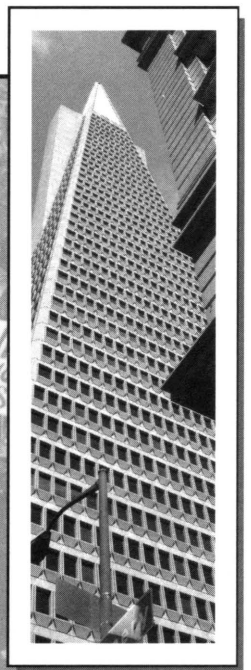
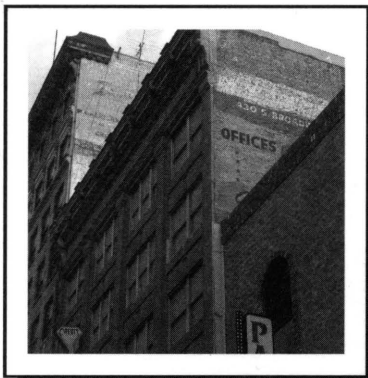


URBAN ACTION



A Journal of Urban Affairs

Urban Action

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2003

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**Urban Studies Department
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Dear Reader,

With great pleasure, we have assembled before you the 2003 edition of *Urban Action*. Upon its pages we trust you will find insight, intrigue, and a diverse exchange of ideas not atypical of the dynamic metropolitan environment in which we reside.

The content in this year's edition covers a broad sweep of the challenges our contemporary urban areas face, from smart growth and housing to the important social question of transracial adoption. We are also pleased to announce a new element in the journal's content this year: the Postmark section. Inside you will find brief but assuredly interesting commentary on the urban experience from outside our borders.

Though the editors and authors have worked hard this year to bring you that which fills our pages, there are others who have been of incredible value to us along the way. We would like to thank the Urban Studies and Political Science office staff for their cooperation throughout the year, as without them our meetings may have lacked a permanent home for some time. Many thanks to Jeannine Hritz, a member of our editorial staff, for her generosity throughout the year in her endeavor to ensure we were always well fed at meetings. None of what you see here would be nearly as friendly to the eye without the talent and devotion of our layout designer, Laura Ajello. Also special thanks to the SFSU Instructionally Related Activities Board for their continued support. Last, but never the least, we would like to thank the Urban Studies faculty and staff, particularly our journal advisor Professor Ayse Pamuk, for their understanding of the immensity of this undertaking, in addition to their already superb support of us all.

We hope you enjoy the journal,

The Editors
Urban Action 2003

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Photos: Aaron M. Seymour

The UN Plaza Fountain: Past, Present, and Future

Historical perspectives on a SF landmark

By Arcadia Smails

San Francisco's UN Plaza, and particularly the fountain that was built on it, have incited and endured criticism on many fronts since their construction 20 years ago. In the following article, Arcadia Smails chronicles the troubled past of this civic landmark and offers insight into how its future will affect the community that surrounds it. Since the completion of this piece, plans to tear the fountain down and redesign the plaza have accelerated, evidenced by the newly placed chain-link fence that surrounds the plaza. This multi-million dollar project, however, is meeting resistance of its own, and will surely draw more conflict as it develops.

“Anything cool they’ll tear out,” Lloyd says with a cynicism that looks well earned. “They already ripped out the benches,” he adds.

Here for the wide open space and a place to rest, Lloyd is sitting on the low steps surrounding the fountain at United Nations Plaza in San Francisco, just a few blocks from the gold-gilded dome of city hall where a proposal is circulating to take the fountain out. Lloyd, unaware of his pivotal role in this plan, has shaggy brown hair, a kind, soft face and a vacancy in his eyes that comes from having no deadlines, bills to pay, or places to go. He used to be in the Navy, later worked as a day laborer, and now talks about having a hole in his heart that seems both literal and symbolic.

With Halloween approaching, it’s sunny for the first time in several days, and Lloyd blends into the bustle of this weekend’s farmers’ market. Circling the fountain are tables weighed down with produce including colorful piles of oranges, artichokes, pomegranates, and squashes. The tables are covered by roofs of heavy white sailcloth, and behind the stands stacks of empty boxes and Styrofoam crates reveal the volume of a Sunday’s business here.

While shoppers delicately pluck up fruits and

vegetables or pull flower bouquets out of white plastic buckets at the market, afternoon ramblers criss-cross the plaza and sometimes stop at the fountain’s edges to sit and talk. There are Chinese men, older whites and blacks of both sexes, and young families all orbiting the watery attraction. One young man wearing a yarmulke and absorbed in a book drifts about the fountain as the light changes from a radiant autumnal heat to shadow.

With one of San Francisco’s classic street cars—the orange F—lumbering by on its metal tracks, with the old-fashioned lampposts nearby waving Giants flags to rally the team and city toward a World Series win, and with the multi-cultural mix of people enjoying this space, the fountain seems as if it could be the centerpiece of a civic dream in which monuments of the past coexist harmoniously with ideals of the present.

But that’s not how others, including San Francisco’s Mayor Willie Brown, view this piece of public artwork. When the market is gone and the weather is bad mid-week, people like Lloyd stop blending into the crowd. Joined by dozens of other people like him, the fountain becomes the resting ground for homeless men and, occasionally, women. Throughout UN Plaza their carts cluster against lampposts, the smell of alcohol seems

“ Market Street is going to be the greatest street in the world and this [granite fountain] is going to help make it that. ”

to rise from the pavement, and garbage begins to gather in the crevices of the fountain. Celebrated by urban planners in theory for its captivating and soothing qualities, the fountain's display, becomes a thing to be ignored and avoided, paid attention to only by the homeless, petulant seagulls, and hundreds of swarming pigeons. The people buying produce on weekends have no reason to come, and weekday pedestrians skirt by on the edges of the sidewalk.

Without the color and distraction of produce stands and shoppers it's much easier to notice what surrounds the fountain—many potential eyesores for city planners. The Strand movie theater sits across Market Street, advertising “5 Hot New Films Daily” and boasting the “Best Variety of Adult Movies.” On the side of the building, story-high silhouettes of nude women look like girls on the mud flaps of interstate cargo trucks and frame the words “Live Nude Show” and “Lap Dancing” to those driving up the street. Also on the block is the Bargain Bee, the Pioneer Army/Navy Pawnshop and a Pay Day Loans outlet. Hidden behind a mural, there's also a large empty lot marked by graffiti and dead grass.

Mayor Brown, along with other city officials, wants to change this area, wipe it clean of the homeless and make it more attractive to merchants and pedestrians. Tearing out the fountain is one idea that's gaining momentum among those plotting to accomplish this goal. Lloyd, surprised and saddened to hear it, wonders what they plan to put in its place.

The plan to remove the fountain is tied to many ironies, one of which gives urban theorists fodder for class lectures on how good intentions can go awry and how bad intentions can make things even worse. For it was in addressing the urban blight of large sections of Market Street, one of San Francisco's main thoroughfares, in the

1960's and '70s that the UN Plaza fountain was born. But today the fountain itself is pinpointed as the foment of surrounding decay. Lauding the proposed installation in 1974, architect and city commissioner William McCormick proclaimed, “Market Street is going to be the greatest street in the world and this [granite fountain] is going to help make it that.”¹

Supported by a 1968 bond issue approved by voters to undertake a massive renovation of Market Street, the city commissioned Halprin and Associates, a landscape architecture firm, to create three plazas along the stretch of Market Street between downtown and the waterfront.² UN Plaza was built to connect the city's governmental offices, the underground transit system, and Market Street. The fountain was distinguished with enough grandeur to adequately tie itself to a commemoration of the UN's founding. In an article written by Market Street Joint Venture Architects and published in Building Stone Magazine in 1981, the plaza and fountain were said to represent “our planet's continuity and brotherhood, the essence of the United Nations.”³

Typifying an all too frequent response to many public art installations, some critics at the time of the fountain's construction were caught up in its appearance rather than its message. Members of the City Art Commission's Visual Arts Committee called the fountain “ugly” and “ludicrous” and one commissioner, Antonio Sotomayor, was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the design would better serve “the pit of the bears at the zoo.”⁴

It's easy to see where Sotomayor was coming from. Measuring 125 by 65 feet, the fountain is

“ ...[The] Visual Arts Committee called the fountain ‘ugly’ and ‘ludicrous’...the design would better serve ‘the pit of the bears at the zoo.’ ”

made of 73 slabs and a total of three to four million tons of Sierra granite that overlap each other laterally and create intersecting islands of stone above a pool of water. The fountain looks blocky, but its largest slabs are intended to represent the earth's major continents, and the water flowing through it symbolizes the different types of water flows in California.⁵



Incorporating the cutting edge of 1970s technology, the fountain is programmed with a daily schedule that includes a changing tide, a wave machine, and the simulation of fog, mist, rain and waterfalls.⁶ It is also designed to sense existing wind conditions in order to prevent viewers from being unduly sprayed.⁷ Dubbed a “brainy fountain” by the San Francisco Chronicle in 1977, the fountain is made more unique through the use of a computer to help run its “giant interlocking system of pipes, pumps, meters and valves.”⁸ Today, it looks dated—stuck in a virtual wasteland of 1970’s urban design that makes San Francisco’s Victorians look more quaint and its new highrises even slicker.

At the time of its creation many city residents were also upset, even outraged, by the fountain’s cost. The March 18, 1974 San Francisco Examiner article, “Architects win, City gets Slab in the face,” included one of the first published cost estimates as the City Art Commission approved the “\$500,000 granite slab fountain” with a 6-4 vote.⁹ The estimated cost rose to \$1.1 million in a follow-up article printed on March 21st, and by 1978 the finished fountain was assigned a price tag of \$1.5 million.¹⁰ In addition, John Cribbs, then Assistant Director of Public Works, estimated the fountain would cost more than \$40,000 annually to keep running.¹¹

Exacerbating controversies over the fountain’s design and cost, the completed fountain

spent only brief moments in full swing. The pipes, pumps, meters, and valves were too hard to operate, or didn’t operate at all. Today many of them are rusted, and the water that does spurt into the air gives no discernable allusion to tidal flows or waterfalls.

But despite its vexed history, the fountain has succeeded in some ways. In 1975, Warren Truitt, President of the Market Street Development Project wrote, “the idea of the United Nations Fountain is participation. Instead of an austere, classical design that would say ‘look, but don’t touch,’ the design for the fountain invites people into its environment, to become a part of it in their enjoyment...”¹²

And people do enjoy the fountain. They gather around it, sit on its wide open slabs, and linger on its surrounding steps. To the dismay of many, however, most of these people, day in and day out, are like Lloyd. This may be why two identical signs now rise up against the back of the fountain that read, “Climbing/Lying on This Fountain is Prohibited, Park Code 303.”

“God that’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard of,” Mary Millman says with exasperation. She’s recounting new plans for the fountain and doesn’t mind being frank.

Sitting beneath a white tent marked by a hanging wooden sign that reads “office” Mary is playing host to a weekly market selling crafts, rather than produce at UN Plaza. It happens

every Thursday and Friday twelve months out of the year, and Mary has been managing it since the fall of 1999. Like the farmers' market, the crafts fair is non-elitist. For sale are baskets from South America, hand made soaps and candles, and knick-knacks imported from Asia.

At Mary's booth are two tables covered with dark blue cloths: one holding donuts and dispensers of coffee for hungry vendors, the other serving as her desk and holding a beige cashbox and clipboard of papers. Mary has cordoned her two Jack Russell Terriers behind metal fencing and talks to them as they stand on their hind legs yelping. The chicken nuggets from Burger King she splits in half for them are still warm.

In her early sixties, Mary has dark brown hair streaked with purple dye and a face both wrinkled and youthful. She is a member of the UN Plaza Working Group, a 15 member voting body created by the Board of Supervisors to determine the Plaza's future use of a federal grant for the area totaling approximately \$1 million. She is also one dissenter in a recent vote of 9-2 forwarding plans to tear the fountain out.

The Working Group is comprised of appointees from various city offices, including two appointed directly by the mayor, one from the Recreation and Parks Department, and four from the Department of Public Works (DPW). In addition to these appointees, a homeless advocate, members of the Market Street Association (comprised of locally based merchants), and members of the public at large have been included.

But while an image of citizen participation has been created by the group's formation, documents show that the DPW and Mayor Brown have their own agenda for this area. And it is unlikely that the opinions of Mary, or others like her, will keep the city from having its way. Memos requested by Adam Arms, staff attorney for the Coalition on Homelessness, from Edwin Lee, Director of Public Works, place current plans to remove the fountain into a much larger, and more sinister, chronology. This chronology gives homeless advocates here reason to believe the city is on a campaign to punish, rather than help, the poorest citizens of San Francisco—even at the cost of public squares and monuments.

In a meeting with DPW representatives on

October 25, 2000, Mayor Brown requested the removal of all benches from the Plaza and, because of "health concerns," requested an evaluation of the fountain's removal as well. Mayor Brown knew that the homeless occupied the benches, and that the fountain had become the occasional spot for public defecation.

In a DPW memo from December of 2000 the plaza's twenty-four benches were acknowledged to be in good condition because of special maintenance given to the area in celebration of the UN's 50th anniversary in 1995. Despite this report the benches were sawed off at their bases during the night of April 28th, 2001 at a cost of \$20,000. In a San Francisco Chronicle story outlining the event, 68-year-old Jay Carter, who lives in a nearby residential hotel room, was said to have missed the benches the next morning. "Old people like myself need a place to sit down," Carter said.¹³

According to documents Lee provided, lighting is also among Brown's concerns. A May 2001 "Proposed Plan of Action" for the area included "enhancing perception of safety within the plaza by developing and installing an intense pedestrian lighting plan...making the plaza a comfortable corridor for transit users, but uncomfortable for transients to sleep in at night."¹⁴

In the same action plan, removal of the fountain was acknowledged to be "problematic" and alternatives were proposed. "These modifications would aim to make it uncomfortable to come in contact with the fountain, or to be in proximity to it, in order to alleviate misuse," the plan states. "Preliminary brainstormed ideas" included "spray jets, misters, fences or other barriers."¹⁵

Since then no such deterrents have been installed and the "problem" of the fountain's removal—its historic relevance and place within the civic art collection—are being at least temporarily sidestepped through the voting process of the UN Plaza Working Group. One proposal under consideration by the city and Working Group is by designer Boris Dramov and includes putting in a small street, or turn-around, in the fountain's place.¹⁶ This fulfills parameters outlined by the \$1 million given to the plaza since the money comes from the Transportation and Communities and Systems Grant Program and must be used to improve access to public trans-

“
It’s nihilistic from my point of
view in terms of urban design.
It’s stupid with a capital ‘S.’
”

portation. According to Judi Mosqueda, a city employee within DPW, many people avoid the Civic Center MUNI and BART stop here because of the plaza’s “condition.”

The new street would be used alternately as a pedestrian walkway and as a place for traffic—perhaps even as a taxi stand. Like other public squares and walkways in San Francisco, the new UN plaza “footpath,” without fountain, may be lined with palm trees. In Mary’s view, the palms—like so many signposts of money and privilege—couldn’t be more of an affront to the people who inevitably will gather in their shade.

“They want to annihilate public space—thinking that if you flatten the land you won’t have the social problem,” Mary says emphatically. “It’s nihilistic from my point of view in terms of urban design. It’s stupid with a capital ‘S.’”

“Removing the fountain will limit what I can do with my market, it will distort what the farmers’ market does, and it will destroy the only open space in six blocks in all directions,” Mary continues.

Mary doesn’t mind the look of the fountain and feels some aesthetic criticism is inevitable for a major public art piece. To her, the fountain is valuable because it represents a particular point in San Francisco’s history and because, it is symbolically endowed, along with the Plaza itself, with the spirit of the UN. Like Lloyd, she also enjoys the sound and beauty of the water.

“It sounds beautiful, looks beautiful, it is soothing. It’s really dancing water, interesting water and it’s cool,” explains Mary.

Even more importantly, Mary knows the fountain’s removal will do nothing to alleviate San Francisco’s homeless crisis. Removing the benches didn’t lessen their numbers and the fountain’s removal won’t either.

It’s hard to imagine San Francisco city officials choosing to spend almost \$1 million to tear out a public fountain if nearby office workers

and tourists sat at its base during lunchtime instead of the homeless. Original sketches and models of the fountain show exactly this image of professionals eating lunch at the fountain. If this were a typical scene, the estimated \$200,000 needed to fully repair the fountain and get its tidal flows and wave machines working would surely be granted. The “no climbing” signs might come down and a plaque might go up explaining the fountain’s vision to those passing by.

But this is not happening. According to Mara Raider of the Coalition on Homelessness, the homeless have been systematically swept from other parts of downtown and have ended up in UN Plaza because it’s the last open space in this part of the city where police let them be. Just a few blocks away, the newly redone Union Square, surrounded by upscale shops, is devoid of transients. Merchants and office workers at the heart of San Francisco’s tourist industry have little difficulty getting police to issue \$76 quality of life citations, effective at getting homeless to go elsewhere. This “elsewhere” is now UN Plaza.

Members of the homeless population are aware of the problem. In a letter written to Mayor Brown on July 28, 1999, several homeless people hanging out at UN Plaza suggest an alternative. The letter begins:

Dear Mayor Brown:

We would like to inform you about a proposal we are making to the Mayor’s Office on Homelessness that we hope will alleviate the situation in UN Plaza. As you know, many of us are forced to stay in this area because we have nowhere else to go. An excellent solution would be to find a reasonable shelter, such that we no longer have to dwell in the park.

Their idea, to use their own carpentry skills to transform a nearby vacant hotel into livable housing, is not being pursued by the city. Instead the homeless have remained while the Plaza itself, including the benches and fountain, is slowly disappearing beneath them. In order to retain the \$1 million allotted to the Plaza, the DPW has to spend the money by August 2003.

This means plans for the fountain's removal, long in the works, may proceed more swiftly in the coming months.

