr. Linda Dalton's research on the subject — with a particular focus on the role of California planners and their professional organizations (APA California, the California Planning Roundtable, and the California Planning Foundation) in moving forward the profession's efforts to address diversity, inclusion, and equity.

APA Diversity Snapshot

First, we need to acknowledge that nationally, APA has made significant progress in advancing women, but has lagged in expanding participation by African American, Asian American, Latinos, and other minority groups, as shown in the figure below.



Some of the patterns in the 40-year period can be explained by age and experience. In 2016 less than 30 percent of APA planners with 20 or more years of experience were women, and 7 percent were minorities. Planners entering the field recently are more diverse at 45 percent women and 15 percent minority.

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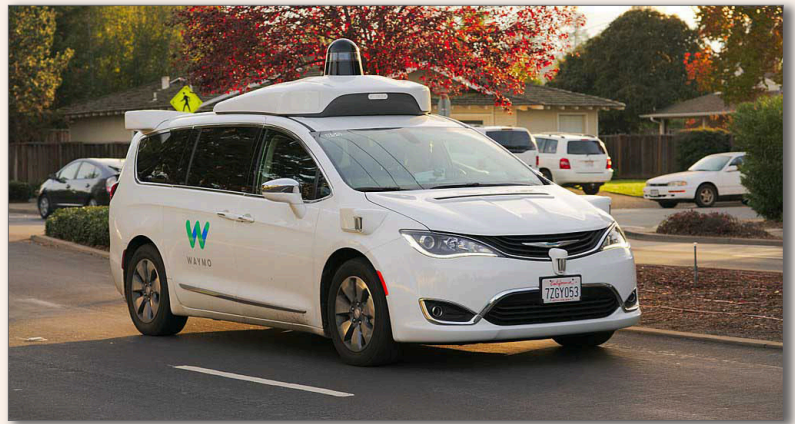
Autonomous Vehicles and the City

A Symposium Developing Policies and Plans for Livability

The University of San Francisco is hosting the second national autonomous vehicle symposium in San Francisco in collaboration with UC Davis, the Mineta Transportation Institute, Fehr & Peers, and Arup. The daylong symposium will focus on the many ways technology and innovation are reshaping transportation, economics, and the environment in our cities.

National leaders in business, policy, and academia will discuss how we can innovate cities in the new mobility future. Attendees will participate in policy workshops focused on design and management strategies that policy makers and planning practitioners can apply in their own work.

The symposium will be held Monday, October 15, from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., at the University of San Francisco McLaren Conference Center, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco.



Waymo hybrid minivan undergoing testing in Los Altos, 2017.

Photo: Daniel Lawrence Lu, CC-BY-SA-4.0

For more information and to register, go to <http://bit.ly/2LESmqH>. AICP CM credits pending. ■

Where in the world



Photo: Aliza Knox (Answer on [page 12](#))

Autonomous vehicles, pedestrians, and cities

John David Beutler, AICP

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) have a pretty good safety record already, and we can reasonably expect that they'll be more reliable than cars driven by humans. AVs will not become distracted, sleepy, bored, angry, or intoxicated. Their sensors will see in all directions and their reflexes will be fast. When they tailgate, it will be called platooning and it will save space on the road and energy.

So it was a jolt when an AV being tested in Arizona struck a pedestrian this year. We could rationalize it as an indication of immature or flawed technology or manufacturing, like a bolt that snaps and brings down a bridge. But that was not entirely the case. Maybe more surprising than the crash was that the car saw the woman before it killed her.

The AVs are coming

Members of the planning and urban design profession are thinking about the many potential effects of autonomous vehicles on our cities — positive and negative, large and small. AVs might induce sprawl, reduce the need for parking, exacerbate air pollution, create congestion, reduce transit usage, and impact equity.

That said, amidst an iPhone-like technological optimism and while occupied with the other continuing demands on our professional attention, we are largely letting the technology firms and car companies drive us toward the looming AV future. For most of us, AVs will be the first physical robots with which we interact, and we really don't know what to expect. It's common to imagine being inside an AV, watching movies, catching up on our reading, eating, or sleeping. Very little is being suggested about what it will be like walking or cycling, facing an AV at the crosswalk. As it's coming toward you, is the AV seeing you (think Arizona)? What calculations are being made in its electronic brain?

Why did the AV hit a person it saw?

Imagine the process of a computer driving a car as being similar to a smart phone's autocorrect function rather than to a calculator solving an equation. The AV is reacting to conditions on the fly and with imperfect information. To prevent the car from stopping at every drifting shopping bag, it is programmed to ignore objects that have a lower probability of being human — which leads us to Arizona (<https://bit.ly/2wn3175>). As the technology improves,



Pedestrians have close encounters with vehicles all the time. How will that change as AVs become more common? Photo by author.

misidentification will happen less frequently, but there will always be uncertainty. And safety will never be the only concern for AVs, any more than it is for human drivers, who may speed in a school zone because they're late for a meeting. Will there be something to stop a ride-hailing company from dialing down the safety to trim a few seconds from each ride if it can save money and raise the share price?

Is there a correct response to AVs?

In my work, we are considering the design issues posed by AVs at the neighborhood, city, and regional scale (Chicago example, <https://bit.ly/2oa0FkW>). But no matter how the city is designed, if AVs operate carelessly, aggressively, or unpredictably, they will diminish our public spaces: Pedestrians fought it out with cars and trucks on the streets of the early 1900s. By the late 1920s, with the invention and outlawing of jaywalking, the cars had won (<https://bit.ly/2FAuSkQ>).

Unsurprisingly, we're in the early rounds of a similar battle as technologists call for the control of pedestrians to meet the needs of AVs (<https://bloom.bg/2LGVAdl>; <https://bit.ly/2onaKeC>). This time we need to start with a set of rules — something that works for everyone and establishes how robot drivers must behave on our streets — if we are to protect both our sense of safety and our actual safety. Traffic laws may punish lawbreaking, as

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we saw this year in San Francisco when an AV was ticketed for allegedly failing to respect a pedestrian's right of way (<https://bit.ly/2ws7X7m>). But we need something more foundational, more akin to Asimov's Laws of Robotics about the relationship of robots with humans (<http://bit.ly/2LewZMB>).

I suggest these five principles as a starting point:

1. An autonomous vehicle must conform its behavior to the safety, comfort, and expectations of people outside the vehicle.
2. Humans must be made aware when a vehicle is under autonomous control.
3. Before it may move at any speed, an autonomous vehicle must be a minimum of five feet from any outside human.
4. An autonomous vehicle must signal its intentions to people outside the vehicle but must not command them in any way.
5. A non-occupant must be able to control an autonomous vehicle, at a minimum to cause it to stop.

(For background on this list, see my article in *The Urbanist* [Seattle], <https://bit.ly/2woMqMV>.)

Etiquette for robots

Whether or not you agree with these particular rules, we need standards for AVs beyond the laws that now apply to vehicular movement and traffic safety. If every AV manufacturer or operator has its own rules and its own expectations of pedestrian and bicycle behavior, we on the street will never know what to expect. We do not want a world where we need to know what brand of AV is approaching to know whether it's safe to cross the road.

Generally, the federal government regulates vehicle safety and the states register vehicles and license drivers. As both the vehicle and driver, the AV can fall through the cracks. The current federal administration has taken a hands-off stance. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, "the Department's *preference* is for regulations that are non-prescriptive, performance-based, and seek to enhance safety *whenever possible*" (emphasis in the DOT original, <https://bit.ly/2oj9LvQ>). Is "whenever possible" good enough? Given the locations of many of the companies involved and much of the testing, it seems that the essential work will happen at the state and city levels, perhaps specifically in California and the Bay Area.

We will need city officials, traffic engineers, pedestrian and bicycling activists, health experts, psychologists, and equity advocates to assist in setting the rules. This is not because of the ethical concerns about tech companies acting in their own interests, but because they have different goals than do the many important groups in society, and those groups need to be at the table. We need a public conversation about the rules on our near-future streets, and we need an entity — one with the ability to make the rules — to convene that conversation.

Early efforts to form cooperative relationships with AV companies have had mixed results (See CityLab, <https://bit.ly/2Fj3OGg>). Though there are efforts underway like the Autonomous Vehicles Perspective Paper by MTC and ABAG (<https://bit.ly/2LzoAU4>) that seek to address AV issues, the focus is too broad to address the fundamentals of behavior and safety. A fragmented local response could well lead to federal preemption that, in turn, may serve the corporations more than the most vulnerable users of our streets.

A future history

With AVs running in the streets, will the planners of 2070 regret our inaction? Will we be like the city builders and officials who enabled the proliferation of automobiles in the early 20th Century but failed to see how the auto would diminish our cities, our environment, our health, and our public spaces? (See <http://bit.ly/2BzbuXo>.) Or will the denizens of 2070 congratulate us on our foresight?

Let's not wait for more tragedies like Arizona. Let's not wait to work out the terms of our relationship to AVs after they're ubiquitous. Let's find a way to come together and develop a structure for this important relationship among humans, streets, and AVs.



John David Beutler, AICP, has worked at the intersection of urbanism, land use, and transportation for the last 18 years. He is a senior urban designer at SOM in San Francisco, having joined the firm in 2015. Beutler holds a master's degree in city planning from UC Berkeley and a B.S. in entrepreneurial management from Missouri State University. You can reach him at johnbeutler@hotmail.com. ■

Call for papers: A Healthy City for All

56th International Making Cities Livable Conference, Portland, OR, June 17–21, 2019

Suzanne Lennard, Ph.D. (Arch.)

We rejoice that many cities now are becoming healthier — making great improvements in sociable, walkable, and bike-friendly streets, public transit, fine-grained mixed use, high density, human scale housing, and access to community places, nature, and healthy food. At this conference we anticipate presenting the best models around the world, both in presentations and in design competition.

These improvements are not reaching the population groups most in need. The poorest neighborhoods suffer the greatest health problems. Many cities face an unprecedented housing affordability crisis, gentrification, and increasing homelessness. We especially want to hear from you if you are introducing innovative strategies to improve poor neighborhoods, rein in housing commodification, and end homelessness.

Presentation of papers

Papers are invited from practitioners and scholars in planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, and urban affairs on such topics as public health and planning in city government and education, access to nature, public places for social life, a healthy urban fabric for 10-minute neighborhoods, sustainable and equitable housing, combatting inequitable gentrification, strengthening ethnic and cultural diversity, transforming suburbs into walkable neighborhoods, and maintaining city identity, to name a few.

A full list of topics and a submittal form are available in the *Call for Papers* at <http://bit.ly/2OOC5BF>.

Design awards competition

The 2019 IMCL Design Competition jury will consider all submissions that speak to designing a healthy city for all. Projects that emphasize health, equity, community, and sustainability are actively sought, and will be given particular consideration. The review procedure will be conducted by blind peer review.

Projects may be in design or already constructed, but must be real projects commissioned with the intention to build. There are no restrictions as to where these projects may be located. For details see <http://bit.ly/2ONgbyB>.

The conference will be held at the Sentinel Hotel, 614 SW 11th Avenue, Portland. For information about the program, and to register, go to <http://bit.ly/2OJZMuB>. AICP CM available (40+).



Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard is the co-founder and executive director of International Making Cities Livable Conferences, since 1985. She holds an M.Arch and a Ph.D. (Arch.) from UC Berkeley, and was a lecturer in the university's Department of Architecture, 1971–77. ■

“Who you know? How Californians get jobs. More than half (54%) of Californians say that their personal connections, such as close friends, family members, or coworkers, did not help them get their current or most recent job, compared to 37% who say that their personal connections did help them. Young Californians (ages 18 – 29) are notably more likely than seniors (ages 65 and older) to have received help from their friends or family in securing their most recent job. Nearly four in ten (39% of) young Californians, compared to only about one-quarter (26%) of California seniors, say that their personal connections helped them get their current or most recent job.”

—PRRI 2018 California Workers Survey, <http://bit.ly/2NBXUUD>, page 34. The survey provides a portrait of the working lives of Californians, via a random probability survey of 3,318 California residents. The survey focuses on how experiences differ by region, race and ethnicity, gender, age, educational status, and other characteristics. Interviews were conducted online in both English and Spanish between May 18 and June 11, 2018.

Planning news roundup

Excerpts linked to the original articles

A new Starbucks may be a proxy for gentrification

CNBC, September 4, 2018

Thomas Franck, <https://cnb.cx/2MUyx4k> • “A new Harvard Business School paper used Yelp data to find that the entry of each Starbucks into a ZIP code is associated with a 0.5 percent increase in housing prices within a year.

“This data point is revealed in a broader study on gentrification by the Harvard Business School that relied on information from Yelp and the United States Census.

“It’s not clear whether housing prices are rising due to the Starbucks opening itself or simply because more affluent customers that would go to the coffee chain have moved into the area.

“Harvard economics professor Edward Glaeser said Yelp data reveals it may be the latter. The study found that each 10-unit increase in the number of reviews is associated with a 1.4 percent increase in housing prices in the ZIP code.

“The most natural hypothesis to us is that restaurants respond to exogenous changes in neighborhood composition, not that restaurant availability is driving neighborhood change,” the paper concludes.



Graphic from “Gentrification: A Timeline,” Next City, <http://bit.ly/2PC80p4>

“The presence of a Starbucks is far less important than whether the community has people who consume Starbucks,” Glaeser writes in the paper. “Consequently, we think that this variable is likely to be a proxy for gentrification itself.”

The benign neglect of California’s forests is ending

Gov. Jerry Brown was involved in negotiations on SB 901 and is expected to sign it

Los Angeles Times, September 2, 2018

Editorial, <https://lat.ms/2MWZZhu> • “Decades of fire suppression have allowed forests to grow dense; management practices have led to more intense and destructive fires that are more dangerous to people living near the forests and more damaging to air quality.

“That’s not all. Healthy forests are among nature’s most powerful carbon sinks, absorbing carbon that would otherwise contribute to global warming. Cutting trees helps only if you cut the right ones.

“California lawmakers [have taken] an important and reasonable step toward reducing wildfire risk. The plan provides \$1 billion from the state’s cap-and-trade program over

five years to thin the forests, cut brush, and set controlled burns.

“It also eases rules for cutting trees on private property ... to give private property owners more incentive to do preventive work and reduce the fire risk on their land.

“It’s also a recognition that California has 15 million acres of forests in need of some kind of restoration. Even with \$1 billion in new funding, the public sector can’t cover the cost of all the work that is needed. The challenge will be ensuring that environmental and public safety interests, not commercial interests, drive the state’s policies on forest management.”