In the meantime the plaza remains dedicated to the spirit of the United Nations. A large granite marker erected next to the fountain in 1995 commemorates the spirit of the UN with an inscrip-

tion from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It begins:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.... ■

Endnotes

- ¹ "Art Board Favors Mountain Fountain," *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 March 1974.
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- ⁵ "Commission Approves \$1.2 Million Fountain," *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 April 1975.
- ⁶ "UN Plaza Fountain 'Wave' Program," Drawing: December 7, 1977, Market Street Joint Venture Architects.
- ⁷ Peter Stack, "A Brainy Fountain is Dedicated," *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 April 1977.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ "Architects Win, City Gets Slab in the Face," *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1974.
- ¹⁰ Russ Cone, "Fountain May Spring Back to Life," *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 October 1978.
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- ¹⁴ "Proposed Plan of Action: United Nations Plaza," Department of Public Works memo: March 7, 2001. Provided by Edwin M. Lee, Director Public Works at request of Mr. Adams, Staff Attorney Coalition on Homelessness.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Mary Millman, UN Plaza Working Group member.



Photo: Sandra Small

SANDAG: Regionally Planning A Better Future

Analyzing of San Diego's regional planning agency

By Melodie A. Bounds

Since the early 1960s, regional agencies have formed throughout California in an effort to provide solutions to regional challenges related to growth. The success and future of these agencies is important because population growth is an inevitable reality that will continue to create planning challenges in the future. The burgeoning population of California will require additional housing, employment, and transportation. As the demand for these necessities continues to rise, regional issues will result such as air pollution, loss of open space, and traffic congestion.

Solutions to regional issues require planning and the implementation of strategies to address the challenges of growth. The capability of regional agencies to effectively address the all-important connection between land use and transportation is essential to ensuring the future success and sustainability of their respective regions. The San Diego region, for example, has recognized these challenges and is taking steps to better prepare for its future growth. A careful analysis and discussion of San Diego's Regional Agency follows, in an effort to reveal the capacities and indispensable contributions availed by this exemplary, regional agency.

Anyone who has sat, fuming, in traffic during peak commute hours has been stranded with the inescapable fact that gridlock foists a very detrimental impact upon our environment and quality of life. Yet, despite such insidious impacts, many people continue to settle in outlying areas and face the inevitable, gruesomely exasperating commutes. The continuing sprawl of suburban tract communities over much of California's rolling hillsides and agricultural lands is evidence that disadvantageous settlement trends will persist into the future unless California changes how it manages growth. The following discussion addresses a number of concerns and prospective actions to correct errant growth patterns in California through regional planning.

The lack of transit infrastructure, employment opportunities, and entertainment establishments within outlying suburban areas has contributed to the dependence upon the automobile. Ever

increasing traffic congestion has plagued roadways across the state, giving rise to spillover effects such as air and water pollution and road deterioration. Traffic congestion crosses both city and county lines; therefore, regional planning is an appropriate mechanism for strategizing the preservation of California's precious resources and quality of life. The impacts of sprawling development and traffic congestion are foreseeable because population growth is inevitable.

California has a variety of regional governments known as "COGs—Councils of Government" that focus on researching and providing solutions to the multi-faceted issues facing many regions across the state. These issues include traffic congestion, urban sprawl, and jobs-housing imbalances. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are three examples of California COGs. In his

book, *Guide to California Planning*, William Fulton points out that COGs were formed in the 1960s by state and federal governments in an attempt to tackle issues facing burgeoning regions.¹ Fulton further explains that the only real power of COGs is their ability to administer state and federal grants. However, this is problematic because when state and federal governments make cuts to grant funding, the power of COGs is also drastically cut. Various regions have attempted to consolidate their regional agencies in an effort to streamline planning and authority, thereby extending the power of COGs. SANDAG is a recent example of such a consolidation. Further background and elaboration on these developments follows in an effort to portray the relative success of regional agencies through the analysis of their organization and processes. SANDAG has been chosen for the preliminary focus of this research because it is currently undergoing structural changes and is on the forefront of strategizing comprehensive plans for the future. ABAG will be discussed comparatively throughout this analysis to emphasize the differences between regional agencies and to shed light on their future successes. In addition, *Mobility 2030*, SANDAG's preliminary draft for the San Diego Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), is reviewed as a case study that displays how the agency operates in meeting its intended goals.

Key to Success

COGs were formed in an effort to address regional issues stemming from the spillover effects associated with “growth.” The success of such agencies is important because growth is expected to continue. Fulton explains that a successful regional agency is comprised of closely coordinated representatives, with well-established

visions for the future and the means to implement their objectives.² This understood, the success of regional agencies is questionable for the following reasons:

COGs are frequently run by voluntary local officials, absent of a regional constituency.³

Regional agency funding is often limited and disjointed because of specialization within the industry; i.e., planning authority vs. transportation authority.

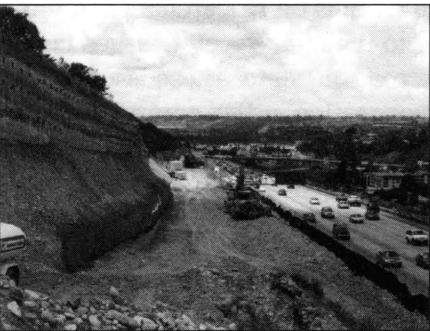
COGs plan solutions to regional issues, but often lack the authority to implement these plans.⁴

The San Diego region has taken steps through the years to overcome hurdles to regional success, and has most recently passed legislation addressing obstacles to regional planning.

Organizational Strategies—SB 1703

Recognizing the benefits of an all encompassing, consolidated approach to planning, the San Diego region streamlined its organization and processes with the passage of Senate Bill 1703, which was enacted and signed by Governor Gray Davis on September 20, 2002.⁵ SB 1703 effectively unites San Diego's regional transportation and planning authorities.⁶ Under this new law, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) and the North San Diego County Transit Development Board (NCTD) have joined with SANDAG to form San Diego's comprehensive regional agency. This reorganization streamlines agency authorities and resources, making SANDAG a more powerful authority to research, plan, and implement solutions for regional issues i.e. traffic, pollution, and loss of agricultural land.

The San Diego region is well known for its unified attitude among local officials, which has undoubtedly helped guide the region's successes in identifying goals and enacting processes to



Photos: Sandra Small

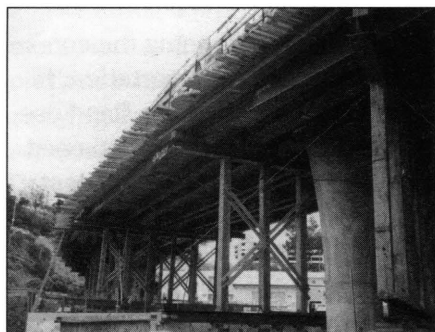
meet their ambitions.⁷ According to Carolina Gregor, Senior Regional Planner and Regional Comprehensive Plan project manager for SANDAG, all 18 cities within San Diego County have voluntarily appointed a local government official to SANDAG's Board of Directors.⁸ In contrast, ABAG has 101 cities within its jurisdiction and only thirty-eight city officials voluntarily participating in its processes.⁹ This is a participation rate of less than 40 percent among ABAG's local governments. Clearly, SANDAG is in a better position to plan solutions to regional issues with 100 percent of its local governments participating in its processes. To ensure the future participation of local officials and avoid a disjointed effort similar to that of the Bay Area, SB 1703 requires that representatives from every city in the San Diego region participate on SANDAG's Board of Directors. Although this designation is perhaps redundant since every locality is currently a voluntary participant, it highlights and thereby seeks to ensure coordination and collaboration among local officials—a step toward future successes for San Diego's regional agency.

The passage of SB 1703 establishes SANDAG as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the San Diego region. In his book *Guide to California Planning*, William Fulton explains that the designation of regional agencies as MPOs carries considerable power because these agencies are better equipped and funded to tackle multifaceted, complex issues.¹⁰ Linking land-use and transportation has proven a difficult task for many regions. For instance, ABAG and the Bay Area's transit authority—the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)—have been unsuccessful in resolving political issues, but have yet to reach a consensus to combine resources. SANDAG is taking steps to tackle the disconnection between land-use and transit in its

region by incorporating these elements into its long-range plans. These developments are discussed further in the Case Study section of this article.

The growing separation between employment and housing is one example of the land-use/transportation disconnect. The problematic, geographical split between jobs and housing is often attributed to Proposition 13. Passed in the late 1970s, Proposition 13 has unexpectedly cultivated the current fiscal structure, which promotes business and retail development through unintended sales tax revenue incentives. As is noted in author Jeffrey Chapman's report, *Proposition 13: Some Unintended Consequences*, "...many cities have attempted to use tax increment financing to alleviate fiscal pressures caused by the [Proposition 13] initiative...." As a result, "...cities have been more inclined to attract commercial activities that would generate substantial sales tax revenues, while new housing [is] often not encouraged because it generate[s] less sales taxes and produce[s] a smaller tax increment."¹¹ The jobs-housing separation syndrome has several injurious impacts on the environment and quality of life. These impacts are evidenced in the growing traffic pollution trends and congestion problems that plague many cities in California. Solutions to these issues require large amounts of funding to both offset the tax benefits of concentrating employment development, and finance the establishment of transportation infrastructure between existing employment and residential clusters.

SANDAG's merge with MTDB and NCTD has provided the necessary resources to address such a complex issue by combining planning, transportation, and funding resources under the same roof. The consolidation of these agencies has established and compiled a working budget



in the amount of \$260 million.¹² SANDAG's budget is substantially large for a 4,621 square mile region whose population is just approaching three million.¹³ In contrast, ABAG is a 7,000 square mile region with a population of almost seven million and a working budget of only \$15 million.¹⁴ Even the Bay Area's transit authority, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), has a working budget of just \$60 million. The comparative analyses of SANDAG and ABAG illustrate the benefit of consolidation—increased local participation and combined agency resources. These comparisons also illustrate Fulton's idea that MPOs have greater authoritative power given these expanded funding resources.

“ The commitment to linking land use and transportation not only goes beyond San Diego County's borders, but also across national borders. ”

With such a substantial working budget, SANDAG has the opportunity to offset some of the side effects of Proposition 13. According to a recent telephone interview with Carolina Gregor, SANDAG's project manager for the agency's Regional Comprehensive Plan, policy changes such as fiscal reforms are underway to increase local governments budgetary controls and promote “smart” planning. The fiscal changes are incentive-based and will reward local governments that implement smart-growth strategies,* which work to limit urban sprawl and provide a better quality of life.¹⁵ ABAG embraces this same concept of rewarding (through incentive-based mechanisms) local cities and counties that practice “smarter” growth planning. However, ABAG's success in carrying out incentive-based programs is perhaps limited by the lack in local member-

ship and investment in the agency.

The coupling of San Diego's planning agency and transit authorities is advantageous for funding purposes, resource accessibility, and implementation strategies. Nonetheless, the success of SANDAG must be measured by its ability to combine those advantages and establish an attainable plan that institutes, what author Robert Cervero describes in *Transit Metropolis* as “the land use-transit nexus.”¹⁶ Cervero explains that the foundation for a successful “Transit Metropolis” lies in the region's ability to articulate visions for the future. Cervero believes, “land use visions [must] lead transportation policies—not the other way around.”¹⁷ SANDAG's dedication to Cervero's theory is illustrated throughout their regional transportation plan—*Mobility 2030*.

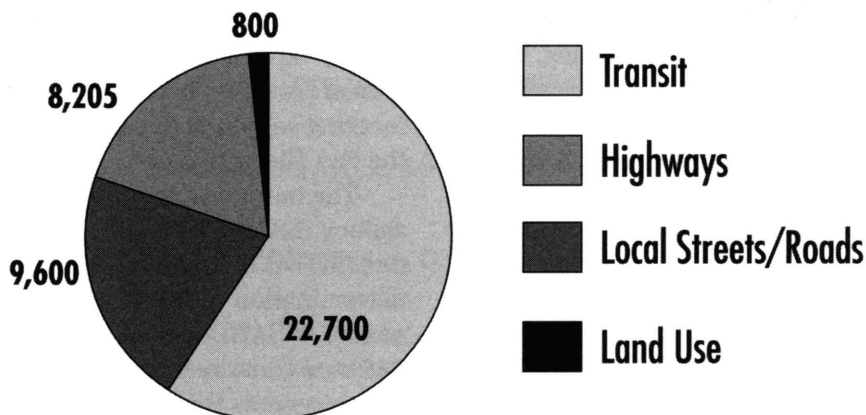
Case Study

SANDAG's preliminary regional transportation draft plan (RTP), *Mobility 2030*, addresses regional issues related to growth from the perspective of transportation networks. SANDAG describes *Mobility 2030* as “a long range plan [that] contains an integrated set of public policies, strategies, and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the transportation system in the San Diego region through the year 2030.”¹⁸ The plan's foundation is “smart growth” ideologies and the reduction of sprawl within the region.¹⁹ Mixed-use development near transit stations, such as combined residential and retail establishments, are encouraged and discussed in the Land Use chapter of the RTP. Also, incentive programs that encourage mixed-use development and smarter planning strategies are built into the RTP. For example, a five-year pilot program is outlined in the RTP that dedicates \$25 million to providing grants to local jurisdictions that implement mixed-use and smart planning.²⁰

The inclusion of the Land Use chapter in SANDAG's transportation plan emphasizes the agency's commitment to strengthening the connection between land use and transportation. In fact, the plan repeatedly states that the “land use-transportation connection must be strengthened where opportunities exist.”²¹ This is consistent

* SANDAG defines smart growth as, “a compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive pattern of development that provides people with additional travel, housing, and employment choices by focusing growth away from rural areas and closer to existing and planned job centers and public facilities (www.sandag.org).”

Figure 1: RTP Major Expenditures (\$Millions)



with Robert Cervero's concept of "land use visions leading transportation policies." SANDAG is carrying out these goals by planning transportation networks in higher density areas and promoting high-density development around established transportation networks. This approach is the key to a successful transit region, according to Cervero. Emphasizing land use is clearly the strength of SANDAG's RTP, and a benefit to those living or working within the San Diego region.

Another interesting part of the RTP is a section describing, "interregional and international commuting". The commitment to linking land use and transportation not only goes beyond San Diego County's borders, but also across national borders. The plan includes strategies to incorporate transportation networks as far north as Riverside County and as far south as Baja California, Mexico. The vision to include such a large geographical area into the RTP will enable SANDAG to better implement seamless transportation networks when needed in the future.

RTP's most distinctive characteristic is its commitment to transit and roadway improvements rather than highway expansions. The RTP outlines a mobility network dedicated to linking outlying areas by way of light rail and trolley services, improved bus systems, and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Implementing an effective, efficient, and seamless transit network will limit air pollution, preserve open space, and cut commute times. The combined

result is a higher quality of life for those living and working in the San Diego Region.

RTP funding allocations are consistent with SANDAG's stated goal—to focus transportation planning on transit and local roadways. As noted in Figure 1, approximately \$33 billion is allocated for transit and roadways, while just \$8 billion is earmarked for highways.²² And, the majority of the funds allocated to highways are designated for operations, maintenance, and rehabilitation, while the remainder of funding for highways is allocated for completing systems and widening roads. The expenditures for the "land use component" include: the smart growth pilot program, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, transportation systems management, and transportation demand management—totals just \$800 million.²³ This is disappointing because the larger proportion of the RTP's text that is dedicated to discussing land use and smart growth. Perhaps greater funding for the land use component will be outlined in SANDAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), scheduled for preliminary draft review in Fall of 2003. Overall, the RTP acknowledges the importance of land use and transportation connections, describes methods and strategies to make these connections, and provides a reasonable funding strategy to meet its intended goals.

In Summary

Regional planning requires a strategic approach that encompasses the coordination and

participation of local governments, the public, and a variety of agency partnerships. Additionally, funding and allocating resources is a necessary component to regional planning. Regional challenges such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and jobs-housing imbalances require solutions derived from the regional level. A collaborative and coordinated effort among political representatives, industry officials, and the public is an essential element to the success of regional planning. A well envisioned, organized, and resourceful regional agency is the first step to providing regional solutions. And, the success of such an agency is greatly dependent upon its constituent regions. SANDAG is well supported by its participants—local governments, stakeholders, and the public. Senate Bill 1703 has provided a framework for the collaborative effort of

these groups to continue into the future. The combination of regional support and legislative authority has established SANDAG as a regional agency capable of not only providing valued statistical research, but also planning and implementing solutions to regional issues throughout the San Diego region.

The merger of San Diego's land use planning agency (SANDAG) and its transportation authorities (MTDB & NCTD) is reflective of the region's determination to create a "land use-transit nexus."²⁴ SANDAG's consolidated organization, invested constituency, and clear vision for the future secures this agency's ability to plan and implement growth strategies to maintain higher qualities of life and preservation for the San Diego region and surrounding areas. ■

Endnotes

¹ William Fulton, *Guide to California Planning*. (Point Arena: Solano Press Books, 1999), 96.

² Ibid.

Robert Cervero, *Transit Metropolis*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 403, 404.

³ William Fulton, *Guide to California Planning*. (Point Arena: Solano Press Books, 1999), 96.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ California, Senate, Senate Bill 1703, amendment to sec. 29532.1 of government code, amendment to sec. 99233.5 of the public utilities code, Statutes at Large, 20 September 2002.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Carolina Gregor, Senior Regional Planner, interview by author, telephone, San Diego Regional Agency, Moraga, CA. 14 November 2002.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ ABAG, AGBAG online: About ABAG, www.abag.ca.gov [accessed 9-28-02].

¹⁰ (Fulton, 1999, 96.)

¹¹ Jeffrey I. Chapman, Proposition 13: Some Unintended Consequences, (California: Public Policy Institute of California, 10th Annual Envisioning California Conference, 24-26th Sept.).

¹² San Diego's Regional Planning Agency, SANDAG: Background, [on-line government source], (San Diego, 2001); available from: www.sactaqc.org/01-03-02/sandag.background.htm, Internet; accessed 8 November 2002.