(The news roundup continues on [page 21](#))

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
INTERNATIONAL

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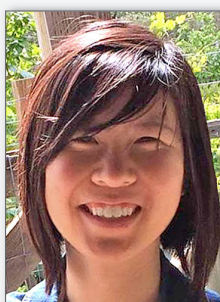
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Who's where



Amanda Eaken, director of transportation and climate for the Natural Resources Defense Council and director of transportation for the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge, has been named to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors. She holds a master of city planning from UC Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in ecology from Dartmouth College. At NRDC, she has led efforts to implement SB 375, California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection law.



Sunny Chao has been appointed to the Northern Section Board as Sustainability Director. As an associate planner with the City of Los Altos, Chao was project manager of their Climate Action Plan. She holds a B.A. in urban studies from UC Berkeley. Chao studied sustainable urbanism in Asia and organized a public exhibition, Ecotopia Asia, at the National University of Singapore.



Shannon Hake, AICP, has been named as Northern Section's Distance Education Coordinator, a new position. She lives in Oakland and works at WSP as the project manager for the Bay Area Carpool Program. Hake served for six years on APA's National Capital Chapter Board of Directors, where she was also chapter president. She holds both a master's and a bachelor's degree in urban and environmental planning from the University of Virginia.



Tom Holub has been appointed Webmaster for Northern Section. He is the founder and principal of Totally Doable Consulting, a strategic and technology firm consulting to nonprofits and the public sector. From 2000 to 2013, Holub was the Director of Computing for the College of Letters & Science, Dean's Office, UC Berkeley. He holds a B.A. in urban studies from UC Berkeley and lives in Oakland. Holub blogs on social issues related to urban cycling at <https://bike-lab.org>.

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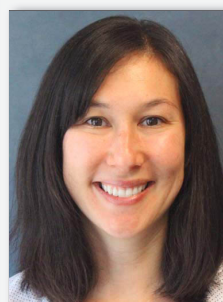
Who's where (continued from previous page)



Ned Thomas, AICP, is now Planning Director, City of Milpitas. Previous positions include division manager, City of San Jose Environmental Planning team; community planning director, Windsor, California; and principal planner, Henderson, Nevada. Thomas holds a master's in urban planning and design from Harvard and a B.S. in geography from Brigham Young University.



Libby Tyler, PhD, FAICP, a resident of Albany, CA, has been appointed to the Northern Section Board as Ethics Director. She recently retired from the position of community development director/city planner for Urbana, Illinois. Tyler is very familiar with the AICP Code of Ethics, having prepared and presented ethics training sessions at three Illinois State Section meetings (2012–2014). She holds a PhD in regional planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a master of landscape architecture in environmental planning from UC Berkeley, and a B.A. in environmental conservation from the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Courtney Wood, AICP, has joined Alta Planning + Design as Planning Associate in the Oakland office, focusing on Safe Routes to School programs and bicycle master plans. She brings more than 10 years of experience in long-range planning and community engagement, including four years at Michael Baker International in Oakland and four years at RBF in Irvine. Wood holds a B.S. in urban and regional planning from Cal Poly Pomona. ■

Answer to Where in the world (Page 6)

Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, with the Convention Center at right seen against a third of the Darwin skyline. A city of about 146,000, Darwin is the smallest, most northerly of Australia's capital cities. In February 1942, warplanes of the same Japanese air fleet that had bombed Pearl Harbor, dropped a considerably larger number of bombs on Darwin. Photo: Aliza Knox

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Northern Section's 2018 State Award winners announced

At 5 pm on Monday, Oct. 8, at the California Chapter conference in San Diego, APA California will recognize the best in planning around the state. The jury reviewed 61 submittals and is granting 28 awards. Of those 28, nine awards are being presented to projects, firms, or plans in the Northern Section of the chapter. Here are those award winners, along with a quote obtained by Northern News. Please cheer on the award winners at the conference!

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Academic Award

Newark Old Town Urban Design Concept Plan

City and Regional Planning, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

"The student team was creative and inspired the community to think of what was possible. The city council funded a Specific Plan — a process now underway — to implement many of the concepts." —Terrence Grindall, Assistant City Manager, City of Newark

AWARD OF MERIT

Best Practices

SB 1000 Implementation Toolkit

California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) and PlaceWorks

"Creating the toolkit challenged us to collect and synthesize an array of tools already available for socially equitable and environmentally just planning. We really enjoyed preparing this guide for planners and communities across California." —Cliff Lau, Project Planner, PlaceWorks

AWARD OF MERIT

Comprehensive Plan, Large Jurisdiction

Propel Vallejo General Plan 2040

City of Vallejo

"Propel Vallejo General Plan 2040 recognizes the city's eclectic, artsy, working class character. It reaches out and connects with the community in a way that gives them ownership of the vision." —Afshan Hamid, Acting Planning Director, City of Vallejo

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Comprehensive Plan, Large Jurisdiction

Belmont General Plan Update, Belmont Village Specific Plan, and Climate Action Plan

City of Belmont, Dyett & Bhatia

"Together, these plans highlight our responsibility to economic growth within our transit corridor. Their comprehensive, self-mitigating policies endeavor to improve sustainability and quality of life. We appreciate the recognition!" —Carlos de Melo, Community Development Director, City of Belmont

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APA CA Northern Section's 2018 State Award winners announced (continued from previous page)

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Emerging Planning and Design Firm

SITELAB urban studio

"In these exciting and challenging times for cities, we are thrilled to be honored for the work we love to do: building places and opportunities for community from the ground up."

—Laura Crescimano, Co-founder and Principal, SITELAB urban studio

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Grassroots Initiative

Pop-Up Care Village

SITELAB Urban Studio, Lava Mae

"SITELAB's inclusive, collaborative, and thoughtfully guided process perfectly mirrored Lava Mae's commitment to rapid prototyping. It created a solid foundation to prove our model with the first iteration." —Doniece Sandoval, Founder and CEO, Lava Mae

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Transportation Planning

West Contra Costa High-Capacity Transit Study

West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee

"We truly appreciate this recognition. We hope it raises the study's profile, so we can find funding to implement these transit improvements along one of the most congested corridors in the Bay Area."

—Leah Greenblat, WCCTAC Project Manager

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Hard-Won Victory

Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan

City of Palo Alto, PlaceWorks

"Palo Alto is thrilled to be recognized for this collaborative and thoughtful process, as well as for the incredible amount of hard work that went into the preparation and adoption of the city's new Comprehensive Plan." —Elena Lee, Senior Planner and staff project manager, City of Palo Alto

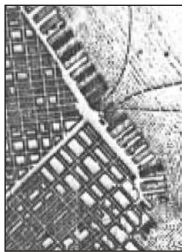
AWARD OF MERIT

Urban Design

Healdsburg Citywide Design Guidelines

Winter and Company, Boulder

"We're thrilled to be recognized for an aspirational and practical document that acknowledges the importance of design and community participation in maintaining Healdsburg's unique sense of place." —Maya DeRosa, AICP, Planning and Building Director, Healdsburg. ■



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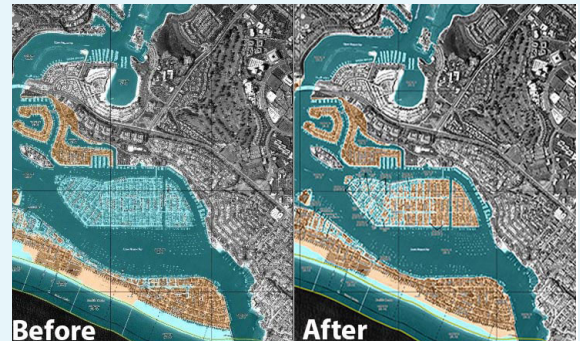
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FEMA agrees to shrink Newport Beach coastal flood zone by more than half. Newport Beach has persuaded the Federal Emergency Management Agency to exclude about 2,700 properties in the coastal part of the city from updated flood maps. Owners in parts of the Balboa Peninsula, Balboa Island, and West Newport won't need

flood insurance, saving up to about \$3,700 each in premiums per year, the city estimates. City staff worked on the rollback for two years, showing



FEMA that municipal infrastructure such as seawalls and sand berms on the beach protected more of the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods than the federal agency's models predicted. The city this year added nine-inch concrete caps to Balboa Island's publicly maintained seawalls, which are about 80 to 90 years old, at a cost of about \$1.8 million to get a few more years out of the barriers. A long-term plan shows the city building full new walls over several years starting in 2026. —Hillary Davis, *Los Angeles Times*, <https://lat.ms/2LfQy7p>

The first quieter megacity, thanks to electric vehicles. Because of how Shenzhen developed, with skyscrapers filling in the spaces between rural farm communities, about half the city's residents are urban villagers, who don't necessarily require their own cars. The new Shenzhen has a mix of electric buses, electric bikes and scooters, electric taxis, and even electric dump trucks. Although the city arrived late to urban noise, the shift to EVs that China has been pushing more than any other country has put Shenzhen at the leading edge of something unprecedented: the quieter city.

—Blake Schmidt, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, <https://bloom.bg/2Pu1hgS>

Will the State's wildfire package suffice? "Questions remain about whether the bills [approved by the legislature at the end of August], if signed into law, will do enough to protect communities where more Californians live. 'There's too much focus on the rural areas, in my view,' said Michael Wara, a climate researcher at the Stanford Woods Institute, who also cited the challenge of local resistance to tree thinning. 'What needs to happen is a community-level change. That's the challenge.'" —John Myers, *The Los Angeles Times*, <https://lat.ms/2wEBZot>

“shelter in place” strategies to protect new residents. While these measures will no doubt provide some measure of increased safety, they are not enough, in my view, to offset the risks. Here are four specific points based on my experience in Sonoma County during the fires:

- **Evacuation plans are essential, but events rarely unfold according to plan**, especially during a wind-driven firestorm. Residents in some Santa Rosa neighborhoods spent nearly two hours in their vehicles, crawling along in traffic trying to get to safety — and this was in areas where the roads were built to full urban standards. In my rural neighborhood, with two-lane roads with shoulders, some had to make their way to safety by driving overland and through fences as flames, fallen trees, and downed power lines blocked the roads. Some had to abandon their cars and literally run for their lives. I have friends in north Santa Rosa who left their home before it caught fire, only to have their way blocked by a fallen tree. They called their kids to say goodbye but thankfully were saved *two hours later* by the heroic actions of two CHP officers. Simply put, *the speed, intensity, and expansive scope of the firestorm that hit Sonoma County last fall completely overwhelmed many evacuation routes.*
- **Sheltering in place is a last-resort strategy.** The WUI standards for new buildings increase the odds of a building surviving a wildfire, but relying on a hardened structure to protect whole communities in a known fire-prone area is the height of hubris and callousness. In Santa Rosa’s Fountaingrove neighborhood, homes that were built to WUI standards appeared to fare no better than those built before those standards. This needs more investigation, but it is testimony to the power and intensity of the wind-driven fire, the likes of which we had not imagined. The lesson is that *we cannot engineer our way out of every hazard.* We also need to think about the psychological cost. I’ve spoken with people who sheltered in place and are grateful to have come through safely, but they suffered a traumatizing and terrifying experience. PTSD is now a community-wide issue in Sonoma County. Sheltering in place is a last resort, not a “plan.”
- **Defensible space is critical to protecting communities in fire prone areas.** Every county and most cities have their own rules about vegetation management that, *if followed*, definitely reduce fire risk. But defensible space requirements are only effective if they are implemented and maintained over the long-term. Before the fires last fall, some property owners took this

issue seriously while others easily slipped into an “out-of-sight-out-of-mind” complacency. Now, of course, the whole community is charged up about this issue and “defensible space” is a new buzzword. But if experience is any indicator, that enthusiasm will fade, and owners will become more interested in a nice-looking landscape than in protecting themselves against a hazard that is difficult to comprehend if you haven’t lived through it.

- **Increasing density in rural, fire-prone areas increases the likelihood of a catastrophic fire** by adding fuel (buildings, landscaping, vehicles) to the natural landscape, and creates significant risks for residents in and near such developments. Hazard mitigation and “Fire-Safe” standards help, but they do not offset the risk and may only create an illusion of safety. **The fire hazards in some areas of our state are simply too great to allow additional residential development.**

We planned for the worst we could expect. It wasn’t enough.

We plan for what we can envision. It turns out our vision was insufficient. Our understanding of fire-dependent ecosystems, historical fire behavior, and the experience of wildland fire experts informed our pre-fire planning efforts in the North Bay. As planners and as local government decision makers, we thought we had adequately anticipated the hazards and had planned accordingly. We were wrong.

As emergency responders (and like almost every public employee), we trained and exercised for scenarios we thought were “worst case.” We were wrong about that too.

What happened in the North Bay fires last October exceeded everyone’s vision and prudence, and we’ve seen similar catastrophes play out up and down the state since then. We have been given severe lessons on the risks of putting ever more people in harm’s way. Those lessons need to work their way into our General Plans, zoning, and everyday planning practice — and soon.



Pete Parkinson, AICP, is the president of APA California. He was Environmental Coordinator for Santa Cruz County from 1984–1996. From 1996 until he retired in 2013, Parkinson worked for Sonoma County’s Permit and Resource Management Department and was its director for 11 years. He is currently consulting on projects for public agencies in Sonoma County. You can reach him at pete.parkinson54@gmail.com ■

Affordability challenges and solutions

Rising construction costs, land prices, and regulatory barriers (<http://bit.ly/2KV2Em3>) have made developing new affordable housing difficult. Former HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan stated that *the issue at the root of the affordable housing shortage is outdated zoning and land use regulations*. Americans are dealing not only with income inequality but also with geographic stratification, in which low-income and higher-income groups live in disparate areas of cities and suburbs. Donovan emphasized the role of state and local governments in overriding zoning codes and increasing transportation options to allow more minorities and low-income families to live and work in higher-opportunity areas. Herbert of JCHS said that one strategy states can adopt is to develop "as of right" districts to expand the supply of affordable housing. Reducing local zoning regulations to allow the construction of accessory dwelling units, increasing infill development, lowering permit costs, relaxing parking requirements, and instituting density bonuses for developers are other strategies that states can implement.

The low level of single-family housing construction and for-sale inventory coupled with the rise in home prices places homeownership out of reach for many Americans. The increase in home prices also raises downpayment and closing costs, which can be even harder to finance than monthly housing payments. The homeownership rate among African Americans lags behind that of other racial groups, and the black-white homeownership gap has widened by 29.2 percentage points. To bridge this gap, Donovan emphasized the need to focus on fair housing, housing finance, and the broader challenges of structural disadvantage and discrimination in the housing market.