- ¹³ SANDAG, Fast Facts: San Diego Region, US Census 2000 Statistics, [on-line government source], (San Diego, last updated October 2002); available from: www.sandag.org/resources/demographics_and_other_data/demographics/fastfacts/regi.htm. Internet. accessed 9 November 2002.
- ¹⁴ ABAG, Bay Area Census: Census 2000 Data, <http://census.abag.ca.gov> [accessed 11-09-02]. Last Updated September 13, 2002.
- ¹⁵ Carolina Gregor, interview by author, telephone, San Diego Regional Agency, Moraga, CA. 15 November 2002.
- ¹⁶ Robert Cervero, *Transit Metropolis*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 403, 404.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ SANDAG, Mobility 2030: The Transportation Plan for the San Diego Region, preliminary draft August 2002, [on-line government source], (San Diego, August 2002); available from: www.keepsandiegomoving.com, Internet. accessed 26 September 2002.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Robert Cervero, *Transit Metropolis*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 403, 404.

Long-Range Vision: Housing, Transportation, and Better Neighborhoods

An interview with Amit Ghosh

By David Carcia and Andrea Kremer

What would our cities be like if there were no city planners? This is probably not a question that often crosses our minds. But at the turn of the 20th Century, as modern cities began to grow, their residents suffered from the kind of intense overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and lack of transportation that we would suffer from today in our cities if the planning profession had not come into being at that time to address the challenges of modern city development.

Amit Ghosh, Ph.D., continues this city planning legacy. He is the current Chief of Comprehensive Planning for the San Francisco Planning Department and is responsible for the Citywide Policy and Analysis Division. He has almost thirty years of experience as an architect, planner and urban economist. He joined the Department in 1981 as a senior planner to plan and implement the federally-funded neighborhood commercial improvement program. He has been responsible for many important planning projects since then, and he is now leading the citywide effort known as Build a Better Neighborhood to address the City's need for housing and enhanced quality of life, as part of the Citywide Action Plan.

Urban Action editors David Carcia and Andrea Kremer interviewed Amit Ghosh in his office in March, 2003.

Urban Action: We understand you've been working at the Department for many years and that you formerly worked with the San Francisco Planning Director Allan Jacobs. Is that correct?

Amit Ghosh: Oh yeah, way back when I was an intern and Allan was the director of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, the CMPO as it was called, which produced the first general policy plan for the Calcutta metropolitan area. I was a student at Calcutta University.

UA: Can you tell us more about that?

AG: I think I was in my final year in the very late-

60's when I talked to Jacobs. He was kind of an awe-inspiring personality in Calcutta then and I remember a few things that he said. I was becoming an architect and he asked me: why do you want to [be an architect], and what in India would you do as an architect? I think what he was trying to get at was as architects in India we were trying to build edifices, but what relevance did they have to the reality that was Calcutta. The tools and techniques that we were being taught were more relevant to the western world and had not been really tested, at that time, for the relevance to the situation in India. It started me thinking, but I didn't have a good answer.

UA: Where did you finally go with Jacobs' question?

AG: Well, it was a rhetorical question that touched a chord, you know, and I started to think about whether it was relevant to chase after clients who pay for costly architectural designs. I practiced as an architect in India and I never felt comfortable. And that's the reason why I went into planning.

UA: Wow, so Allan Jacobs had a profound influence on you at that time in your career.

AG: Yeah, in retrospect it was very profound; I don't know whether I realized it then or not.

UA: We'd like to move forward to some of your work in San Francisco. For instance, what was your role in San Francisco's downtown plan?

AG: In 1982 when the downtown plan was finally published, I was the planning coordinator and George Williams was the project director. He was in my position then. Ultimately my role was coordinating and bringing the plan together in the end, but I worked on almost all the pieces: the commerce and industry piece, the preservation of the past, and especially the urban design piece with Dick Headman. That was my final role. Glen Ericson completed most of the transportation section, but I worked directly under George Williams, who was the project manager. By the time the plan was finally at the commission, I was kind of responsible, under George, for the whole thing. I think that a very unique thing about the downtown plan was that it got translated into actual code.

UA: What exactly was the process of the downtown plan?

AG: A long process. The downtown plan was a public planning response to a lot of concerns about the management of commercial growth and employment growth in San Francisco. In the mid-'70s to late-'70s the downtown was growing fast and there were various attempts by concerned citizens to have some growth limits. So, they went to the initiative process, kind of sim-

plemindedly, I believe: it's hard to say that just because we can't grasp growth, we have to stop it. They wanted limits, limits, limits, but you can't just say no. What you have to do is to come up with some ways of managing growth, and so the downtown plan's principal and explicit objective was to agree on an amount of growth that was sustainable. Once there was an agreement on analytical documentation about what amount of growth we can sustain in San Francisco, [the question then became] how do you then vigorously manage and guide that growth, so that "place" is not overwhelmed.

UA: Yeah, it's really interesting because it seemed that it was very contentious at the time. When you look back at the history it just seemed like everyone was knocking heads and then there was the passage of Proposition M. By the time Prop M came around, do you think the voters were more sophisticated?

AG: Absolutely. What Prop. M did was it said, look guys, we love all the [requirements] of the downtown plan. That's all perfect. Let's set that aside. There is one basic question that still needs to be addressed. While you all were still worrying about [details], who was minding the store? There was a huge amount of growth that was way beyond what we said was sustainable on an annual basis. So, how do we go back and rectify that? That was Proposition M's issue. Prop. M said we [would] accept the downtown plan, but what we want to do is have an annualized allocation of growth that would account for the excesses of the past. It claimed there was a surplus of office development created.

UA: Kind of like the planning equivalent of the Kyoto treaty, which stipulates mitigation for environmental damage that has already happened: cut the output until a sustainable level is reached.

AG: Exactly. The downtown plan agrees to a growth limit of a million square feet a year. Let's say that's what the city can accommodate.

UA: Is that just a hypothetical number?

AG: Oh no, 950,000 was the round number. There

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The downtown plan I still believe is a seminal piece of work that goes into the management and guiding of growth within a zoning framework.

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was this huge analysis; there were EIR's, consultant reports, and planning reports done that ultimately said there will be over 100,000 new jobs in the next twenty-year period. That translated into a certain amount of office space. Once approved, the downtown plan allowed the city to approve one million square feet of office development for the following year. However, the voters in July [1986] voted in Prop M, allowing only one-half million square feet until the surplus of seven and one-half million square feet was reduced. Now, after 15 years we can go back to building a million square feet per year. So, that's where we are today.

UA: Was Prop. M implemented as written?

AG: As written. It's implemented as written. Until the time we retired the seven and one-half million square feet of surplus, we were allowed only about 450,000 square feet [per year].

UA: How has the downtown plan actually changed the way San Francisco has developed?

AG: You know, if you think about it, the downtown plan was predicated on the idea that there would be this immense desire to grow and that the plan's rules and regulations would guide and manage that growth. But, think of what happened after the downtown plan was approved.

UA: There was a bit of a downturn.

AG: Right, quite a bit of a downturn. We went into a huge recession. For a short time even the housing prices dropped because there was a con-

centrated burst of supply. There was no economic growth and we had built, in 1989 or 1990, about the highest number of units ever: 2,300 units, I believe. At the same time there was no job growth. My point is that the downtown plan didn't get a chance to have an effect because there was no real growth to manage and guide.

UA: Did the recession render the downtown plan irrelevant?

AG: No, the downtown plan I still believe is a seminal piece of work that goes into the management and guiding of growth within a zoning framework. For the first time a city was able to formally adopt a set of rules that truly managed a lot of ways that growth could occur, based on an understanding of the public good and the public realm.

UA: Can you elaborate on the values and/or principles behind the downtown plan?

AG: The basic premise was that we would accept growth, but we would vigorously manage the impacts of growth. The impacts are on the public "place." We tried to understand, therefore, what constitutes the public realm: the open space, the streets, the physical qualities, the historic fabric, heritage, sunlight access, physical comfort, and the amenities that support "place" like housing, transportation, childcare, and public art. These were all identified as elements that constitute the public realm. We outlined several things that we believed were important to support "place" and we made them an integral part of the downtown plan requirements. So, you [can] build only if you satisfy these requirements. That's kind of the crux of the downtown plan.

UA: When the economy came roaring back the plan was in place, but we saw the kind of unpleasant displacements that seem to accompany wild growth. Why didn't the plan help in the boom years of the late 90's?

AG: Yes, the economy came back, and every time it comes back there will be these rules. But, the economy came roaring back [in the 90's] outside of the downtown. It came roaring back into the

“ You can own a piece of land, but what you can do with that piece of land in the market is based on the zoning rules and police powers. ”

R5 industrial lands.

UA: Although the R5 industrial lands have plenty of commercial vacancies in the current recession [2003], there are advocates who worry that renewed economic growth will come back and lead to the same type of contentious displacement of lower income residents that occurred during the dot-com craze. We saw this happen in earlier decades too: immigrants were displaced in SOMA to make way for the Moscone Center and African Americans were displaced in the Fillmore District to build Geary Boulevard, complete with express lanes, and Japantown. So, how do you envision a better balance in future land-use?

AG: It's what I call the Citywide Action Plan (CAP), which is just a framework that lets you make these decisions about land allocation to various activities. Housing is very, very important, but so is work, so is recreation, and so are all the other amenities that support life in a city. One very important part of an urban "place" is the variety of activities. Although, we need land for all these different activities, the art of it is to decide exactly how much land [should be] allocated for each, and which uses can be mixed. There are some that cannot be mixed, but most can.

UA: Ok, how about the planned housing and existing boutique industries in Eastern San Francisco? Can they be juxtaposed?

AG: Absolutely, I mean, what are the concerns? There are what we call the negative externalities, which are physical. If the work or the activity has harmful impacts to other adjacent users, then it's not compatible. The other dimension of this compatibility occurs when one activity is so much

more competitive in the market. If a particular land-use is favored without concern for other activities then displacement happens.

UA: And how are you going to achieve this development balance?

AG: That's what we are doing with zoning. [Zoning] looks at the physical impacts and tries to reduce them. Historically, we have kind of tried to protect single family homes from, say, a slaughterhouse. That was kind of the genesis of zoning. So, when you have wonderful residential areas, do you put slaughterhouses in the same area? No, there are physical conflicts there. But zoning influences property markets. What is zoning after all but the package that defines property rights. You can own a piece of land, but what you can do with that piece of land in the market is based on the zoning rules and police powers. So in the exercise of zoning and police powers, you can actually allow certain things or disallow certain things. Now, if we disallow more competitive land-use and allow less competitive uses, what have we done?

UA: You're increasing the "allowed" party's property rights, and thereby their property-value. You're affecting the bid market. A devil's advocate, of course, would ask; To what end? Why would you do that? Why not just let the office builders come in and outbid everyone?

AG: If we as public planners get paid so that we are the stewards of the public "place," if we define our profession or our existence to be for the stewardship of the public realm, then there has to be some definition of what the public good is. Now, once the public good is defined, there is responsibility in public planning to guide market decisions [toward that public good]. If that's what we do then how do we plan to do that? Let's look at the constraints of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

UA: Ok, how does this apply, for instance, to the critical need for affordable housing in San Francisco?

AG: Although some housing is built in the non-

profit sector, most of the production is done in the private market. Because it's a business enterprise, there needs to be sufficient rate of return that guarantees the risk of investment. There is a certain amount of cost to the production of housing. That cost must be returned for capital to be attracted. Suppose you added up all the costs, such as cost of land, concrete, nails, wood, and labor etc.; most San Franciscan consumers cannot even afford that cost.

UA: What can be done to deal with this problem?

AG: One thing that people talk to us about is that oh, there is a law of supply and demand. Why don't we just make sure that there is enough supply, you know, if there is enough supply the prices will fall, you were getting to that way back in 1989, because the supply out paced the demand. So, you will hear the drum beat of advocates of producing housing in the market saying that if only you would let us produce enough we could produce a lot of units in a short amount of time so that the demand for housing would be overcome by the supply. Then, your problem of affordability could be addressed. But let's be real about it. Lets put some real numbers to that.

UA: Well, the housing estimate that's been calculated by ABAG, working with the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) agency, is 3000 units per year. Do you think it's a reasonable amount of housing for San Francisco to build?

AG: Yeah, I mean it's a logical construct, right? It's a construct that is based on the amount of economic growth. If there are this many jobs to be accommodated in San Francisco that translates into [3,000 units] since this is formulaic. Also, the jobs are based on the local [San Francisco] policies. We control the use of land. So, if we zone everything out, right, there is no economic growth, then they will of course revise the [number of housing units needed].

UA: How many units a year is San Francisco producing?

AG: Our historic rate of growth production has

been about 1,100 units. So, it's [about] a third [of the ABAG recommendation].

UA: Can something be done to bring production up to the recommended amount?

AG: Of course there's something that can be done. Lots of things can be done. But, you have to be realistic about which ones will actually transpire. First of all, is there the political will to build 3,000 units a year? What is the immediate thought that strikes San Franciscans when you say that you can build 3,000 units a year: where are they going to build it? Is it going to be right in my backyard?

UA: Residents don't want to have any more density.

AG: Yeah. So, we need to build the political will. Look at Oakland. Oakland had the political will; there is a mayor behind 10,000 units, the 10K plan, right? Then comes the issue of whether the industry is capable of producing.

UA: Apparently not in Oakland.

AG: In Oakland it didn't. In San Francisco, historically we have produced only 1,100. So, we can perhaps attract capital because this is a place where people want to be. We can bring in more capacity to produce than we have in the past. There is a limit to that, but I haven't put much thought to that.

UA: So, the capacity to produce doesn't exist today?

AG: I don't believe, right now, we have the capacity to produce 3,000 units a year. I believe we can build the capacity. The last question [that] comes up is, can we sustain the political will to keep building 3,000 units a year? Look at how our rules allow us to build. We are slowly eroding the city's fabric, the city's sense of "place." And as that becomes more and more apparent to the folks that live here, they want to stop it.

UA: As a long-range planner, how do you deal with this reality?

AG: It is a very complicated task, so I take a very strategic approach. That's why I have kind of talked up this Citywide Action Plan [CAP]. If we want to sustain "place", then it's the same old downtown plan principles: we agree on a certain amount of growth that must happen and find out exactly how we go about guiding it. Where do we locate growth, what principles apply to it so that the "place" can be sustained.

UA: Can you tell us more about CAP?

AG: The Citywide Action Plan as a framework starts with the policy work. So, there is a housing policy, a land use policy, and a "place" policy. These are the three big policy documents we are working on. Then, under these policies, we are looking at transit nodes, how to deal with the intervening corridors between these nodes, the Better Neighborhoods program, and the eastern neighborhoods. In the eastern neighborhoods we are looking at how much of that industrial land can be opened up and still serve the city. So, the whole idea is that the city is organized around the transit network around which we organize our lives. Fifty percent of us shop and recreate around this transit network; ninety percent of our jobs are within a quarter mile of our transit network; two-thirds of us live on the transit network; and thirty-three percent of San Franciscans do not own cars. This car ownership pattern can be related to our transit network and we can build on that pattern. That's kind of the principal issue of the citywide action plan.

UA: And how and where are you implementing these concepts?

AG: Our Better Neighborhoods program within the CAP framework is the first step toward making the basic decision as to where to locate these changes. It's a strategic effort within the CAP where we felt that we could start with community acceptance of what it takes to build better places. And some of what it takes is counterintuitive to many people.

UA: Octavia/Market is one of the planned Better Neighborhood areas. The infrastructure there leaves a lot to be desired: motorists in the

“ Coming to a solution takes real courage, because that's when you have to take unpopular stances about density, about parking, about open space, about fundamental principles of 'place.' ”

Richmond and Sunset have trouble getting to and from the freeway, MUNI buses are stuck in both directions on Van Ness, and of course pedestrians are facing an unfriendly environment there. Are plans for rapid bus transit lanes on Van Ness and/or other proposed solutions still under consideration? Also, since there's opposition to these plans, how do you feel we can achieve such a monumental change?

AG: Well, through the information exchange and discussion and deliberation about what the benefits are. Those of us who spend the time to really think [this] through need to go beyond identifying the problem. You know? We talk to the community, we talk to everybody and, oh, this is a problem, parking is a problem, walking is a problem, they are all problems. But then when you start thinking about what the solution is, that's when you start talking about compromises that you have to make. Coming to a solution takes real courage, because that's when you have to take unpopular stances about density, about parking, about open space, about fundamental principles of "place." Okay? But, the bus lane on Van Ness, or on Geary, are something that we have taken on in the Better Neighborhoods program. We have to look at more efficient ways of moving people.

UA: It seems like a well-developed idea, but how far have you moved from problem identification to consensus?

AG: It's out there in the public, it's getting reviewed, and we've gone through almost three

years worth of discussion, working with everybody in the community. And when I say everybody, what I mean is that there were open meetings that were announced very broadly and everybody was welcome. We didn't work with just one group, we decided in the Better Neighborhoods program that we would not be working with identified community neighborhood groups. We decided that it would be open to everyone.

UA: And how close are we to seeing a decision?

AG: The environmental review for Market and Octavia has been started and it should be another 6-7 months before completion. We are hoping that the Market/Octavia plan will be before the board sometime before spring 2004. It's a 20-year horizon, however, for implementation. And everything planned might not be built. For instance, at Balboa Park we're talking about covering over the freeway and making that into a usable space: closing both sides and putting a lid on it. It sounds really far out, but it's done in lots of places. In Seattle they have that, and if you think of it, the most extreme case is Boston, if we are talking about the Big Dig. But here, it's just a little stretch of the freeway on which we'd put a lid, thereby connect the two neighborhoods on top of the BART station.

UA: Great. What's the next step?

AG: We need to have the plan adopted. We need to have the whole strategy. If we have a blueprint for change then there is certainty on both sides of the table. But, here in San Francisco we have a very, very arcane and involved and exhausting entitlement process. And it's not fair to anybody because nobody knows what the ultimate product is going to be. Developers don't know exactly what they will get under those circumstances. They don't know exactly what kind of a deal to strike, so they hedge all their bets. On the other side, the community doesn't even know what is going to be done to them. With the Better Neighborhoods program, however, we have a process where the community has developed its own outline, its own blueprint, and we now have a fair amount of certainty about what we are

going to ask or get from the city or the developers or whoever implements these ideas.

UA: So, would you say that the Better Neighborhoods program is making the planning process a little more palatable?

AG: Not just a little bit more; one major objective of the Better Neighborhoods program is to instill certainty in this entitlement process. And one big tool in that is what we call program Environmental Impact Reports (EIR)s. There's an EIR done over the total program so you don't have to fight project by project; you already have the framework, and if you come in within the framework, you're free to build.

UA: There's been talk again about closing Market Street to private auto traffic. What's your take on that idea?

AG: It's an idea that keeps coming back: What's the role of Market Street? Can we really close it down? What are the impacts on foot traffic and businesses? What does it do to vehicular traffic? Right now there is a study by the Transportation Authority concerning bicycle movement. But we don't have the answers. It's something that needs to be ferreted out.

UA: A number of European cities, like Stockholm and Amsterdam, have popular and successful pedestrian areas as a part of their urban design. But even in denser parts of San Francisco pedestrians still have to battle with automobiles. Considering that there were approximately 24 pedestrian deaths last year in San Francisco, what role, if any, does this planning department have in addressing pedestrian safety?

AG: It's a very important role, and we take it very seriously, but it's a complicated challenge. I think we've gained a lot of ground, even in the Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT), whose main purpose is to move vehicular traffic. There is now a whole section of DPT's charter that applies to traffic calming and pedestrian safety now that DPT is becoming more a part of MUNI. We need to move vehicular traffic, but at the same time pedestrians can't be killed in the

process. Also, bicycles need to have mobility because, more and more, I think people are realizing that there are limits to "place." There are only so many streets in San Francisco. There are only so many cars that can move in San Francisco. So, just moving more traffic by increasing capacity is not the solution. So, in order to make the pedestrians safe, the extreme would be to lock them up in their homes, and not let them come out. They would be very safe. But since they have to walk and come outside, we need to make the different modes aware of each other and mix them so that, ultimately, the city becomes a single "place."

“ Most rational people would think that we are crazy because not everybody has thought through all the things that, perhaps, we have had the pause to think through. ”

UA: We understand that San Francisco currently requires a 1:1 ratio of new housing units built to parking spaces. Is that true and are there plans for reducing the number of required parking spaces?

AG: We are looking into the ramifications of relaxing that requirement. We are more and more concerned that it just doesn't compute. With the amount of housing we have to build, if each housing unit is built with a parking facility, then that translates into many more cars. Can that really fit within our physical structure? If it doesn't fit within our physical structure, then what do we do?

UA: Does the planning department know if it is possible to build enough of the required housing around transit nodes?

AG: We are sure that is possible. We've found the

areas where we can build, and we have found we can build up to 10,000 units, without much difficulty, right around the transit nodes.

UA: If parking spaces are eliminated because housing is built around these transit nodes, doesn't that also mean you can build more units of housing per acre, thereby making the units more affordable?

AG: Yes, and we are just beginning to get these facts out. We are only now beginning to get a dialogue with those who make decisions in the planning commission and on the Board of "Supervisors because it's not a very intuitive position that we are trying to articulate. People mostly believe that there is a tremendous problem: we don't have enough parking. But, we don't realize that if we just produce more parking, we just produce more fumes, and we have nowhere else to go. Once we realize that we are stuck, by goodness what do we do? We need the cars, but we don't realize that there are choices. We are not in Fresno. San Francisco, because of its physical pattern, affords us other choices.

UA: You can have this discussion among planners and get input at public meetings and come up with solutions, but isn't a big part of your task just selling these ideas to decision makers?

AG: Yes, yes, and it's right now we are at the stage where people think we are mad.

UA: Mad as in angry or mad as in crazy?

AG: Crazy. Most rational people would think that we are crazy because not everybody has thought through all the things that, perhaps, we have had the pause to think through. I am confident that once all that we know is shared with everyone they will come to the same conclusions.

UA: That's a very encouraging idea. We hope you're right.

AG: I hope so, too. Because if I'm right, then I see a solution to all the problems that many of us identify [with]. If I'm wrong, then we still have to keep working at what the solution is.

UA: Do you see progress in certain areas of your dissemination effort?

AG: Yes, absolutely. I would really urge you to come attend and listen to the next Planning Commission hearing. You will see how far we have come with this idea of density around transit corridors, and with this idea of alternative choices. [Planning commission meetings are open to the public and can be viewed on the Internet at www.sfgov.org.]

UA: Can you say a few words about the recent changes in the political process surrounding planning decisions?

AG: It used to be that the board had nothing to do with [planning department] plans. The commission would adopt and that would be the end of it. In 1996 there was a charter change. Now, the board has to approve the plans. So, it's becoming the case that the general plan of San Francisco has more of a relevance to the decision making [of the elected San Francisco Board of Supervisors].

UA: And there's been a change in that both the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors now appoint planning commissioners. Does that have an impact?

AG: Well, that came later, that was in 1999, I think. Sure, it's a whole new commission. An independent commission: it's appointed by the board or the mayor, they take their turns and they don't serve at will, anymore. I think everybody likes it. That's my opinion.

AG: Since some of Urban Action's readers are City and Regional Planning/Urban Studies students, what advice could you give aspiring planners?

AG: I was thinking recently about how diffident we are as professionals. Planners use tools that they have mastered and special knowledge and skill they have derived through hard work, training, and schooling. Planners, therefore, have a certain amount of specialized information and a professional opinion that contributes to the [planning] debate. I don't believe that we have to constantly agree with and facilitate the (perhaps uninformed) general opinion. It's not a planner's arrogance or a professional arrogance. No, I'm not talking about that. I'm just talking about having confidence in a set of tools, in our different level of understanding, and then being sure we effectively communicate that. We need to take the planning debate to the next level. ■

Nine Winter Views of San Francisco

By L. J. Morin

In the hour before dawn, rain showers gust over the city, knocking white plum blossoms off of the trees and gathering them into the gutters.

In the hour before quitting time, the thin gray air slips noiselessly in and out of the chilly canyons between the downtown office buildings.

In the hour after sunset, the swollen solstice moon hoists its golden bulk up over the cables that sag between the rooftops.

In the hour after dawn, the people on the corner peer up the hill through the morning fog, looking for the lights of the streetcar.

In the hour after midday, the fronds of the low palm trees, tipped with yellow, wave back and forth in the winter sun.

In the hour after midnight, the tower at the top of the hill glows greenish-white, like a shaft of moonlight turned to concrete and blotted by fog.

In the hour before noon, three white chimneystacks with heads like Japanese lanterns stand side by side on the roof of the next apartment building and regard the looming blue mountain across the bay.

In the hour after lunchtime, the sun burns weakly through a pearl-colored cloudbank in the southern sky, washing out the colors of Stockton Street.

In the hour before sunset, a Chinese monk sings loudly to God from the top of a reservoir embankment, his face turned to the dark winter hedge and his palms pressed together, fingertips pointing to heaven.

Transracial Adoptions: In Whose Best Interest?

A review of the Multiethnic Placement Act

By Lolita Smith

For individuals unable to biologically produce children or amenable to non-traditional family structures, adoption is a viable opportunity through the cooperation of an intermediary, usually an independent adoption agency. To ensure the establishment of legal responsibility and financial obligations to these new adopted family structures, federal and state statutes regulate the process. These statutes exist as guidelines in order for adoption agencies to thoroughly assess an individual or couple's capacity to provide care in the best interest of the child, as defined by the state. More importantly, guidelines exist to respond to the overwhelming number of children under the custody of the state in temporary placements or at risk of temporary placement. The Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and its Interethnic Provision (IEP) serve to assist public foster care and adoption agencies with placing their larger number of minority children into safe and secure households. However, are these guidelines indeed effective and if so do the provisions outlined by the law effectively prepare and inform parents on how to raise a child of a different race?

Although imposed at the federal level, upholding responsibility, implementation and enforcement of the MEPA/IEP remains at the discretion of local and state agencies. Yet, infliction of large penalties proportional to an adoption agency's caseload is the federal government's disincentive measure for non-compliance for both public and privately administered agencies. In legislation such as the MEPA and the IEP, in which most agencies set their own adoptive policies and eligibility standards while also complying with the state's definition for "the best interest of the child," inconsistency reigns. These standards serve to assess and evaluate not only if a prospective parent can financially manage the care of a child through the provision of a secure and permanent home but they also include other subjective criterion such as religion, economic status, home environment, age, and health of the prospective parent/s. And these flexible determinants, like in any type of economic market, rely a great deal upon the behavior of consumers, the availability of supply as well as any

other externalities that may occur. In the case of adoption, these ideas establish certain conditions that influence either the willingness of adults to adopt and/or the discretion of caseworkers (West Legal Directory, 2002).¹

Certainly, regarding adoption as an industry and offering children as commodities is distasteful and will not produce beneficial results. Besides, unlike a free market, most cases contain existing conditions that do not allow for all types of adults to adopt but in effect assign preferential status to certain members of society. Although these values are evolving, certain groups are still alienated and prevented from adopting children, primarily because long held, socially constructed biases concerning appropriate familial membership and one's suitability towards care-giving, while ignoring the benefits these "alternative family structures" bring to children. For instance, Florida, Utah, and Arkansas are a few of the states that explicitly prohibit gay and lesbians from adopting, and five other states (Arizona, Indiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Texas) are

considering similar legislation (Pertman, 2000, p. 163).² Thus, legislation combined with the individual prerogatives of adoption agencies may only play a part in a rather conflicted understanding of federally mandated adoption policies, which will in turn further affect who will and can adopt whom.

Why is the MEPA/IEP necessary?

Sadly, the topic of race and adoption eventually transforms into a dichotomous discussion in terms of Black and White because these two groups form the largest percentages of children in foster care at both the national and statewide level. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis & Reporting System (AFCARS) database, has gathered an approximation of both nationwide and state level data relating to several variables confronting children in public foster care agencies. For the period of October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000 they estimated the number of children waiting for adoption nationwide to be around 131,000. Of these 131,000, the largest represented groups are African American, Caucasian, and Latino children (43%, 34%, and 13% respectively). Moreover, of the 275,000 children who left foster care in the same year, 31% were African American, 45% Caucasian, 15% Hispanic, 4% unknown, and 1% identified as belonging to two or more ethnic/cultural groups (DHHS, 2003).³ Thankfully, these children do receive in-home placements, but rates of recidivism will determine whether placement lends to permanency or not.

Children adopted through public foster care agencies do not always stay with a single out-of-home placement. The number of children ready for adoption in 1998 was about 50,000 and this number climbs to 85,000 when including children with special needs, such as children with a marked disability or older African American children (Simon, p.6).⁴ Hence, ameliorating administrative obstacles encountered by prospective parent/s assumes that a reduction in the time spent in care of the state would naturally follow. Perhaps this kind of reasoning is much too simple when re-entry into the system links other factors, such as the psychological impact of institutional parenting and the length of time spent in

foster care (36-59 months for 25% of children and at least 60 months for 24% of children), as obstacles to successful placements (DHHS, 2003).⁵

Additionally, there are many difficulties with placing every African American child into a racially matched home, because only 15% of the total population is African American. Every African American would need to adopt four children to end this problem (Pertman, p.158),⁶ thus derailing ambitions of producing racially matched homes through sheer reality of the numbers. Yet, the directive on finding permanent placement as soon as possible remains in order to avoid future social and economic costs once these children emancipate from the system. Interestingly enough, difficulty with accessing standardized and/or current data is a well-documented problem in the area of research into the adoptive services. Regardless of whether transracial adoption occurs or not, without reliable, quantifiable figures for the number of approved adoptions or verification of active and consistent recruitment of African American parents, legislation only allows for further fractious and lack of accountability on the part of our federal government. These limitations hinder investigation into where improvement in current adoption procedures is necessary. Furthermore, this uncertainty lends questioning into whether the legislation interferes with the degree of confidence adoption agencies operate under when making decisions about placing children into appropriate homes or proactively recruiting African American parents.

What is transracial adoption?

Transracial adoption is a type of family formation in which either the child or parent/s do not share in a common ethnic or cultural background. The U.S. has a long history of integrating children of different ethnicities into families since the origins of this country, sometimes lawful and sometimes not. Early Caucasian settlers “unofficially adopted” Native American children as a means of assimilating them into the dominant culture of the time. Conversely, in response, Native Americans “unofficially adopted” Caucasian children. Each party participated so intensely in their antagonism that it is easy to believe that concern for the needs of the children were a passing consideration (Babb, 1999, p.36).⁷

As conflict between these two groups gave way to absolute control of land rights, Caucasian children ceased becoming “adoptive Native Americans”, however, Native American children continued to be adopted into non-tribal families well into the early twentieth century. Thus, feelings of resentment in Native American communities coalesced around this practice until the strength of their political voice grew strong enough to prompt the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978. This law both prohibited the adoption of Native Americans by non-Native Americans and absolved the fears of Native Americans who believed transracial adoption eroded upon the continuity of their culture (Simon, 2000, p. 27).⁸ Interestingly enough, the MEPA/IEP protects the Indian Child Welfare Act, by allowing for race-based consideration for this subgroup, while denying this for others (GAO, Appendix II).⁹ This, in turn, draws even more questions about this seemingly arbitrary though well-intentioned legislation.

Should African American children be placed only in African American families?

Transracial adoption arose as an issue of contention in 1972, when criticism from the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) declared it tantamount to “cultural genocide” (Babb, 1999, p.52).¹⁰ According to the NABSW, African American children require nurturance within their particular ethnic community in order to ensure the “preservation of the African American family,” (Hohman, 2002)¹¹ and their personal identities secured therein. When Caucasian parents adopt African American children, the NABSW believed this practice in no way promoted or reflected “the best interests” of African American children because non-African American families could not provide the necessary coping mechanisms for combating racism outside of the home. Although the NABSW’s justification for resistance may have been a valid response at the time, in our contemporary social climate, this perspective becomes questionable as well as socially divisive, especially when one considers the experience of biological parents who have mixed raced children.

Should adults who do not share a common

cultural heritage avoid having children in order to divert their children’s experience with racism when at least one parent is deficient in providing the appropriate coping mechanisms? Additionally, if studies on race and adoption reveal that African American children adopted by Caucasian parents form better opinions of Caucasians than if adopted by African American parents (Bartholet, 1998),¹² could this situation apply in the inverse? Would reciprocal transracial adoptions create a more tolerant society overall? Whatever the case may be, a benefit of this discord was concerted effort on the part of the federal government and adoption agencies to reverse some of the structural inefficiencies existent in the child welfare systems, primarily due to previous legislation that inadvertently contributed to the influx of African American children under the protection of the state. Additionally, the NABSW’s rejection of transracial adoption called attention to a flaw in the prevailing color-blind assumptions, which previously ignored certain culturally specific needs of this population. Current legislation discussed throughout this paper illustrates how this color-blind assumption may once again threaten the best interest of minority children in foster care and adoption agencies.

What has changed about adoption practices? The Multiethnic Placement Act and its Interethnic Provisions

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 and its 1996 amendment, the Interethnic Provision (IEP), under the Business Job Protection Act (PL 104-188), are for all intents, a single federal statute with a three-fold agenda:

1. To increase the number of adoptions for minority children,
2. Prevent the consideration of race from detracting from the formation of permanent placements
3. Facilitate the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents (DHHS, 2001)¹³

The earlier legislation, MEPA, still allowed public agencies to address with greater sensitivity the ethnic and cultural heritage of the child before placement into a foster or permanent home. For

instance, a few of the guidelines in the MEPA state that both caseworkers and agency:

- Promote good child welfare policy
- Keep apprised of the legislation and request clarification when necessary
- Develop a system for supervision and technical assistance for workers to promote compliance that meets the best interests of the children
- Assess the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of the child as soon as the child is exposed to protective services
- Make individual decisions based on sound child welfare practices and the best interest of the child. (Bussiere, 2001)¹⁴

Yet, with increasing numbers of minority children entering and remaining in foster care, the IEP amendment was Congress' response, which

“ If studies on race and adoption reveal that African American children adopted by Caucasian parents form better opinions of Caucasians than if adopted by African American parents, could this situation apply in the inverse? ”

changed the rules by which caseworkers handled cross cultural/ethnic adoptions. The amendment now prevents the consideration of race, for either the parent or the child, based upon the assumption that it obstructs possible adoptions. Additionally, despite good intentions, devolution of administrative responsibility to the state and local level, without clearly defined methods of adhering to its guidelines, resulted in many of the same problems faced by previous federal legislation when attempting to develop performance measures for effectiveness and equity. As much

as the IEP legislation attempted to address some of the structural impediments to equitable adoptive practices, its guidelines do not provide clearly defined methods or procedures for enforcement. Moreover, the new legislation contradicted MEPA's already established regulations and confused both state and private agencies about the proper standards for implementation as well as to which sector it applies, foster care or adoption.

A year after the IEP amendment passed, DHHS' Administration of Children, Youth and Families (ACF) provided regional agencies with the following advice for comprehending and complying with the legislation: "Race, culture or ethnicity may not be used as the basis for any denial of placement, nor may such factors be used as a reason to delay any foster care or adoptive placement." (GAO, Appendix IV).¹⁵ Yet, guidance around recruitment of parents, included as a requirement in both statutes, is in direct opposition to this original statement. In the same memo, but one page later, ACF states that the "child welfare provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster or adoptive parents that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity in the State for whom the foster or adoptive homes are needed." Hence, in light of these admissions, one understands caseworkers' and agencies' difficulties with seeking appropriate and permanent in-home placements.

DHHS contributes to a misleading and subjective execution because the legislation still implies that caseworkers should consider racial orientation as criteria for placement in some instances but not others. This is even more telling when the document later justifies the practice of selective consideration in "very limited circumstances where such consideration would be necessary to achieve a compelling governmental interest," whereby a compelling governmental interest is to promote the "best interest of the child" (GAO, Appendix IV).¹⁶ Another issue of concern is about the cultural needs of children in foster care. Although the purpose of the MEPA/IEP is not to address some of the external factors that create child welfare systems, some may argue that environment, traditions, or personal tendencies influence and stimulate a particular ethnic or racial experience.

This experience, once internalized, usually manifests itself as a specific "cultural" expression. In clarifying its placement procedures, DHHS states that although the legislation does not "address the consideration of culture in placement decision, there are situations where cultural needs are important, such as where a child has a specific language needs" (GAO, Appendix V).¹⁷ If culture is also not to be a consideration under the law, is there a way of separating racial orientation from culture and further, why is the consideration of culture acceptable and not ethnic orientation?