Adding to the supply of affordable housing would help lower costs for renters, but for low-income families and individuals, subsidies are also critical for easing cost burdens and making

housing more affordable. From 1987 to 2015, the number of very low-income renters increased by 6 million as the number of those assisted increased only to 950,000. George McCarthy, president and chief executive officer of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, spoke about the need to implement safeguards to reduce competition between the investment market — which profits by quickly renovating housing and raising rents beyond the financial means of existing residents — and the shelter market. With housing choice vouchers and low-income housing tax credits as the primary rental assistance programs in the shelter market, McCarthy suggested that policymakers identify ways to speed the development of affordable housing and *insulate the affordable housing stock from foreign investors* through public housing, community land trusts, and deed restrictions.

Ways forward

Eric Belsky, director of the Division of Consumer and Community Affairs at the Federal Reserve, noted the larger economic consequences of income stagnation amid high housing costs. Cost-burdened households have less money to spend on other goods and services and struggle to save for retirement or emergencies. Critical to avoiding a national housing crisis, Donovan emphasized, is rebalancing priorities and linking revenues directly to the scale of the problem. The supply of low-cost housing needs to keep pace with low-income residents' demand. Addressing structural and geographic disadvantages is critical to ensuring that low-income residents and minority groups can access neighborhoods of opportunity. Increased coalition building, streamlined regulatory codes, housing finance reforms, and other measures can help increase low-income families' access to affordable housing.

Ed. note: You can also view or download the "State of the Nation's Housing" report for 2018 (44 pages, 5.6 MB) from our Northern Section website at <http://bit.ly/2OKBh0s>. ■

AVs: Modeling disruptive trends. "It is important to understand how private sector market forces are changing travel decisions and behavior. ... Without government action, the private sector business model for TNCs and MAAS generates revenue based on miles of travel, minutes of travel, demand levels, and choice of vehicle/service. Hence, the private sector is currently incentivized to increase the use of vehicles while the public sector [has] focused on reducing vehicle miles of travel (VMT) to improve sustainability. ... As vehicles become more automated and connected, they offer greater potential to increase roadway capacity. The increase will come from shorter headways, less weaving, and more stable traffic flows. Roadway capacity will increase first on freeways and expressways, then on major arterials." —Ronald T. Milam, AICP, and William (Billy) Riggs, AICP, Meeting of the Minds <http://bit.ly/2wAE3Ok>

However, when we look at the academic 'pipeline' into the profession, there is a critical gap between the diversity of students in planning schools vs. their participation in APA.

About 30 percent of recent planning students are racial minorities whereas (as noted above) 15 percent of planners with less than 5 years of experience are racial or ethnic minorities (student data from the Planning Accreditation Board).

The patterns vary significantly across the U.S. In four states (Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, and Montana) half or more of the planners were women in 2016; whereas in nine states less than one-third were women (Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia). Generally, the southern and western regions employ more planners of color in comparison with New England, mid-Atlantic, and north central regions of the country.

A Note Regarding Data

APA, the Planning Accreditation Board, and other planning organizations could do a more thorough job of collecting data and following planning careers. To date, data is only available for traditional definitions of gender and for racial/ethnic background (often grouped as "white" or "non-white"), and not for other dimensions of diversity included in APA's broad definition.

Comparative data for trend analysis is very problematic. U.S. Census definitions continue to evolve, with the addition of multiple race options and with an increase in the number of respondents to surveys who decline to answer questions about race or ethnic heritage. Further, APA and PAB have handled counting Latinos differently, so their data are not directly comparable.

The discrepancies are sufficiently large to call for action while concurrently working toward more systematic and comparable data.

We also know from Dr. Dalton's research that women and minority planners were more likely to see their work as nontraditional than men/white planners. And planners who considered their work to be nontraditional were less likely to find APA relevant to their careers.

Further, the nature of professional practice for women and planners of color differs distinctly from white men even among those who belong to APA. For example, white

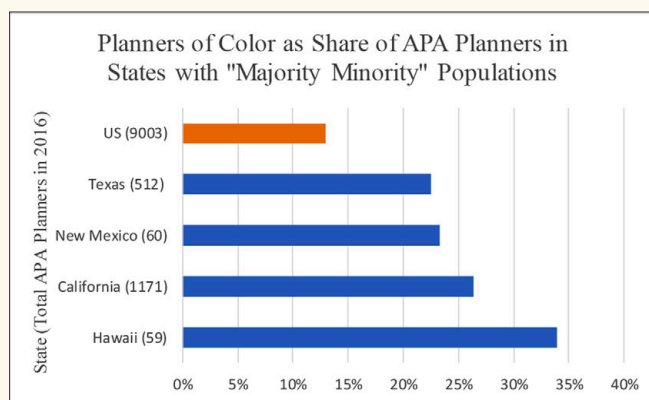
planners were more likely to be involved in land use without community development, while the reverse was true for planners of color. White planners also engaged in environmental planning more often than planners of color.

In sum, we can't just expect the planning profession to become more diverse by "aging out" mature planners as they retire. What accounts for the success of women in planning — and is any of it applicable to planners of color? We need to know what happens to planning students of color after they leave the university — where they work, what their career paths are like, what professional organizations support them, and where they succeed (and where they do not). We need to consider how planning is portrayed and perceived outside the immediate profession, especially by professionals and leaders of historically underrepresented groups/communities.

California

At 45.6 percent, the involvement of women in planning in California is greater than the national average for APA members in 2016. Ten other states employ higher proportions of women, but the sheer number of women in planning in California exceeded their combined total in 2016.

California leads the nation in the ethnic diversity of the profession: APA California members represent 13 percent of all APA members, but 27 percent of racial and ethnic minority planners nationwide. While Hawaii employs a higher percentage of planners of color (at 34 percent), California has many more planners. The following figure shows the share of planners of color in states with "majority minority" populations.



Demographics certainly help explain this relative success, yet California out-performs other "majority minority" states except Hawaii. And Proposition 209 (1996) prohibits California's public institutions from affirmative action.

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Leadership on Diversity from California Planners

Aside from the demographic trends, the diversity transformation in the planning profession at the state and national levels has been fueled by the active engagement of various California planners. In many respects, such evolving engagement can be traced back to the devastating civil unrest in Watts in 1965. According to APA California Historian Steve Preston, communities of color formed organizations — the Watts Community Labor Action Committee, United Neighborhoods Organization, TELACU, Spanish-Speaking Unity Council, community design centers, and L. A.'s Barrio Planners to name a few — to represent their communities. Pioneers include Dr. Ed Blakely, Alvin James, Yukio Kawaratani, Dr. Leo Estrada, Frank Villalobos, and others.

Planners increasingly turned to questions of equity, although those early efforts often lacked the depth of understanding required to address racism and economic injustice. Only after the 1992 civil unrest in Los Angeles did a California chapter initiative lead National APA to launch its Agenda for America's Communities, and a tradition of diversity summits continuing today.

In terms of gender diversity, early planning pioneers from the 1940s and 1950s including Mary Robinson Gilkey, Gloria S. McGregor, Minnie Ruth, Marilyn M. Pray, and Betty Croly, FAICP, were instrumental in shaping APA California. APA California has elected seven women as president: Gloria McGregor, Janet Ruggiero, FAICP, Reba Wright-Quastler, AICP, Collette Morse, AICP, Jeri Ram, AICP, Brooke Peterson, AICP, and the incoming President Julia Lave Johnston. The work of Carol Barrett, FAICP, regarding planning ethics and women in planning, has also supported diversity in the profession. And APA in 2018 posthumously recognized Margarita McCoy, FAICP, as a Planning Pioneer, in part for her role as an instrumental mentor for many California planners.

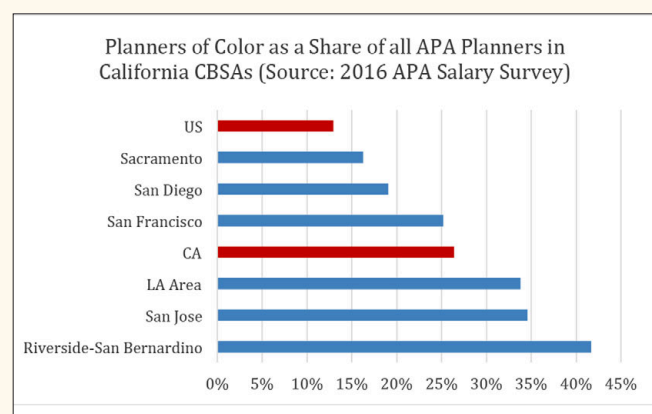
More contemporary members who have carried the torch and have combined gender and racial equity as the propeller for diversity and inclusion at APA include planners such as Jeannette Dinwiddie-Moore, FAICP, and David Salazar, AICP (co-authors of APA's California Membership Inclusion Plan), Linda Tatum, FAICP, Hing Wong, AICP (first Asian-American elected as APA California President), James Rojas (Latino Urbanism

Pioneer), Bill Anderson, FAICP (APA Past-President who among other things appointed California Planners to serve on the national APA Diversity Task Force), and Connie Malloy, Anna Vidal and Miroo Desai, AICP (who were instrumental in organizing the eight Chapter sections to form a Diversity and Inclusion Committee and in coordinating the annual Diversity Summit at the State conference). More recently, under the leadership of planner Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP, APA adopted its first diversity and inclusion strategy. The list of California planning leaders advancing an agenda of a more just and equitable planning practice continues to grow.

In short, our preliminary findings suggest that individual leadership, role models, mentors, and diversity sessions at state and section conferences and meetings have contributed to creating a more supportive culture for planners of color and women in California. Over several decades, their numbers have grown and sustained a movement that has landed in APA's court to examine and to take a stand and actions pertaining to diversity, inclusion, and equity in the planning profession and practice.

What more should California do?

Within California, there is significant variation by region (*i.e.*, Core Based Statistical Area, or CBSA) for both women and planners of color. In 2016 more than half of the APA planners in the Bay Area (San Francisco and San Jose CBSAs) were women, while the percentage was lower inland and in Southern California. The disparity for planners of color is greater, ranging from about 16 percent in the Sacramento CBSA to nearly 42 percent in Riverside-San Bernardino in 2016.



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Our preliminary study suggests that the success factors we listed above have been ad hoc or fragmented rather than systematic or institutionalized. Therefore, we recommend the following:

- Regular, visible coverage of all aspects of diversity in section newsletters and CalPlanner magazine, including profiles of prominent planners from all backgrounds;
- Regular sessions regarding diversity in planning during “prime time” at state conferences — with assured CM credit for attending and participating in such sessions;
- Encouragement of a diverse range of planners to assume leadership at the section and state levels;
- Recognition of leadership contributions to diversity in section and state awards programs, including scholarships for planning students;
- Formal mentoring for planners of color and planners from other minority groups, involving and connecting experienced planners with planning students and young professionals; and
- Tracking planning students from California's many planning programs and reporting their career progression.

The United States of America is a diverse nation unlike any other in the world. Geographers would explain that, over the course of history, North America has changed as a result of cultural diffusion, advancements in technology, and a European race for hegemony. Today, the ripple effects of that experience manifest in our daily work.

Facing inequities — unjust and unfair practices — is by far the most challenging aspect of the planning profession. Sometimes it is hard to talk about it, and sometimes easy to forget. Bringing these issues to the forefront is essential, as they are in many respects the root causes of many planning dilemmas.

Diversity in the planning profession is a portal into the conversation.



Linda C. Dalton, PhD, FAICP, is professor emerita of City and Regional Planning at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where she also served as chief planning officer. She is an emeritus member of the California Planning Roundtable and former board member of the California Planning Foundation. Her work has earned

awards from the American Planning Association, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and Planning Accreditation Board.



Miguel A. Vazquez, AICP, currently serves as the American Planning Association's Diversity Committee Chair and as Healthy Communities Planner for the Riverside University Healthy System-Public Health. He is an active member of the California Planning Roundtable and received the 2018 APA President's Award to honor his work to advance diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Sources:

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Lower East Bay housing moves forward

San Francisco Business Times, August 31, 2018

Fiona Kelliher, <http://bit.ly/2Nao6J5> • “As renters flee San Francisco and Silicon Valley, East Bay cities from Concord to Fremont have positioned themselves as cheaper alternatives for Bay Area professionals.

“With Newark about three-quarters of the way to meeting a 2,500-unit goal on new waterfront development, Integral Communities and Trumark Homes have received approval for 331 units under the Bay-side Newark plan. Formerly known as the Dumbarton Transit Oriented Development plan, the plan was approved in 2011.

“Union City has poured over \$163 million of public money into revitalizing the neighborhood surrounding BART, with an additional \$850 million from the private sector invested or planned to develop new housing. A public park and a promenade leading to a new eastern entrance to the BART station have been completed.

“Windflower Properties started leasing out Union Flats, a 243-unit apartment development next to BART. Rents range from \$2,315 to \$3,310 for one- or two-bedroom units. Windflower, which exclusively develops transit-oriented sites, has approvals for another 443 units directly adjacent to Union Flats. That project is pushing for a 2020 opening date.

“Other new developments nearby include MidPen Housing at Station Center (157 affordable units, the result of a public/private partnership with funding from the city, county, and state); AvalonBay Communities (438 units), and Essex Property Trust (282 units).”

Blocking development prices residents out of neighborhoods they want to preserve

CityLab, August 28, 2018

Joe Cortright, <http://bit.ly/2BYejBD> • “In city after city, we see ... current residents ... at city council or planning meetings objecting to new development ... ‘so our neighborhood will stay the same.’

“Slowing or stopping new ... housing development has exactly the opposite ... effect. It constricts the housing supply, drives up rents, and fuels displacement.

“I profiled Oakland’s Uptown and Fruitvale neighborhoods (<http://bit.ly/2BT7mS6>). Both experienced almost identical increases in rents and home values as the city boomed. Fruitvale, which has built more housing, has seen dramatically less demographic change. Uptown, which has built almost no new housing, has seen its population shift.

“If you don’t build new housing, you intensify the shortage, raise rents, and amplify displacement. People associate new buildings with new residents, and assume that if new housing isn’t built, new people won’t show up, or they’ll go somewhere else. That’s not the case.

“A big reason some low-income neighborhoods are seeing development pressure is because wealthier urban neighborhoods and suburbs generally have been effective in deploying NIMBYist regulations that block development.

“In the game of musical chairs that is the urban housing market, the only way to make sure that all people find a place to sit — i.e., not be displaced — is to add more chairs. Research on the subject, notably by California’s Legislative Analyst Office — and confirmed by skeptical academics at UC Berkeley’s Urban Displacement project (<http://bit.ly/2BY2sTS>) — is that building more market-rate housing reduces displacement.”