Although the law appears explicit about its purpose and functions as a compulsory advisement, documentation issues such as those in the case of the AFCAR system have led to difficulties in holding state agencies and individual caseworkers accountable. If compliance with the law is proven, agencies within the state face immediate censure in the form of a financial penalty proportional to the population they serve. Penalties may range between \$1000 and \$3.6 million dollars for each yearly quarter (Hayashi & Golden, 1997).¹⁸ Moreover, withholding categorical funding that supports the work of social workers and child protective agencies, leaves these sectors vulnerable to and in fear of censure, primarily because the law in no way establishes specific procedures for identifying discrimination. Yet, the Office of Civil Rights and the Administration for Children and Families is responsible for reviewing and evaluating complaints for non-compliance and creating a standard protocol that will insure effective application of the statute.

The only method of identifying whether agencies or caseworkers deviated from the law is through in-house documentation and regular agency reviews, administered and implemented internally though monitored at the regional level. If caseworkers consider racial or ethnic origins in their decisions about placing any child, they are required to document and justify why and how this decision adheres to a governmental standard of "best interest of the child." Otherwise, if found unwarranted, caseworkers are in conflict with the law and their agencies are open to financial penalties for "inappropriate professional decisions" as defined by the state. Ironically, embedded in the legislation, is the civil

rights protection of both the children and potential parent/s. By removing the consideration of race in adoption, the legislation inadvertently threatens the rights of social work professionals to exert their freedom of speech. How might an agency or caseworker exercise or express their professional judgment to meet the special needs of children, when compliance requires taking a stance that "would be inconsistent with an approach of individually considering these factors only when specific circumstances indicate that it is warranted" (GAO, Appendix V)?¹⁹ Further, is it not the responsibility of the caseworker to assess the individual needs of the child above all else?

Dialogue on MEPA/IEP

In such a racially charged issue, one would expect the debate to square off along racial lines, with African Americans against the MEPA/IEP and Caucasians for it. Curiously, strong proponents of the MEPA have been and are African American and support the legislation because they wish to see children provided with permanent and loving homes, regardless of the race of the parents. The critical views on the MEPA/IEP are less an oppositional position to transracial adoption than a unanimous view that color-blind legislation demonstrates our society's reliance upon the "dictates of supply and demand" (Babb, p.54).²⁰ Simply put, competitive markets trading in heterogeneous products, rely upon the behavior of both consumers and producers. Demand prompts increased supply; increases in supply lead to higher prices, and higher prices reduce demand until the market reaches equilibrium in price & quantity. Thus, by removing obstacles to adoption, political decision makers hope to stimulate demand by allowing parents freedom of choice. Yet, products perceived as more valuable will influence a consumer's willingness to buy (consumer surplus) and/or a producer's surplus (the price at which they are willing to sell). Under these conditions, consumers/producers may either purchase/supply less of an item with a high value or more of a low value item. Naturally, one might assume consumers will want to receive more for less but what consumers may value could nonetheless fluctuate widely.

A reasonable conclusion would be that color-

blind legislation attempts to position all children equally in weight with the other, facilitating greater numbers of adoptions or permanent placements. Yet, without reliable documentation there is no method of discovering whether obstructive issues relate to lack of recruitment or caseworker misjudgment. However, by repositioning equity through legislation, the law overlooks the fact that children under custody of the state are not perceived as being on an equal playing field. Children in foster care have various emotional and social difficulties to deal with, usually related to personal experiences within their families and communities and/or placement in foster care. These experiential differences do not occur within a societal vacuum but are intrinsically linked to distinctive histories involving race/ethnicity and culture. From this, it is easy to see where criticism occurs in this issue and why opponents point the discussion to evidence of a larger social problem. How does legislation intend to ignore the fact that our society unconsciously assesses a person's worth through a social construction called race?

Agencies typically place minority children with Caucasian parents but rarely the inverse. Angela Mae-Kupenda, from *In the Public Interest* journal, herself a transracial adoptee, believes disregarding race in adoption actually reinforces discrimination. Her complaint concerns the almost nonexistent data available that reports equal efforts towards placing Caucasian children into African American families (1998).²¹ This particular complaint against one-way transracial adoption is part of a larger complaint against subtle and possibly unconscious discrimination operating in many of our institutions. Although Kupenda's argument is rather defensive, it does uncover how the specter or suspicion of racism lies below the surfaces of all our social structures, ready to raise its ugly head when discussing issues regarding equity. If the legislation is to prevent discrimination in placement, why is there no data suggesting increasing adoptions of Caucasian children placed within non-Caucasian families? This segment of the population also represents one of the largest percentages of children in foster care, yet without the data related to how caseworkers and agencies determined this choice of parent makes it difficult under-

stand the purpose of the MEPA/IEP. Since the legislation calls for ending race as a placement consideration, with documentation required only in the case of exceptions, adoption professionals can look forward to validity and reliability issues with data collection under this law.

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As an emerging analyst in the field of social policy, it is apparent that care focused on the ‘best interest of the child’ relies upon a multiple array of experiential variables

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The law assumes minority children remain longer in foster care and prevents adoptions because caseworkers assessed the racial orientation of its clientele. If we want these assumptions to hold true, how does the MEPA/IEP prove this true? Ideally, as an emerging analyst in the field of social policy, it is apparent that care focused on the “best interest of the child” relies upon a multiple array of experiential variables. A multi-cultural, multi-faceted perspective must be developed in order to facilitate the development of policies that reflect the realities of the world in which we live and foster better understanding of the personal experiences unique to many different people. It is impossible for me to say definitively that culture and ethnicity are mutually exclusive ideas. Additionally, since agencies may not assess potential parents for appropriate levels of ethnic or cultural competency, they cannot also reject parents because of this deficiency (GAO, Appendix V).²² Instead, agencies’ racial assessments are limited under the law to educating parents about the cultural needs of their future adopted children. If, as Kupenda believes, these children do not receive necessary “survival skills and awareness they need to survive in this country” and “there is a need to increase the number of African Americans willing to adopt” its uncertain how caseworkers will navigate this

topic with potential parents, when technically this is to be of minimal consideration. This will become most telling when caseworkers are themselves endowed with inadequate knowledge of and understanding of different cultures.

Many supporters of transracial adoption ironically become opponents to the MEPA/IEP and blame the continuance of structural ills on the weak effectiveness of such legislation. Gilles and Kroll from the North American Council on Adoptable Children performed a survey of sixty-four private and twenty-three public child placement agencies within twenty-five states. They uncovered a few of the barriers preventing African Americans specifically from adopting:

1. Lack of people of color in adoption agencies
2. Fees that are necessary to provide adoption services are also too high for most prospective parents
3. Adoption agencies are negatively perceived within the African American communities
4. Inflexible standards that insist on two financially secure parents
5. Little or no promotion within the relevant communities on the need for adoptive parents (Gilles & Kroll, 1991).²³

If these are the limitations preventing families from adopting and many parents of multiethnic children and caseworkers agree that change is necessary, how does the MEPA/IEP assist towards this goal? It would appear that the barriers directly relate to the inadequate and misdirected approach that agencies are advised to think about race, rather than race becoming the single most defining obstruction to adoptions. Moreover, according to the GAO's survey of caseworkers, many of whom believe the inclusion of race should be a consideration under law, find that the previous allowance for racial or ethnic assessment neither delayed or denied the placement of children in to adoptive homes (GAO, 1998).²⁴

Conclusion

Is there an embedded belief in our society that applies a lower value to the experience of

African Americans? However radical the opposition once rallied against transracial adoption in the seventies, the controversy did eventually lead to a greater sensitivity on the part of adoption agencies. Their procedures turned towards an extension of consideration of ethnic orientation in the decision to place African American children. Yet, even this had damaging consequences. Although parents of different cultural/ethnic orientation may adopt African Americans, these children remain longer in foster care, while agencies seek families of the same ethnic orientation. Yet, high-level administrators in HHS are confident enough to praise the "extraordinary efforts within their offices...with responding to questions and resolving questions around the MEPA/IEP, so that states have a single reliable Department policy for implementation and compliance (GAO, Appendix VI)."²⁵ However, it's possible this confidence is a little premature given that documentation issues, placement decisions and understanding about the law remains ambiguous and subjective in nature.

An inspection of the MEPA/IEP legislation reveals its inherent ambiguity that continues to leave it open for interpretation. In particular, guidelines from the MEPA/IEP state that caseworkers should, "assess the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of the child as soon as the child comes into the welfare system" and "promote good welfare practices" (Bussiere, 2001).²⁶ How does this happen? Another often repeated criticism stems from a belief that this legislation intentionally disregards the importance or value of cultural differences. Implicit in these criticisms is the call for exposure of the contradictions contained in this legislation and in society. Critics feel these statutes are counterproductive to the problems they espouse to solve. That is, to create a color-blind adoption process within a society inherently based on and defined by racial categories. Regardless of one's stance, an overrepresentation of minority children is a reality in child welfare agencies and the longer they remain, the more disruptive and their situation becomes.

Parents willing to adopt children of another race or ethnicity most often believe that children need love and that any decision to parent these children arises from a desire to build families,

not to exert claims of privilege or entitlement. It is quite difficult to ascertain or distinguish just how much of our structural or systematic inputs operate in our individual lives but there are ways to create cultural and ethnic bridges. Although many parents admit their inadequacies in meeting certain cultural needs of their children (hair care, harassment from strangers, conflicting histories, etc.), they believe if provided with the necessary resources to cope with these difficulties, many obstacles could be dealt with based upon an informed position and therefore can be ame-

liorated. Informing parents and agencies about difference and different needs does not appear in the law nor is it presented as an option for case managers. As Kupenda, Hall and Steinberg attempt to show in their critiques, racial discriminatory practices have contributed to the problem and with nearly 45 percent of African American children in 1995 in out-of-the-home care facilities (DHHS, 2001)²⁷ it is apparent that dismissal of race as a consideration is as damaging as sensitivity to race matching. ■

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An Urban Growth Boundary in Transition

Portland Metro's largest expansion proposal in over 20 years

By David Carcia

Among this era's most controversial topics in planning, the urban growth boundary has become one of the preeminent buzzwords in the so-called 'smart growth' movement. Devised to provide a means of both managing growth as well as placing it within defined geographical limits, growth boundaries have been used with growing frequency by cities, counties, and regional authorities for the last thirty years. In this article, we have a look at the classic case study of metropolitan boundary implementation in Portland and the challenges regional planners are facing there as a result of the area's study of its first extensive boundary expansion in over 20 years.

Introduction

The idea of Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) is not new; Ebenezer Howard conceptualized "garden cities" in England in the late 19th and early 20th century. Howard envisioned a series of 6000-acre developments consisting of 1000 acres of urban land surrounded by 5000 acres of agricultural hinterlands.¹ Although two garden cities were built in England in Howard's lifetime and other examples can be found in Europe, in the 1970s America had few examples of such comprehensive planning. Oregon, however, passed its model statewide planning law in 1973 creating a strategy that accommodates urban development while maintaining realistic protections for farms and forests. This state law allowed for the creation of urban growth boundaries (UGBs), outlined statewide planning goals, and also required cities and counties to adopt land-use plans consistent with these new planning goals. Then, in 1979, to implement this legislation in the Portland metropolitan area, voters approved the metropolitan service district, called Metro, as an elected regional planning government. Metro is authorized by Oregon state law to adopt and amend the regional Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), and to adopt "land-use planning goals and objectives for the district" that are con-

sistent with Statewide Planning Goals.² Metro's UGB encompasses 369 square miles and serves about 1.3 million people living in three counties (Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas), 24 cities, and 60 special districts. Today, Metro is contemplating the first significant expansion of its UGB in over 20 years. This article will review and provide commentary on this UGB expansion study and its recommendations.

Metro Urban Growth Boundary Jurisdiction and Statewide UGB Expansion Rules

Metro has the legal authority to:

- manage and amend the Urban Growth Boundary
- protect land outside the Urban Growth Boundary for natural resource use, conservation, future urban expansion, or other uses
- design urban settlement patterns
- plan housing densities
- plan transportation and mass transit systems
- preserve parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities
- determine water sources and storage

- coordinate planning goals with Clark County in the State of Washington
- maintain responsibilities mandated by state law
- manage any other issues of metropolitan concern

State law requires Metro to conduct a land-use analysis every five years in which they inventory vacant land and examine housing needs to produce a 20-year "needs" forecast. If there is a forecasted land-use need, Metro is directed to develop the land within the existing UGB first before expanding the boundary. If the Metro analysis proves that the land within the UGB cannot meet the projected need, however, development outside of the UGB is allowed. Once it has been established that expansion of the UGB is justified, Metro is required to study potential sites and determine their suitability. As a result of these rules, Metro conducted its needs assessment in 2002 and made a preliminary recommendation on expansion.³

Study Areas

Metro hired several consultants to conduct an assessment of approximately 75,000 acres divided into 94 study areas surrounding the current UGB. Pacific Rim Resources evaluated 25,000 acres while ECONorthwest and Parametrix examined the remaining 50,000 acres. The Damascus vicinity, just southeast of Portland, is the largest contiguous block of land studied, encompassing eleven study areas and totaling approximately 8,000 acres.

The first step in the study was to determine how many Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA) existed within the study areas. Some land was removed from consideration because of Title 3 water quality and flood management reasons or for having slopes greater than 25 percent.⁴ Acreage for needed streets, parks, schools, churches, and community organizations was also removed from consideration. Although other potential expansion areas around the Portland metropolitan region will be discussed from a contextual point of view, this article will primarily focus on the roughly contiguous 8,000 acres around Damascus.

State land-use planning requirements for UGB Study

Oregon State land-use planning requirements are written in Oregon law as "Goals" with each goal having a number of "Factors." For the purposes of this paper, Goal 14, which addresses rules for studying any proposed changes in the UGB, and Goal 2, which deals with land classification, are the most relevant. After this brief look at the significant parts of the state laws that provide a framework for any study of UGB expansion, we will look at the crucial concept of Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA), which determine whether development happens within the current UGB or into an expanded boundary. Since Metro's initial assessment shows that the Portland area meets the state requirements for potential UGB expansion, Metro is required by state law to conduct a study to determine the best choice of land for this purpose.

“ Locational factors are meant to assist planners in deciding where to place any increased development once analysis determines a need exists. ”

According to State Planning Goal 14, seven factors must be studied before the Urban Growth Boundary can be changed. Factors 1 and 2 of Goal 14 are "need factors" that require proof that a demonstrated need exists as a result of population forecasts, employment opportunities, or livability. Factors 1 and 2, therefore, specify *how much* land "need" is required to justify expanding the UGB. The other five factors of Goal 14 are known as "locational factors." Locational factors are meant to assist planners in deciding *where* to place any increased development once analysis determines a need exists. The five locational factors are:

- Factor - **orderly economic provision** for public facilities and services

- Factor - **maximum efficiency of land uses** within and on the fringe of the existing urban area
- Factor - **(ESEE)** environmental, social, energy, and economic consequences
- Factor - **retention of agricultural land** as defined with Class I soil being the highest priority for retention and Class VI soil lands the lowest priority
- Factor - **compatibility** of the proposed urban uses with nearby agricultural activities.⁵

Statewide Planning Goal 2 deals with land-use and requires that Metro conduct an analysis of alternatives to help determine the best expansion possibilities. In addition to working in conjunction with the Goal 14 factors listed above, Goal 2 also considers one of the primary reasons for the UGB in the first place: retention of agricultural land. In fact, Metro is directed by Oregon law to prioritize land for inclusion in the UGB as follows:

- **First priority:** *urban reserves*. This is land within the UGB.
- **Second priority:** *exception land*. Also known as non-resource land, it is adjacent to the UGB, but not designated for farm or forest use. Farm or forest land that is completely surrounded by exception land can also be considered second priority.
- **Third priority:** *marginal land*. This land classification accounts for a small amount of exception (non-resource) land unique to Washington County that allows dwelling units on exclusive farm-use land.
- **Fourth priority:** *farm or forest*. Also known as resource land, it can be considered in a local comprehensive plan.⁶

In addition to the priorities listed above, Metro defines land with Class I and Class II soil as agricultural resource land and considers it the land of last resort for expansion to the UGB. In fact, since the state and Metro planning guidelines put a premium on farmland, the consultants did not include in their analysis land with the Class I and Class II soil rating.⁷

The Residential Urban Growth Report (UGR)

The Residential Urban Growth Report (UGR) is an important technical document that helps establish whether there will be a surplus or a deficit of land. The Residential UGR analyzes the land capacity of Metro's three counties and 24 cities, and compares this with population and housing forecasts. If a deficit of developable land is found, Oregon State law ORS 197.296 and Metro Code allow the following options:

- expand the UGB by the number of acres necessary to meet housing needs
- create additional capacity inside the UGB by applying additional regulations or other measures
- combine expansion of the UGB and policy changes to meet a shortfall

If Metro decides to mitigate any deficits by applying land-use regulation, regulation changes must be regional for Metro to get formal credit for increasing capacity per the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. Possible regional changes include upzoning, changing minimum floor area ratio (FAR) requirements or offering incentives that optimize development of land.

Metropolitan Portland is forecasted to need 222,800 housing units. Since the dwelling capacity within the existing UGB is only 184,100 units, however, this calculation predicts a deficit of 38,700 housing units over the next 20 years, thereby justifying a need for UGB expansion per Statewide Planning Goal 14, factors 1 and 2. In addition to the housing need estimate above there is also a need for "job acres," land used to build industrial/commercial facilities. The 2002-2022 Employment Land Needs Analysis indicates that 1,100 "job acres" have been absorbed since 1997 and that there will be a need for approximately 5,700 industrial job acres in the next 20 years.⁸

Net Vacant Buildable Acres Outside UGB

Table 1 shows estimates of the Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA) in Damascus. It divides this value among the 2040 Design Type Designations such as Town Centers (14.1

Table 1: Planned Damascus Land-Use Based on Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA)⁹

Study Area	NVBA	Town Center Acres	IN Acres	ON Acres	Corridor Acres	Emp Acres	Industry Acres	Total Housing Units
06(a)	521	0	421	0	100	0	0	4,008
06(b)	97	0	0	0	7	0	90	26
10	2565	379	1627	0	0	224	335	18,692
11	444	0	50	0	0	195	199	394
12	736	0	561	0	0	0	175	4,743
13	553	0	368	0	0	67	180	3,065
14	537	127	163	0	0	67	180	2,898
15	351	3	348	0	0	0	0	2,607
16	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	118
17	220	0	52	0	0	32	136	432
18	144	0	0	0	0	144	0	0
19-1	317	0	263	0	0	44	10	2,248
19-2	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	30

dwelling per acre), (IN) Inner Neighborhoods (9.6 dwellings per acre), (ON) Outer Neighborhoods (7.3 dwellings per acre), Corridors (14.1% to 30% residential along transportation corridors), Industrial Acres, and (EMP) Employment Acres. This table also gives the total number of housing units planned. The Damascus area has the variety and development density required for a successful urban environment. Study Area 10, for instance, has 379 acres designated for a central town place with 1,627 acres designated for Inner Neighborhood and a total of 18,692 housing units all within a few miles, which offers the housing density needed for the creation of a vital cultural place. In this same area, 224 acres are planned for office employment and 335 acres are planned for industry. This will provide employment for those living locally. Without this job-acres element, Metro runs the risk of having the same problem found in every suburb: a jobs/housing imbalance. When considered together with town centers, Inner Neighborhoods, and employment acres in close proximity, Damascus holds the potential of many employees walking or taking public transit to

work, thereby greatly reducing automobile trips.

Study Area 14 has a similar zoning on a smaller scale with 127 acres zoned for a Town Center, 163 acres for Inner Neighborhood, 185 Industrial, and a total of about 3,000 units. In addition to the fairly large total number of units estimated for areas 12 and 13, area 06(a) is zoned for the largest corridor development along Telford Road. Adding up all of the NVBA for this Damascus area yields approximately 8,000 acres and over 30,000 estimated housing units. If built as proposed, Damascus might surpass nearby Lake Oswego as the most important economic and cultural sub-center second to Portland.

Assessment for Water, Sewer, and Storm Water serviceability

The consultants used a method similar to the one used in the Utility Feasibility Analysis conducted in 1996 by rating serviceability as “easy”(E), “moderately difficult”(MD), or “difficult”(D).¹⁰ They used Metro data as a primary source and made telephone calls to “each of the water, sanitary, and storm water service providers” located near the study area in question.¹¹

Table 2: Damascus Transportation Assessment (Parametrix/ECONorthwest)¹³

Parametrix								
Study Area	Possible Housing Units	Auto Trips	Lanes Needed	Travel Created	Connects to Built System	Potential Auto Serviceability	Total Score	General Assessment
12	2,910	3,518	3.4	3	1	1	5	Fair
13	4,690	5,670	5.5	3	2	2	7	Poor
14	3,795	4,588	4.4	3	2	3	8	Poor
15	2,820	3,409	3.3	3	2	3	8	Poor
16	160	193	0.2	1	2	3	6	Fair
17,18	680	822	0.8	2	2	3	7	Poor
19	2,385	3	2.8	3	3	3	9	Poor
75	175	212	0.2	1	2	3	6	Fair
ECONorthwest								
76	0	0	0.0	1	1	1	8	Easy
10	19,964	16,112	9.0	3	3	1	16	Difficult

According to the feasibility study, most of the Damascus area sanitary sewer service should be straightforward to implement. Study Area 15 is considered more difficult to serve and Area 14 is expected to require a new pump station. Although providers do not anticipate any problems with providing sanitary sewage and water services to the Damascus area, it is expected that upgrades will be needed to handle the added capacity.¹²

Transportation

One of the essential ingredients of a successful expansion of the UGB is transportation. Currently, the Damascus area has limited road, highway, and public transportation. The analysis for this part of the assessment looks at three main parts: relative intensity of trip activity, connectivity, and serviceability. Rankings were given for all three attributes and weighted composite scores were calculated. ECONorthwest reported one of three levels of difficulty: “easy,” “moderate,” or “difficult” to supply transportation services to any given study area. Parametrix used the

designations “easy,” “fair,” or “poor.” A very important conclusion that they both make is that it would be “difficult” to supply the highway improvements necessary to handle the estimated increased automobile traffic and that Damascus is a “poor” UGB choice from a transportation point of view.

The consultants, however, seem to have an automobile bias. Parametrix seems to favor the already built suburban infrastructure in areas like Hillsboro to the west and Gresham to the east. Parametrix calculated that the proposed development in the Damascus area will generate 0.62 trips per household, and therefore, will put 900 (ECONorthwest estimated 750) vehicles on the roads per hour.¹⁴ Since there is not enough infrastructure to handle this capacity, Parametrix gives the Damascus area a mostly “poor” rating. One reason for this conclusion is that they statistically weighed transportation modes with autos getting a decided bias of (0.5) compared to transit at (0.25) and bicycle/pedestrian at (0.1). The overall effect of this particular bias is that it encourages more suburban-type development.

For instance, Parametrix concluded that transportation development for Cornelius and Forest Grove (Table 1 Study Areas 75 and 76 in the northwest section of the metro area) would be "easy" and "fair." This is because there are highway lanes directly to these suburbs. The northwest section of the metropolitan area, however, lacks the acreage needed to build the tantalizing town centers and large-scale Inner Neighborhoods that are planned for the Damascus area. But the consultants are heavily influenced by the existing highway infrastructure. This kind of thinking might pull Portland deeper into the problems of traffic jams, pollution, and longer commutes. Metro, it would seem, has a fantastic opportunity to strike a better balance than what Parametrix suggests. For instance, they could build public transit infrastructure into the Damascus area where it would not have to compete with existing automobile expressways, thereby greatly increasing transit's chances of success. Even if the Hillsborough rail line were extended to areas 75 and 76, they would still have a serious lack of employment and/or industry, thus leading to a jobs/housing imbalance.

One of the problems with a lot of the development that occurs in many instances before planners start to look at relationships across the metropolitan region, such as in the case of the San Francisco Bay Area, is that there is a serious jobs/housing imbalance; Silicon Valley workers, for example, sometimes have 1.5- to 2-hour commutes. The same situation is also found in Washington D.C., Chicago, and Denver, to name a few. The Portland UGB expansion acreage zoned for mixed-use, inner neighborhood, outer neighborhood, and employment acreage on this larger scale around Damascus promises to alleviate the jobs/housing imbalance. It should be remembered, however, that the Portland Metro only serves approximately 1.3 million people, while the San Francisco Bay Area has over 7 million people. As Portland Metro grows, commute troubles could mushroom. Provided the transportation aspect of this planned expansion is carefully implemented, however, workers could commute to work from Damascus to Downtown Portland in 30 minutes using Rapid Bus Transit. However, since the consultants for the UGB expansion are

placing more weight on automobile travel, they are leaning toward more suburban-type development: exactly the opposite of what Metro was created to accomplish.

2040 Policy Fundamentals

Fortunately, Metro also overlays the fundamentals of what it calls its 2040 Policies as well as the hierarchy of its Regional Framework Plan (RFP) over the findings of the planning consultants' alternatives analysis to arrive at their final recommendations. The fundamentals found in Metro's 2040 Policies are ideas that are often referred to as "smart growth." Here are the eight fundamentals Metro applied to the Alternatives Analysis of potential UGB amendments:

1. use land efficiently (mixed-use centers and corridors)
2. protect the natural environment (streams, wetlands, riparian corridors)
3. balance transportation with transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile facilities
4. maintain separation between Metro and cities in the hinterland (green-belt, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City idea)
5. create a sense of place
6. offer diverse housing options
7. create a vibrant place to live
8. encourage a strong local economy

In the case of the proposed UGB expansion in the Damascus area the fundamental that has the most impact on the alternative analysis is number 3: balance transportation. When this fundamental idea is applied to the analysis it counters the auto-biased logic of the consultants' transportation calculations and gets back to the general idea of creating an interesting urban place where people live and work. With this additional layer of thought applied to the study we can begin to consider designing something that has both a vibrant local economy and also has Rapid Bus Transit for those going to downtown Portland or Lake Oswego for work and play. So, how did it turn out when Metro applied these fundamentals? Metro's idea was to upgrade the "suitability" (based on score) of land for inclusion in the UGB if it met a majority of the 2040 policy fundamentals.¹⁵

The Damascus area in general all met a majority of the 2040 fundamentals. The positive side of this is that the growth will be compact, will offer ample opportunities for office and industrial work, will have diverse housing options, will have good transit, bike, and pedestrian options, and will be defined by definite edges (as opposed to typical suburbia). The downside is that while the Damascus and Gresham areas meet several 2040 fundamentals, Metro claims that Fundamental 2, protection and restoration of natural resources, will be difficult to meet.¹⁶ The only way around this, it seems, would be higher density zoning within the current UGB near already established commercial districts, such as Hawthorne Boulevard (in East Portland) and 24th Street (in West Portland), but this seems very unlikely given the nature of neighborhood politics.

Conclusion

Suburban sprawl continues to be an issue that metropolitan areas have to face. We still have single family homes rising on one-acre lots that are 30 miles and a one-hour commute from meaningful jobs; we still have traffic jams and pollution, cultural isolation, and the waste of resources inherent with low-density developments. Metro has been given authority to develop and implement policies that attempt to control the region's growth.

But does Portland Metro have an advantage over other Metro regions? Has their Urban Growth Boundary really done any good? And in either case, does it make sense to roll out the asphalt and build in Damascus on part of their beautiful greenbelt? The questions are complex. And like the planning analysis of the Damascus area the answer to these questions depends as much on how you think as it does on soil classification, Statewide Planning Goals, and consultant trip-generation calculations.

Certainly the calculations and the standard economic, environmental, and social calculus will generate a lot of graphs and data: the 2002 Alternatives Analysis Study of the Damascus area, for example, yielded Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA) statistics. They told us there were a lot of buildable acres. We also found out that Damascus is basically a rural area without much

in the way of automobile infrastructure, even less transit service, and basically little or no sanitary sewer services.

To the consultant it looks like there are a lot of expensive, time-consuming automobile lanes to build, and current transit cannot handle the commute needs. Although there is truth in this perspective, this is where it starts getting difficult to decide what the proper course of action is. When Parametrix began their portion of the Alternatives Study they decided how they would think about the transportation: they decide to weigh the data in favor of already existing infrastructure. This has a lot of appeal. Why go all the way out to a fringe area, at great expense, and rip up a part of the greenbelt?

Before going to the greenbelt Portland could easily accommodate higher-density construction within the UGB, especially on the east side of the Willamette River. Portland does not have stifling housing and employment densities, they already have the makings of "Town Centers" within the city, and it would cost much less for them to build out public transportation. Hawthorne Boulevard and Lloyd Center east of the Willamette, and 24th Street in the west, are examples that come to mind. But changes to the current Metro density rules would be needed and the aforementioned neighborhoods, of course, would never agree to the increased density. Building in the Damascus area as detailed in the current proposal, however, could very well lead to a new, successful, and vibrant urban space. If this transpires, it holds the potential to break down community resistance and lead to acceptance of creative higher-density designs within the existing UGB. The Metro study detailed in this article is a good first step in realizing this potential.

The consultants' analysis, however, seemed to encourage the least dense development you can find in the Portland Metro area, namely Hillsboro and Forest Grove. If Metro is politically blocked from creating more density within the existing UGB, it can attempt to create a new standard of density for all future UGB amendments. The land-use designations for the Net Vacant Buildable Acres (NVBA) for the Damascus area offer the promise of this kind of new density standard that will promote a better

jobs/housing balance and the housing density needed to help stem sprawl. In addition to the variety and density of land-use Metro also applied its 2040 fundamentals to its UGB expansion decision.

The 2040 fundamental policies call for building mixed-use development, creating a sense of place that is vibrant, providing diverse housing options, encouraging a strong local economy, and offering a balanced transportation system. When these Fundamentals were applied to the Alternatives Analysis Study, they countered the

negative rating of the Damascus area by the consultants' automobile facilities bias. As a result, the Damascus vicinity study areas are being tentatively recommended by Metro as the centerpiece of the UGB expansion. Although I am disappointed that Metro is throwing in the towel on 2040 Policy Fundamental 2, and its natural resources protections for the Damascus area, it may actually be worth the price in the long run if Metro delivers compact, vibrant urbanized neighborhoods. ■

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Photo: Andrea Dooley

I-Hotel: Fall and Resurrection

City growth, urban renewal and the power of community organizing

By Andrea Dooley

After a long struggle, ground has finally been broken for the International Hotel Senior Housing Center on Jackson and Kearny streets. Built in 1907, the original International Hotel had been home to immigrant Filipino service workers in what was then the Manilatown section of San Francisco. For twenty-six years following the struggle, the site—a corner lot that borders the financial district, Chinatown and North Beach—had not been developed.

It all started in conjunction with urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s. Local government, the business community and real estate developers targeted the hotel for demolition which sparked an activist movement that would agitate to bring the issue of low-cost housing to the public agenda. On August 4, 1977 the forty-five remaining residents of the I-Hotel were evicted after a 10-year effort to save one of the remaining low-cost residential hotels in San Francisco. This article traces the history of the International Hotel, the city growth machine and the power of community organizing.

Manilatown

Nearly ten years after the evictions of the elderly residents of the International Hotel (I-Hotel) located in the “Manilatown” section of San Francisco, Sheriff Richard Hongisto observed,

When it comes to the destruction of housing stock for capital, it just shouldn't be allowed. The [I]-Hotel afforded its residents housing they could never get anywhere else at the same price, it was part of the social fabric of the city, and it was very unkind to throw them out...in pursuit of—not just profit, but extraordinary profit. I find it revolting.¹

In light of the fact that Hongisto was the sheriff who carried out the final eviction orders of the 45 remaining residents of the hotel, this statement is all the more poignant. By contrast Justin Herman, who at the time of the evictions was the

executive director of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, a coalition of local leaders who administered the Urban Renewal programs, stated, “This land is too valuable to permit poor people to park on it.”²

This “too valuable land” was the site of the I-Hotel, built in 1907, one year after the devastating San Francisco earthquake and fire. This residential hotel was home to Filipino men employed in the service industries in the city. Many of these men were seasonal farm workers who came to the city in the off-season to find work in restaurants, canneries, and factories. During this period, Asian males were legally prohibited from land or business ownership thus excluding them from advancement and assimilation into the larger society. Many were U.S. citizens and many of these manongs, an Ilocano term of respect for the “old timers,” were veterans of both World Wars, systematically denied the benefits originally promised them in exchange for military service.³ In addition, these men were part of a third wave

“

This land is too valuable
to permit poor people
to park on it.

— Justin Herman

”

of cheap Asian immigrant labor who sought to find further opportunity on the mainland after having been schooled in the service industries of Hawaii. As a consequence of Asian women being denied immigration rights to the U.S. until 1965, and anti-miscegenation laws which prevented intermarriage between races, a bachelor society was created among these men.⁴ Noted longtime resident Nick Napeek, “It [the I-Hotel] was a good place for brown people, Filipinos specifically coming for jobs in Alaska or on the farms—a unique place where you met friends to guide you and maybe recommend you for jobs.”⁵

The City Growth Machine

“Powerful neighborhoods, like powerful nations, tend to expand into adjoining territory,” wrote Calvin Trillin. His analogy is apt when it comes to the growth of cities.⁶ City power elites (i.e. real estate developers, local politicians, financial institutions) constitute a city growth machine, promoting their own interests through development and economic expansion in the urban context. These power elites take city growth as their priority, affecting land use patterns, public policy and urban social interactions.⁷ Like nations seeking to dominate, city power elites will manipulate land use to create higher profit opportunities and gain control. By contrast, like a weaker nation, there are those living in the city that seek to protect neighborhood borders and community life. Land in the urban context has always been a source of conflict.

There are those individuals who view the urban landscape as a commodity to be “exchanged” for higher values in rent or resale. Those who control the land (and in most cases land policies and decisions) therefore seek to exchange the land for the wealth and power it

affords them. “This might explain why,” write John Logan and Larry Molotch in *The City as Growth Machine*, “certain people take a keen interest in the ordering of urban life.”⁸ In this framework land is seen as a product like other products on the market that is traded to maximize profits and power.

At odds with these “actors” in the land use debate are those who view land for its “use” value and see it as a place to live, work, and build a community. Land, in this case, is not primarily manipulated for monetary or power value but rather is viewed as part of a larger socioeconomic and political construct that encompasses not only the profit potential of land use but community need, environmental and ecological issues, historical and ethnic neighborhood boundaries, and housing cost concerns. The one issue that consistently divides these two already disparate groups is urban growth.

The modern growth machine and growth itself have become a complex coalition of business, government, and institutions whose goal revolves around “intense land use and increased rent collections,” although the specific tools of growth may differ. Logan and Molotch note, “People who use their time and money to participate in local affairs are the ones who—in vast disproportion to their representation in the population—have the most to gain or lose in land use decisions.”⁹ Logan and Molotch go on to assert that the essential question to ask in the face of urban expansion is “who benefits?” In the case of the I-Hotel the answer to that question is abundantly clear.

The Struggle to Save the I-Hotel

The effort to save the I-Hotel began in 1968 when it was sold to Milton Meyer Company. When the company’s plans for the site were made public, the residents and the activist community found themselves positioned in direct opposition to the city growth machine. Walter Shorenstein, head of Milton Meyer, who ordered the demolition of the hotel, stated at the time, “We deeply regret having to disrupt the lives of these good people.”¹⁰ Despite Shorenstein’s expressed concern, Milton Meyer applied for and received a demolition permit with the purpose of building a multilevel parking garage on the site. This was a

particular tactic of growth machine actors who would clear buildings, erect a parking lot and wait for the land to accrue value. In these cases, when the real estate reaches its peak value the parking lot is torn down and an office building or luxury hotel replaces it.¹¹ Although Shorenstein and Milton Meyer were less than forthcoming about future plans for the site, their behavior suggests this pattern.