(The news roundup continues on next page)

“Safe, affordable housing is necessary to improve health. CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, assesses the largest US cities on nine evidence-based policies that can create healthier communities that thrive. Recognizing housing as a determinant of health and overall quality of life, CityHealth spent more than a year considering a range of pragmatic policy options available to city leaders that could improve the quality, availability, and affordability of housing in urban settings. It found that no single policy is a cure-all for the highly variable housing challenges facing cities, but that inclusionary zoning is one tool that must be part of a larger and more comprehensive toolbox, ensuring safe, stable, and affordable housing. It is an important indicator of a city’s commitment to producing affordable options alongside new development and growth. CityHealth identified four key criteria that should exist in a comprehensive inclusionary zoning policy: have an inclusionary zoning law in place, require program evaluation, apply to projects of at least 10 units, and mandate that at least 20 percent of the total number of units in a development are affordable.” —*Shelley Hearne, Brian Castrucci, Loel Solomon, Health Affairs*, <http://bit.ly/2BzVwMG>

Chicago Architecture Center empowers young people to shape their city

WTTW Chicago, August 27, 2018

Daniel Hautenger, <http://bit.ly/2LvSo41> • “Only 19 percent of registered architects in the United States are women. Three percent are Latino, and 2 percent are African American.

“The Chicago Architecture Center (<http://www.architecture.org>) aims to address that lack of representation and to empower the wider public to engage in the architectural and urban planning decisions that affect their lives.

“Using ‘No Small Plans’ as a starting point (<http://bit.ly/2LwiTXc>), CAC runs community design workshops, and partners with teachers to integrate the graphic novel into curricula at schools throughout the city.

“For older kids with ambitions to enter architecture or urban planning, CAC offers a Teen Fellows program for women and young people of color (<http://bit.ly/2BV9cCa>) that starts during their sophomore year of high school.

“Sixteen Fellows begin to learn the fundamentals of architecture, meeting every other Saturday during the school year. Over summer, they begin with urban planning and community design. Their second year focuses on urban planning and paid summer internships. The Fellows program ends in the fall of the Fellows’ senior year, when CAC helps them with their portfolios and applying to college.

“The most important thing is to inspire the feeling that they belong in this set of fields that has been hard to enter if you’re someone of color, if you’re a woman. We’re helping them along on a journey, and we’re there for them,” says Gabrielle Lyon, CAC’s Vice President of Education and Experiences.”

Public transport should be free

We don’t put coins in street lamps or pay by the minute in public parks.

Jacobin, August 24, 2018

Wojciech Kębłowski, • “The number of cities experimenting with fare-free public transport (FFPT) is on the rise.

“FFPT exists in ‘full’ form in at least 96 of the world’s cities and towns for the vast majority of local public transport routes and services, for the vast majority of users, and for most of the time. In at least 138 other cities, fares are suspended either for specific areas, modes of transport, or periods of the day or year.

“Commerce, the Los Angeles suburb, reportedly first used full FFPT in 1962. Today, FFPT exists in 27 U.S. localities: small urban/rural areas (e.g., Edmund, Oklahoma; Kootenai County, Idaho), university campuses (Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Macomb, Illinois) and natural parks and tourist resorts (Crested Butte and Estes Park, Colorado).

“A plethora of fare-free systems have emerged in Europe, particularly in Poland (21) and France (20). Many European municipalities justify FFPT as a strategy for reducing car use (e.g., Avesta, Sweden; Bełchatów, Poland), car-related pollution and noise (Tórshavn, Faroe Islands), as a policy helping disadvantaged groups (Lubin, Poland; Colomiers and Compiègne, France), or to re-define collective transport as common good (Aubagne, France; Mława, Poland).

“Tallinn, Estonia, at 430,000 inhabitants, is the largest city to currently host a ticket-free program. Still, transport experts seem convinced that fare abolition is irrational, senseless, and irresponsible.”

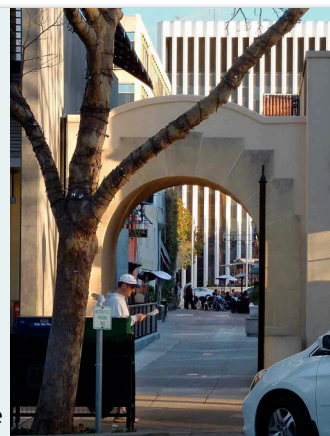
Hat tip to Direct Transfer. Read more at <http://bit.ly/2PbfwXI>.

(The news roundup continues on next page)

Palo Alto needs help at the top. “Palo Alto’s Chief Transportation Official Joshua Mello has resigned, leaving the city with a vacancy in one of its most critical and challenging positions. Prior to coming to Palo Alto, he worked as a consultant at Alta Planning + Design. His departure adds to the growing list of vacancies at the highest level of City Hall. The positions of city planning director, public works director, and chief financial officer are now being filled on an interim basis. The city will also have a vacancy at the top of its utilities department when its general manager takes over as city manager in December.”

—Gennady Sheyner, *Palo Alto Weekly*, <http://bit.ly/2wzFDQG>

Palo Alto City Hall from University Avenue



Healdsburg to limit downtown hotels, require affordable housing

The Press Democrat, August 23, 2018

Kevin Fixler, <http://bit.ly/2LA3lkY> • “Amid a growing public outcry over the proliferation of hotel rooms downtown, Healdsburg’s city council has asked staff to draft an ordinance banning any more hotels in the town’s central retail hub.

“In addition, the ordinance would require hotel developers to create one affordable housing unit for every five hotel rooms built, or pay a fee toward a fund aimed at creating such housing.

“The decision requires council endorsement at later public meetings.

“Healdsburg had 387 hotel rooms at the start of the year, including 142 downtown, according to the city. By year’s end the total number is expected to balloon to 548 across the city

— a 42 percent increase. Another 178 rooms are in the pipeline, ultimately bumping the city’s total to 856 rooms in the coming years.

“[Our] ‘small-town charm is a very delicate thing,’ Councilwoman Leah Gold said. ‘So why in our right minds are we talking about approving any hotels at all? We don’t need any more hotels right now. It’s time to be responsible and take a pause.’

“Mark Luzaich, owner with wife Marie of the small Duchamp Hotel downtown, asked what the new limits would mean for existing hotels like theirs, which had long-term plans of adding to its six guest rooms. The envisioned ordinance would prevent Duchamp’s expansion.”

Building housing on flood plains is another sign of growing inequality

The Conversation, Aug 21, 2018

Deborah de Lange, <http://bit.ly/2BCFSQA> • “Flood plains are easy to build on because they are flat and, in cities, they tend to be close to amenities. Yet ... irresponsible choices made by elites, at Waterfront Toronto for example, leave unsuspecting, lower-paid professionals in dangerous circumstances with rising insurance costs and potentially bad investments. That’s because future flood insurance may become prohibitively expensive or insurers may decide not to cover high-risk properties.

“Research shows that densely populated areas are more vulnerable — the same disaster affects more people in dense environments.

“New York City is going to build a wall around the lower part of Manhattan and add a park. The Dutch are using

public space to absorb floodwater. New Orleans is building parks to double as reservoirs for floodwaters, on the advice of the Dutch.

“Meanwhile, new Toronto lakefront condominium developments are proceeding on flood plains historically contaminated by heavy metals, oil, and coal. ‘Workforce housing’ is a required part of the plan. Middle-income professionals are expected to settle in the waterfront condominiums so that they can be closer to where they work.