Although few people in the city even knew of the I-Hotel and fewer still knew of the evictions and future demolition, Milton Meyer and Shorenstein ran into opposition from the start. Several factors contributed to this climate of resistance. First, 1968 was a very politically charged time in San Francisco with many protests against the Vietnam War and this translated into more community-level involvement in general. "It was a generation of a lot of activism," recalls Terry Bautista, who was active in the defense of the residents of the I-Hotel, "we were looking for our own voice."¹²

Secondly, the rise of ethnic studies and women studies programs at the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University had a great impact. These programs not only raised awareness of ethnic communities, but also encouraged those involved in these programs to go back into the communities and agitate for change. Bautista recalled, "the I-Hotel struggle was a good application of what ethnic studies were all about—go study your community and look for justice where there isn't any. There was so much going on at the time. You couldn't help but be political."¹³

Volunteers from college campuses and local grassroots organizations helped to refurbish the hotel and continued to advocate for permanent preservation of one of the remaining low-income housing buildings in the city. The controversy continued with demonstrations and legal battles intended to keep the I-Hotel from being demolished. Unlike most urban renewal programs, which rolled over cities in the United States in the mid 20th century, Milton Meyer, local growth boosters, and politicians who favored the expansion of the "Wall Street of the West" were thwarted temporarily in their efforts to raze the I-Hotel.

Urban Renewal & "Manhattanization"

In San Francisco, the urban renewal projects of the mid 20th century had elements of the modern growth machine, which was focused on the exchange value of land regardless of the larger social consequence. Although urban renewal projects were federally mandated, local counsels were formed to make policy—thereby creating local coalitions of power elites to control and guide land decisions.¹⁴ These counsels were inevitably made up of local real estate, business, media, and political groups who had the most to gain by promoting growth. This drive to promote growth greatly impacted the resident populations, specifically communities of color, in different neighborhoods. For example, in the Western Addition section of San Francisco, 4,000 people, mostly poor African Americans, were relocated or simply driven out by renewal and were never able to return to their neighborhoods.¹⁶

After World War II, urban renewal projects in San Francisco focused on expanding the financial district, and as a consequence destroyed many small businesses and residential hotels. This pattern repeated itself in the "Manilatown" section of the city. The "Kearny Corridor", as it is sometimes referred to, was home to some 10,000 Filipino men who had the misfortune of sitting on land directly in the path of the rapidly expanding financial district. "Ten full blocks had been redeveloped," writes Larry Salamon in *Roots of Justice*, "from low-cost housing, restaurants, barber shops and other institutions that served the Filipino community."¹⁶ This area was being transformed into the now-recognizable and expanded skyline of the "Wall Street of the West." Those who opposed the forward march of urban renewal saw it as a move by city power elites toward "Manhattanization," whereby a city is transformed into a financial and corporate center modeled after New York City. These opponents saw the transformation coming at an extremely high cost and in the process, notes Salamon, "four thousand low-cost housing units were lost and four out of five low-cost residential hotels were gone by the end of the 1970s."¹⁷ According to senior editor of the San Francisco Business Journal, Caroline Grannan, in the ten-year period between 1968 and 1978 alone 2,300 units were destroyed.¹⁸

“ Four hundred policemen, concerned about unsubstantiated reports of firearms and home-made bombs in the building, dressed in full riot gear and marched on the hotel at 4 a.m. ”

But even powerful members of the city's elite like Shorenstein must sometimes weigh the damage of a tainted public image against profit. In 1973, because of local community opposition to the demolition of the I-Hotel, Milton Meyer sold the I-Hotel to the Four Seas Company, which was based in Hong Kong. This overseas company had little interest in local politics or grassroots organizations and the sale was not even made public for 10 months. In 1976, Mayor George Moscone tried to broker a deal whereby the San Francisco Housing Authority would condemn the building under eminent domain—a policy whereby local governments can seize private land for public use, usually with compensation paid to the owner. This would then enable the city to sell the hotel back to the residents.¹⁹ Four Seas filed suit claiming the city could not invoke eminent domain in the particular case of the I-Hotel. In an interesting twist of the interwoven powers of the growth machine, Superior Court Judge Ira Brown, also a former landlord, ruled in favor of Four Seas, stating that the city could not use eminent domain to take property away from one private investor and give or sell it to another.²⁰ This ruling was seen, at the time, to be the final blow to the long struggle over the I-Hotel. As a consequence of this court ruling, the evictions were set for August 4, 1977.

The Evictions

By all eyewitness accounts, the 3,000 demonstrators outside the hotel on that night were peaceful and stood eight deep around the entire block. Four hundred policemen, concerned about unsubstantiated reports of firearms and home-made bombs in the building, dressed in full riot

gear and marched on the hotel at 4 a.m.²¹ As told by Salamon, “the pictures of old immigrants being forced into the streets...were shown on newscasts across the country and in many places outside the U.S.”²² This event helped to further galvanize the tenants' rights and low income housing movements all over the country. Calvin Trillion later wrote, “the Human Rights Commission of San Francisco, expressing concern about the steadily diminishing supply of low-rent housing for people with pensions or low incomes, felt the residents of the I-Hotel were an example of what was happening to the elderly poor.”²³

This same scenario was played out over and over in cities around the U.S. where low-income housing was demolished in the name of growth and urban renewal while no alternative or otherwise cost efficient housing was found for displaced communities. Many of the residents of the I-Hotel left the area as the more elderly passed away, and as late as 1983, seven of the surviving tenants living in San Francisco were still waiting for relocation housing.²⁴

In 1979, then Mayor Diane Feinstein, a prominent figure in the city growth machine, set up a citizens advisory committee (CAC), to oversee development on the site.²⁵ After years of legal wrangling, the site of the I-Hotel remained undeveloped. In 1994 the Archdiocese of San Francisco needed to relocate the St. Mary's Chinese Catholic center and as a consequence purchased the site when the CAC accepted their proposal.²⁶ The plan for the site includes an elementary school, the Manilatown Community Center, a parking garage and a 104-unit, 14-story affordable housing development to be named the International Hotel Senior Housing Center.²⁷ The community had extensive input on what would be housed on the site with the CAC polling focus groups about their needs. According to longtime housing activist Bill Sorro, the community center housed on the ground floor will “memorialize and commemorate the struggle for the International Hotel. It will educate about Manilatown and will be a venue for Asian American performing and visual arts.”²⁸ At a groundbreaking ceremony held in August 1997, the 20th anniversary of the evictions, Emil De Guzman, a longtime activist in the struggle to save the I-Hotel commented,

“finally, justice is being served. The souls of our tenants [will] finally rest when the new building is built.”²⁹ As of fall 2003, construction of the International Hotel Senior Housing Center was finally underway.

Justice Isn't Something Simple

The documentary, *The Fall of the I-Hotel*, shows the exposed brick of the demolished hotel's foundation with the words “evict your landlord” written defiantly. Perhaps this is the final legacy of this long struggle for tenants' rights.³⁰ Growth advocates present various arguments for continued development. First, they purport that growth promotes fiscal health. However, the position that suggests growth “adds to the tax base” is assumed to be beneficial and does not take into account all of the complexities of the urban environment. At the very least it can be said that growth benefits to fiscal health are exaggerated.³¹ Growth advocates also assert that local growth creates jobs. Logan and Molotch argue that “in any given year, the United States will see the construction of a certain number of new factories, office units, and highways—regardless of where they are put.”³² Accordingly, only a certain number of jobs will be created in any given year, making the job market a bit like a nationwide game of musical chairs, with a mobile labor force searching for an open chair when the music stops.³³ Logan and Molotch go on to say that, “the number of jobs in this society, whether in the building trades or in any economic sector ... will be determined by rates of return on investments, national trade policy, federal decisions affecting money supply, and other factors unrelated to local decision making. A locality can only compete with other localities for its share of newly created U.S. jobs.”³⁴ To be sure, growth advocates will also champion growth as a means of eliminating social problems. In fact, Logan and Molotch opine that the “size and rate of growth have a role in creating and exacerbating urban



problems such as segregation and inequality.”³⁵

Actors in the growth machine use all of the above reasons and many more to justify the kind of urban renewal that lead to the demolition of the I-Hotel and other low-income housing. “Nevertheless,” say Logan and Molotch, “for many places and times, growth is at best a mixed blessing and the growth machine’s claims are merely legitimating ideology, not accurate descriptions of reality. Residents of declining cities, as well as people living in more dynamic areas are often deceived by the extravagant claims that growth solves problems.”³⁶ Although the I-Hotel functions as a symbol of the loss of community, continuity, and low cost housing in urban areas, it can also be seen as having instigated positive outcomes in the ongoing struggle to understand the complexities of land use.

Thus, it is fitting that after more than thirty years, the *manongs* will again have low-income housing and a center that celebrates their rich heritage and numerous contributions to American society. And while the Four Seas Corporation may have wanted a more lucrative use for their land, the International Hotel Senior Housing Center stands as an example of what the involvement of the community can produce. Further, the larger community was galvanized and took action to find justice for a group of individuals with too few resources to fight the more powerful city elites. When Bill Sorro is asked if he feels victorious and vindicated by this out-

come he answers, "we don't feel vindicated because justice doesn't work like that. Justice isn't something simple, so that if you fill up the hole with this much justice then you're equal."³⁷ Emil DeGuzman, today a San Francisco Human Rights Commissioner and one of the tenants of

the I-Hotel at the time of the evictions, sees the new I-Hotel as a victory but argues that the problems of poverty, homelessness and gentrification have only gotten worse.³⁸ Ultimately, it is a small victory that pales in comparison with all the work that still is to be done.³⁹ ■

Endnotes

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Photo: Benjamin Leon

A squatter site in Amsterdam. The Frankrijk is a legal, well-established residential settlement that features its own cafe/bar.

Breaking In

Politics of private property & squatting in the city

By Jessica M. Look

The right to control property offers a person social and economic benefits. When these benefits occur and are protected by the state, it translates into a society that in essence, preserves and strengthens divisions of class and economic status. In particular, it forms a culture of power dynamics within the divisions of property owners and non-property owners. In western industrialized urban areas, these divisions only worsen the social condition of the lower economic classes and create physical and even social separations. Even in liberal market economies such as the United States of America and Great Britain, where property rights are fully protected and defended by the government, property is still seen as achievable through the assumption of perfect competition as explained in the 'classic' economic model. However, as demonstrated by the existence of the high rates of poverty and homelessness, especially in America, disparities in the market do exist and inevitably so then does squatting. Squatting, a form of self-help housing when all other forms of housing are not available and/or accessible, challenges this system of power in the control and privilege of property. Until there is a balance between the privilege of property rights and the right to housing, squatting will continue as a self-help housing act, motivated by the need for shelter.

Squatting is a self help housing act that occurs when a person, who does not have shelter, enters into a vacant housing unit owned by someone else and proceeds to live in it without acquiring permission from the owner or otherwise without compensation. While some individuals hold the perception that squatting is an act of trespassing, others view squatting as a necessary means of providing shelter. Squatting is a useful tool of analysis because it confirms the existence of an ethical dilemma between the power struggle associated with private property rights and the basic human need for housing. In other words, squatting itself questions the economic systems that value private control of land over the human requirement for housing. This questioning, therefore, reveals another side to the field of housing, one that is beyond the classification of housing as a commodity, but rather as a value determined by necessity.

One can learn about the systematic ways that the privilege of property is associated with the

inaccessibility to housing by investigating the struggle behind the squatting movement.¹ One of the justifications of the squatting movement used when reclaiming unused or abandoned property, especially during a housing crisis, is as an attempt to redistribute land and/or housing for their unmet housing needs. Another justification that squatters have expressed when occupying empty homes is one of protest to the social neglect of housing responsibilities that a property owner has to their communities. In the history of squatters in the city of London, communities used these justifications to challenge this system of privilege within private property. This movement demonstrated how power and privilege are embedded in the rights of individuals to control vacant housing even during a time of housing need. Before the analysis into the politics of squatting, an overview of the social and economic implications associated with individual control of property shall be examined.

Property Rights: The Right to Power and Privilege

Property rights produce social arrangements that make owners more socially and economically powerful at the expense of others. Since owners have exclusive rights and access to their property, which typically has substantial economic value, they gain unequal economic advantage over the landless. Property owners also have more access to resources—such as networking connections—as well as the ability to influence the political process. This accessibility to sociopolitical privilege is a direct result of the economic status gained from property rights. Since the state protects these privileges via the law, it forms a society that in essence, preserves and strengthens social and economic inequalities. A typical example of this skewed power dynamic is demonstrated in the landlord and tenant relationship. In this relationship, tenants are obligated to give a substantial portion of their income to the landlord in exchange for limited housing

“ In socialist welfare states...there is a greater political emphasis for the protection of common property and state ownership. ”

security. While the tenant gains no equity, landlords profit from favorable tax breaks, thereby increasing their economic and social advantage. Landlords also benefit from legislative protections that are not afforded to tenants. Although these disparities exist in many countries, a number of governments deal with the consequences of property privileges differently.

The system of private property ownership has been a core element in the capitalist organization of society since its very inception.² In liberal market economies, such as the United States and Great Britain, the roots of the right to property are, “...in the ancient assertion that private property was necessary for the full realization of human facilities, for the attainment of the ethical

goal of free and independent individual development.”³ Today this assertion has been codified into our laws. The state defends individual private ownership by giving owners exclusive rights and protection to their property. These rights are securely held through contract provisions and can provide incentives for investment and economic community growth with very little government interference. Governmental interference is seen as restriction of consumer choices while damaging the market. In her book, *Public Housing and Private Property*, Stephanie Cooper explains that full rights of ownership and the system of private property can only operate under “...conditions where the full and free exchange of all things, including income and wealth.”⁴

In socialist welfare states such as Sweden and even in more moderate welfare states such as the Netherlands, there is a greater political emphasis for the protection of common property and state ownership.⁵ Common property is assumed to make guarantees that each individual is assured not to be excluded from the use or benefit of property. This ideology is explained by the government's motives to limit poverty and promote equality amongst the people. Policies are then designed to limit private property rights in the hopes that the, “...distribution of things do not reflect purely market criteria,” explains Cooper meaning that allocation of benefits could be managed and controlled for the purposes of equality.⁶ Cooper further emphasizes another motive for state intervention on private property right is that it, “...rectifies possible injustices that would arise as a system of unrestrained private property (that) intensifies existing social and economic equalities.”⁷ Restricting the rights of private property has always been a controversial issue. The controversy has always been that the more a government interferes with regard to protecting equality amongst communities, the more bureaucracy and limitations on individual freedom can inevitably result.

These two political economies demonstrate how different societal and cultural values reflect the system of privilege within property, while both protecting within variation, the ideals of personal freedom and the protection of social equality. The split of ideology between these two

example states based on the notion that social equality and personal success is achievable through the perfect market competition and self discipline of the 'self-made man'. As demonstrated within the policies of the liberal market economies, the more limited involvement of the government within the market is believed to encourage the free movement of investment and economic growth. However these policies tend to produce higher amounts of poverty, homelessness and all other related forms of social inequality. This occurs because of a belief system that lacks the awareness of the market's ability to exploit workers, minorities, and the poor. Even today in the City of San Francisco, a worker making minimum wage of \$5.75 would need to work for 106 hours per week to afford a two bedroom housing unit at the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Market Rate benchmark for California (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2000).⁸ This example shows how limited regulation within the liberal market economies still doesn't guarantee availability of housing for all. In the case of social democratic forms of government, the belief system recognizes the market's inability to provide for all and therefore involves itself in the protection and maintenance of citizen welfare. These protections can include social housing programs, health care and extensive pension programs.

The Social Construction of Power and Property

By taking an approach of examining the social aspects of private property and its connection to power, one could view property as a means of social and economic control for the pursuit of capital. Authors David McCrone and Brian Elliot in their book, *Property and Power in a City: The Sociological Significance of Landlordism*, offer the theory that property rights should be seen as an institution and are not to be confused with such tangible things as objects. The theory of 'property as an institution' implies that property is a product of social creations, like culture. When one views property as something other than a 'thing', one can then socially analyze it. Therefore, property can be identified or confirmed as an influence on certain social relationships where economics and privi-

lege are at stake. In addition, property rights can grant owner powers to select those who can have access to property or even, as McCrone and Elliot explain, "confer the capacity to exclude others from the object."⁹ This property creates self-interest. In the rental sector of housing, this demonstrates a dangerous possibility, as property owners can withhold housing and determine who can and cannot have access to it. Overall, this is important in modern capitalist society because it shows that property is merely a socially constructed right tied to the promotion of class stratification.

The Politics of Squatting

The motivation behind urban squatters in today's society is not only to equitably distribute land, housing and power, but to provide access to immediate shelter. Squatting, as a housing action, is oftentimes a last resort when all other housing options both in the private and public sector are inaccessible. In *The Squatter's Handbook* by the Sydney Housing Action Collective, reasons are given as to why some squatters in the city resort to this action. Among them:

Despite government policies that aim to promote 'affordable housing', it is clear that the numbers of low-income people able to afford housing in the Sydney area are rapidly decreasing. The costs of private rental accommodation are increasing exponentially, pushing many low-income earners away from the places in which they and their friends live. The private rental market is largely de-regulated and tenancy laws afford low-income earners little protection from the increasingly exorbitant rents demanded by landowners and their real estate agents.¹⁰

Squatting takes place by homeless people who take control of their situation and take over unused housing units for the sake of personal or even communal housing. In other words, squatting is a blend of self-help housing and of protest to the failure of a society that maintains the

power of privilege of private property.

Squatting also challenges the decentralization of and the limitations on personal autonomy in securing shelter for one's own use. Typically, if urban governments were to undertake the building of housing, it would be in the form of large scale, mass-produced and they would need to provide a motivation of profit for a developer or otherwise find other funds to cover the investment outcome difference of market-rate and affordable housing. John F. C. Turner, often referred to as the 'philosopher of housing', speaks of the power of self-help housing and the autonomy that comes from it. In his book, *Freedom to Build*, Turner states that housing autonomy produces, "...individual and social well-being", and when housing autonomy doesn't occur, "dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to the personal fulfillment and a burden on the economy."¹¹ The concept of squatters taking control of private property for public housing is one of political anarchy, however in reality this idea of local control and the decentralization over housing resources is worth noting.