“However, the waterfront area remains a flood plain and is affected by storm surges. We have also seen streetcars submerged in water recently with people trapped inside. What’s left of Toronto’s waterfront should be public parks, not condominiums billed as ‘workforce housing.’”

(The news roundup continues on next page)

BART housing bill on governor’s desk. Under AB 2923, “BART could develop tens of thousands of homes on property it owns near stations. The bill requires that BART replace any parking spaces eliminated with parking options elsewhere. The BART board has until July 2020 to formally adopt its guidelines. Affected cities would be required to bring their own zoning laws into compliance with BART standards or allow the agency’s rules to govern development on its property. 17 Bay Area cities and the League of California Cities registered opposition to the bill.” —*The California Report*, KQED, <http://bit.ly/2BUacGH>

What the Berlin Wall can teach us about urban development

Chicago Booth Review, August 21, 2018

<http://bit.ly/2BCZ2Wx> • “Economic activity isn’t evenly distributed across geographical space. This is reflected in the existence of cities [and] the concentration of economic functions in specific locations within cities, such as Manhattan in New York and the Square Mile in London.

“When Berlin was divided at the end of the Second World War, the western part lost access to the heart of the city; when the wall came down in 1989, the city was reunified. The researchers tracked the fortunes of West Berlin, which remained a market economy during the 41-year period of division, collecting data on employment, population, and rents between the 1930s and the 2000s.

“They find that property prices and economic activity in the eastern side of West Berlin, close to the historic central

business district in East Berlin, began to fall when the city was divided. Then, after reunification, the same area began to redevelop: West Berlin suddenly had access to all the knowledge and public resources in the resurgent central business district it had been denied. This spurred development in these areas, raising land prices close to the central business district and demonstrating the positive effect of exposure to density in neighboring areas.

“The model ... has practical applications for urban planners making decisions on infrastructure and housing. [It] also makes it possible to simulate what will happen to places that are close to proposed new infrastructure, what the potential economic spillovers to other locations may be, and ... when improving one area is likely to hurt another area.”

Cooling the Concrete Jungle

CityLab, August 20, 2018

Linda Poon, <http://bit.ly/2BFoyKQ> • “Finding shade isn’t always easy in Dallas, Texas. Though home to the 6,000-acre Great Trinity Forest, there’s a dearth of trees in the rest of the city. And the urban heat island effect has made Dallas one of the fastest-warming cities in the United States.

“‘If we continue to add impervious surfaces and remove trees, we could have an urban heat island that covers almost half the city,’ said the director of operations and urban forestry at the Texas Trees Foundation.

“The Foundation [started] mapping Dallas’s tree cover in 2015. Aerial imagery captured the overall canopy, and the team physically counted the species of trees in a sample of more than 600 plots. On average, Dallas has 29 percent canopy coverage. Some neighborhoods have less than 10 percent.

“[The] team’s map combines heat, health, equity, flood zones, and pedestrian and biking safety data. They targeted areas that show high health disparities, public schools that have little to no shade, and places with high foot traffic and pedestrian deaths.

“The Texas Trees Foundation’s report (81 pages, <http://bit.ly/2BA6jXh>) suggests that the city will need to increase its tree canopy by about 5 percent (roughly 300,000 trees) to make a dent in curbing the heat island effect.

“‘Part of what we’re doing,’ said the Texas director of the Nature Conservancy, ‘is generating the science to connect the dots between trees, vegetation, mental health and well-being, and things like asthma.’”

(The news roundup continues on next page)

“What I learned on the city council. There’s no question that serving as a local elected official in California has gotten a lot harder over the past decade or two. And, mirroring what’s happening at the national level, the ability to get things done locally has gotten much more difficult. Local politics is getting more ideological and the divisions in every city are getting starker. A disagreement on policy is one thing, but one [citizen] declared — in the subject line of his email — ‘Give me plastic bags or give me death!’ ... But maybe the most important thing is simply to help people see political and civic life in their town as a shared effort that includes not just the elected officials but everybody else as well. That’s where the hope lies: When ordinary people from various backgrounds are inspired to step out of their own world and into the wider world of civic involvement.”
—Bill Fulton, Zocalo Public Square, <http://bit.ly/2wyqEGA>.

The jobs-housing hamster wheel

Shelter Force, August 20, 2018

Rick Rybeck, <http://bit.ly/2BEHDgl> • “Housing affordability appears to be a conundrum. Housing prices tend to be low in communities where job opportunities and/or compensation levels are low. But even relatively ‘cheap’ housing in these communities might not be affordable if household members are unemployed or earning low wages. Contrarily, where job opportunities are more robust in terms of number and compensation levels, housing prices tend to be very high, leaving many households struggling to afford decent housing if they have average or even above-average incomes.

“Many communities are stuck on a jobs-housing hamster wheel where increasing job opportunities and higher wages appear to be canceled out by a matched increase in housing prices and rents.

“It is not the price of lumber, bricks, or labor that accounts for high or low housing prices. The controlling

factor most often is the price of land. If public goods and services are tied to particular locations and are well designed and well executed, these areas will rise in value.

“Many economists from widely divergent perspectives agree that returning publicly created land value to the public sector and recycling them for public purposes — known as land value return and recycling or LVRR — could have significant benefits. For example, LVRR encourages more compact development, which is more sustainable both environmentally and fiscally.

“LVRR is typically overlooked or underutilized as a revenue source. More robust utilization of LVRR could substitute for taxes on privately created building values. It could lead to more real estate development activity resulting in both increased employment and more affordable housing, thereby overcoming the jobs/housing conundrum.” ■

“These California counties have the highest concentration of homes vulnerable to wildfire.

Deadly wildfires, once again, have pushed the conversation about the risk of living in some parts of California to the forefront. A new analysis by insurance data provider Verisk Analytics shows that more people are in danger than you might think. More than 2 million homes — about 15 percent of all housing units in the state — have high to extreme risk of wildfire damage, according to the New Jersey-based firm. In seven counties, mostly in Northern California, more than two-thirds of all homes were in jeopardy. Verisk Analytics used three factors to determine risk, including how close a property is to forests, shrubs and trees; whether it is near hilly or mountainous terrain; and if it is hard to reach and isolated. In the case of the northern counties, the risk will be higher because homes are often dispersed at the edge of a wildland area, said Lenya Quinn-Davidson, a Eureka-based fire advisor for the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Quinn-Davidson said many homes actually burn not from the front of the fire but from embers landing on nearby shrubs or roofs filled with debris.”

— Michael Finch II, Sacramento Bee

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

County	DUs at High and Extreme Wildland Fire Risk	Percent DUs at High and Extreme WL Fire Risk
Los Angeles	444300	13
San Diego	254400	22
San Bernardino	111500	16
Ventura	77900	28
Alameda	77000	13
Riverside	76800	10
Orange	73800	7
Santa Clara	63200	10
El Dorado	53900	61
Santa Cruz	52400	50
Contra Costa	50100	13
Sonoma	47600	23
San Mateo	40500	15
Butte	40300	42
Nevada	39300	75
Monterey	38500	28
San Luis Obispo	38300	33
Placer	37200	24
Santa Barbara	37100	24
Marin	33700	30
Kern	33100	12
Humboldt	27300	44
Shasta	25100	32
Tuolumne	25100	80
Napa	24100	44
Mendocino	23800	59

California counties with more than 20,000 dwelling units at high and extreme wildland fire risk.

Source: <https://verisk.com>

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- Increase public awareness of the importance of planning;
- Encourage professionalism in the conduct of its members; and
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