The social politics of the urban squatters in London, England gives an impressive overview of how squatting out of housing need can disrupt the privilege of power enjoyed by owners of private rental housing stock (i.e. landlords) and protests the inefficiency and sluggish response of programs of social 'Council' housing. In this instance, squatters created self-actuated community housing, as well as new confusions about the legitimacies of private property, ownership and social responsibility. Perhaps what's more significant besides the act of social awareness is the energy they gave to urban renewal, fighting blight and their creation of a bona fide counterculture. It's like the old saying, "a city can not have culture without a counter cultures," and in retrospect, the squatter communities of London are successful examples of a counter culture that promoted the idealist notion of housing controlled by and for the people.

Over a quarter of a million Britons, mostly living in London, occupied empty buildings and converted the units into homes between 1968 and 1980.¹² On November 18, 1968, the first activists formed an organization called The London

Squatters Campaign. Members were comprised of homeless and families with children living in insufficient short-term hostels. Authors N. Wates and C. Wolmer explain in their book, *Squatting the Real Story* that the members claimed their goals were, "an all out attack on the housing authorities with ordinary people taking action for themselves" with a campaign that would have a, "radicalizing effect on existing movements in the housing field."¹³ The situation of some rental housing at that time has been described as either unaffordable and/or uninhabitable. Social rental housing was in a crisis as well. It was depicted as having long waiting times and was often placed in locations away from jobs and other services. In the arena of private home ownership, the option to buy a home privately or from a housing corporation was severely limited. In 1980, the median costs of homes in London were around £29,000, while the median annual income was a mere £6,000.¹⁴

While this crisis was taking place, the rate of homelessness was drastically increasing. Although the number of homeless people was difficult to assess, the figure given by the England Housing Council reported that 56,020 people were without housing during the peak of the housing crisis in 1979.¹⁵ This number only reflects people at risk, thus leaving the hidden households of those living with friends or family who would have needed a home of their own. Meanwhile, as people were residing in makeshift homes on the streets or in short-term hostels, the number of empty housing units mostly in the inner city—was increasing. For instance, according to the official London Census for 1975, there were around 72,000 empty homes! Most of these homes (60,000 of them) were privately owned and the majority had been empty longer than over three months.¹⁶ Properties suitable for habitation owned by private property owners or even the state remain empty while for reasons of bureaucracy dealing with planning and procedure, speculation, red-lining, and even designation for future demolition occurred for such things as urban renewal.

Ultimately, as the London's Squatter history revealed; individuals, groups, families with children, all without housing, occupied these empty properties for the soul intention of making

homes for themselves. Public authorities, landlords and the media quickly responded, seeing it as a problem and not a symptom of the housing crisis. English law in the 70's treated squatting as both a form of trespassing and as a civil matter not pertaining to criminal jurisdiction. This meant that, "...squatting is *unlawful*, an action which is wrongful by virtue of the civil law, but not *illegal*, an action which is wrongful by virtue of the criminal law."¹⁷ However the protection of private property in English law does have precedence, and served the right of owners to protect private property even in a time of housing need.

Historically, squatting has been used many times over in urban areas to respond to the need of housing when property remains unused. The American advocacy group, Homes Not Jails, in San Francisco states that, "Generally speaking, throughout history squatting has generally been seen as a positive force to effectively counter property inequalities whenever the availability of land and housing is insufficient but at the same time land and housing resources remain utilized by the legal owners."¹⁸ Squatting challenges the state supported system of private property ownership that is seen as the promotion of profitable endeavors over housing, a basic universal human need. This notion of 'challenging' is referred to by the London Squatters, in what they called a "logical step forward."¹⁹ This enabled them to introduce an element of control and self determination into their lives by taking over empty houses which the established institutions of society could not or would not use. The future ability of a society to house everyone will always be filled with the tensions between the rights of private owners and the rights of the non-owners. McCrone and Elliot have said, "In a market society, the ability of a minority to acquire and monopolize property greatly restricts the opportunities for others to obtain enough property to allow the development of their full human potential or indeed, the creation of the "good society."²⁰



Another Amsterdam squatter site directly across the street from the Frankrijk.

Conclusion

In 1840, a French anarchist named Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in a now famous quote argued "property is theft," though it should be noted he also said, "property is freedom" meaning that people should have the right to control their property as a means for human society to evolve.²¹ This ethical debate is central to our understanding of squatting because it demonstrates the challenges of sustaining the system of ownership and a community's need for housing. The movement of squatting challenges a society in which land and the housing on it is seen as merely another product. If shelter is an essential proponent to life, then it would be logical to surmise that access to housing should be given by need and not always by the ability to pay.

All over the world in both developed and developing countries, squatter communities rely on this form of illegal housing to provide themselves with immediate shelter while at the same

time challenging the inequitable distribution of land, power and privilege. The social politics of squatting radically challenges the privilege that is embedded in the system of private property. However, the true purpose of squatting should not be downplayed over the political justifications for it. Squatting both historically and at present is done out of human need during a housing crisis. Squatting is not the solution to this predicament, but rather a short term tactic that provides immediate relief of need for shelter. For an equitable distribution of land and housing, governments need a more egalitarian social and

economic system. This should be created using not just progressive agendas, but rather a merger of both left and right political strategies. Squatters, property owners and local governments should seek a compromise in which property and housing seeks fair and unbiased cooperation based on the understanding that shelter is a human right. The future social development of housing in our communities thus depends on our ability to understand that values lie in what things do for and to life and not just a means to create profit. ■

Endnotes

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¹⁸ Homes Not Jails, San Francisco Chapter. "Page St. Squat Adverse Possession," San Francisco Tenants Union, <http://www.sftu.org/page.html>. [accessed 11-24-02].

¹⁹ Wates, N & Wolmar, C. Eds. *Squatting the Real Story*. Bay Leaf Books, London, England 1980.

²¹ McCrone & Elliot. "Property and Power in a City," *The Sociological Significance of Landlordism*, Basingstoke, Edinburgh, England, 1989.

²² Wates, N & Wolmar, C. Eds. *Squatting the Real Story*. Bay Leaf Books, London, England 1980.

The Give and Take

By Sebastian Africano

The National Wildlife Federation postulates that a child born today in the United States will, by the age of 75 years, produce 52 tons of garbage, consume 10 million gallons of water, and use 5 times the energy of a child born in the developing world. **One child.**

Estimates on how many people the earth could sustain indefinitely, based on the resource consumption levels of the United States are between 200-500 million people, according to population experts E.O. Wilson of Harvard and Anne Ehrlich of Stanford. The earth's population is currently 6.6 billion people—and rising—and

Present day –

Where to begin and what to say

I'm here to ask some questions about how we live today

I've got to find some reasons to how our race is so blind

Taking what we want, not caring what we leave behind

The societal construction of US is my question

Can anyone answer? All I have is an objection –

I OBJECT to the fact that PROFIT runs our lives

We don't care where it comes from – we don't want to feel obliged

To see a forest for a forest instead of in board-feet

To question how we're living while there're humans in the street

We go about our daily like these problems aren't there

While we're all part of this puzzle – everybody everywhere

You see its simple observation that inspires these words

As I wander around a planet, that could have been preserved

'til it got caught up in the cycle of consumers and our greed

Stepping upon each other to see who could supersede the next human

I'm fumin'

To think of all that's died

In "pursuit of happiness" we're committing matricide

O mother I can't tell you why we disrespect you so

Our place on your creation is to cultivate and grow

An understanding between each other, not to hoard all that we can

Making gains off one another never was part of the plan

But there's resistance –

To living a life of subsistence

We'd rather make a dollar than embrace our coexistence

So I must ask the question – how were we led astray?

We've been brainwashed to believe that making money is the way

OK another question – what gives us the right?

To take more than we're given and to kill what gave us life?

Well, here's a clue people – we're all in this together

WE'RE ON THE SAME PLANET

the developing nations of the world are using more and more resources in an attempt to meet the consumption standards we, in the developed world, have set.

This piece was written in response to the world's refusal to acknowledge the finitude of the earth's natural resources and the fragility of our collective ecosystem in our quest toward endless material advancement. It is an appeal to those who read it to educate themselves on the effects of their daily consumption and question the ways in which they interact with the air, water, soil, and communities we all share. Also, it is an affirmation of the fact that we are one people—that which affects one of us, affects us all.

It can't be said better.

We're bound by ONE system
Held together by a thread
We're throwing off the balance
Getting in over our heads

...yet coal we're still burning
And oil we're still churning
Trying to squeeze dollars
From a globe that's still turning

In spite of all our efforts, to take all that we can
WITH NO CONCERN FOR EACHOTHER!
NO CONCERN FOR THE LAND!

SOLUTIONS!!!

We want energy and cars with NO POLLUTION
We want an educated public, NO CONFUSION
We want equal rights and justice NO ILLUSION

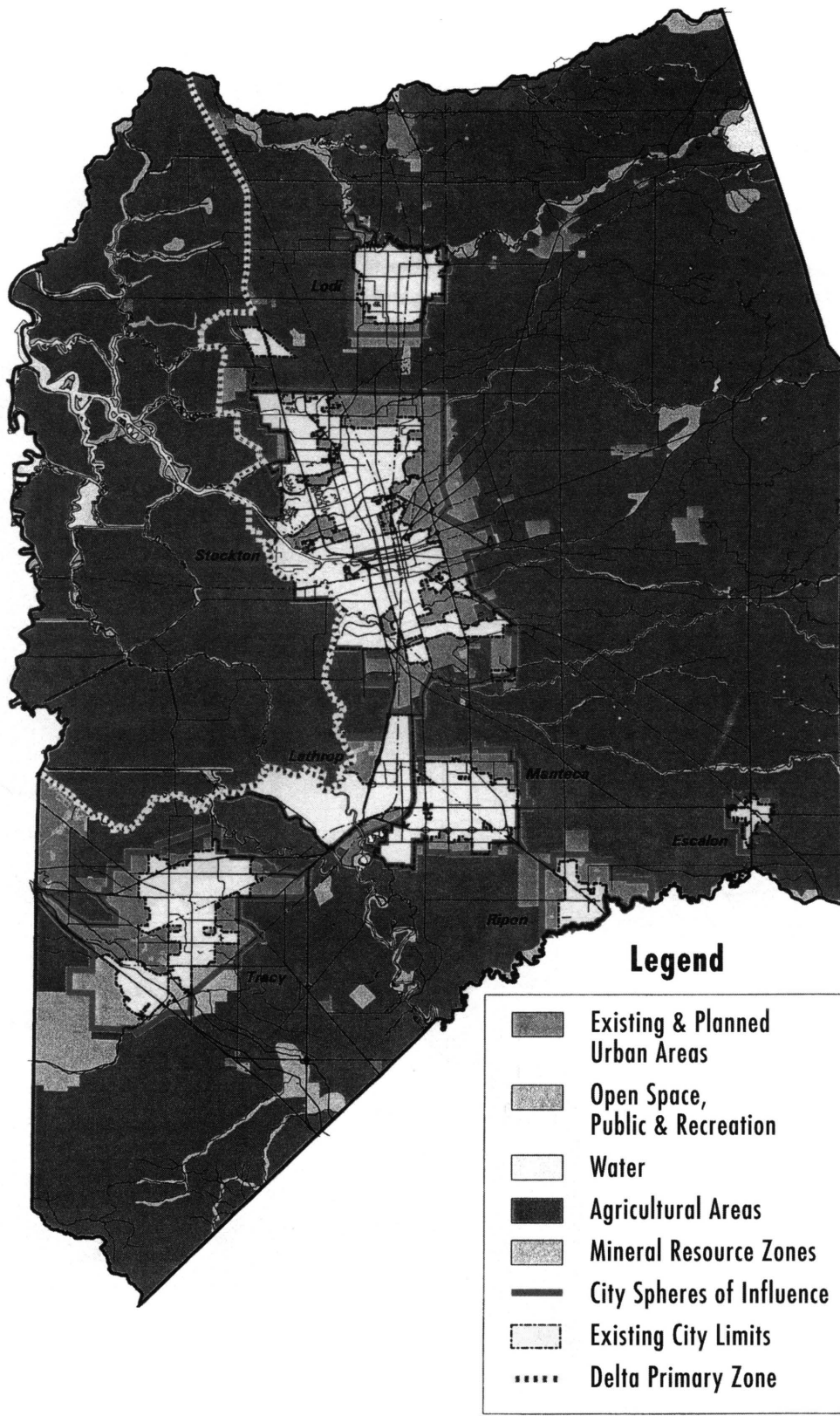
...Under ONE meditation

We've got to wake the public from their age-old trance
And show them how to break free from the subjects of this rant
'Cause some they don't see it, and some just don't get it
Here comes capitalism, make money and don't sweat it

My point and my purpose is to make you all see
That we've got to give of ours so that others can be free
The only way to live is with respect for one another
For the earth that gives us life – for our sisters and our brothers

Cause one day...there won't be more to take
We'll be wallowing in garbage with destruction in our wake
And this is how it goes, people, we don't have a choice
SPEAK UP for Mother Nature – she doesn't have a voice.

Photos: Laura M. Ajello



Source: San Joaquin County Community Development Department

Current City Spheres of Influence & Agricultural Areas

California's Heartland: Growth Impacts on San Joaquin County

The Bay Area's role

By Alberto Arellano Jr.

One of the more difficult intellectual undertakings for many people is gaining an understanding of just how connected all of us really are. In a large region like Northern California or the Bay Area, connecting the dots economically and spatially usually is easiest. The explosive growth of the Bay Area housing and job markets in the late 1990s underscored the importance of understanding these relationships. This article examines how San Joaquin County, in California's agricultural heartland, experienced its own troubles with growth as a result of its connections to the Bay Area.

In examining growth trends that occur in a given population area, one must look at the broader picture. Specific cities, counties, regions and states are all influenced and inter-linked and should be treated as such. Only through viewing the situation via a wide lens does even the layman analyst gain a full sense of the mechanics of change and growth. With rather formulaic occurrence, we have seen the evolution of regional Bay Area patterns of influence as residents transplant themselves from one area to another. These influences come in many forms, but in developing counties such as San Joaquin, they come in the form of enhanced demands, which result in accelerated growth and cost of living increases. As San Joaquin County itself borders the greater Bay Area, and in a geographic sense, touches, or is otherwise close to Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara Counties, we see the results of these direct effects. One of the strongest driving forces for growth in San Joaquin County is the residential accommodations supplementing Bay Area counties which are facing their own population and growth issues.

It is with great necessity that this county of some 596,000 individuals, consisting of some 1,400 square miles and seven significant cities (Escalon, Lathrop, Lodi, Manteca, Ripon,

Stockton, Tracy, and unincorporated areas) is looked at in a broader scope. The land use patterns of San Joaquin County have changed dramatically over a period comprising the last 50 years. Historically, this land has generally been used for agricultural purposes. According to a study by the California Department of Finance conducted in 2001, San Joaquin County ranked #6 in the state for agricultural production.

Considering that San Joaquin County is the gateway to the vast San Joaquin Valley, and a major contributor to California agricultural production, it is important to keep that perspective in looking at this county. The land in San Joaquin County is considered to be prime farmland and considered by many to be some of the best in the world. Sadly, this prime farmland is under attack by many outside forces, the most visible of which is urban sprawl.

Continuation of existing development patterns and growth trends may result in a future for San Joaquin County that many consider undesirable in terms of impacts on environmental quality and economic prosperity, and many concerns have already been raised at present. From 1987-1997 the number of farms has decreased from 4366 to 3862, according to an agricultural Statistics Data Base from the Dept. of U.S.

Agriculture, 1997 census.¹ The assumption that this trend of decreased farmland will continue is not far fetched, as growth continues to consume the land. This loss of agricultural land has been attributed to the development of single-family homes and other suburban development schemes. In fact, nationwide, San Joaquin ranks as one of the most threatened major land resource areas in the United States. The growth pressure that has changed the land forever has been induced by a number of issues.

Predominantly, it comes from growth of cities into traditionally unincorporated areas creating a dynamic of urban sprawl and non-traditional land usage. This is evident in instances such as the controversial 1996 Lathrop City annexation of surrounding farmland, practically doubling the city's size. This growth has often been attributed to the influx of residents connected to the neighboring Bay Area for the most part. California

“ California Department of Finance statistics show that migration, and not immigration or natural birth increases, are what have contributed to the population ‘boom.’ ”

Department of Finance statistics show that migration, and not immigration or natural birth increases, are what have contributed to the population “boom.”

The impacts of county growth and issues faced by numerous local governments and counties extend far beyond what we may see. As topographically varied as California is, we find many counties with the same issues. In metropolitan areas, we may find viable lands for growth in housing and development, with minimal land usage for subsistence in the agricultural areas. San Joaquin County, however, is an exception to the metropolitan ideal. An agricultural county primarily, it is now being faced with the inevitable

dilemma of growth, as it has the “undeveloped” land to support the influx of population. As California's growth pattern continues to be above average, one sees entire counties having to redesign and alter themselves to accommodate this. In a personal interview with Jim Van Buren, a Senior Planner with the Office of Community Development of San Joaquin County, he notes that the major topic plaguing planners in San Joaquin County is the loss of agricultural land. The onus is on the County to examine and address these problems and concerns that both planners and existing residents are facing now and into the future.

San Joaquin County is far outpacing the growth averages of not only the United States, but also the State of California. As the current real estate market throughout the state has slowed, San Joaquin County has continued to surge, soaring some 50% from last year's home sales.² This is important to note, as the Bay Area has declined by some 13% from last year's home sales. The trickle down effect of one bordering area to another is obvious. The following data provides us with a broad picture of what is going on in terms of these emerging trends. Although dated from the 2000 Census, the same patterns and occurrences are thriving.

With area businessmen such as Doug Urbick (President of Teichert Construction and a member of the board of directors of the San Joaquin Partnership) proclaiming the area to be “virtually becoming a part of the East Bay Region” (SJ Biz Online), we can look at the scope of problems that this encompasses.

Population, housing levels, income/jobs, land usage, the environment, and transportation are all major elements of growth concerns in general. The desirability of San Joaquin County area property, real estate, living costs and prices all contribute to and make this area very attractive to the immediate Bay Area options of high-density housing and a higher cost living. If transplant individuals are willing to make changes in their quality of life (longer commutes, less family time, etc.), they do so in exchange for lower living costs, larger houses, and in many peoples opinion, better land. But, what sort of additional problems does this pattern bring about?

Starting from a benchmark of 1997, housing

General Comparative Data

People Quick Facts	Alameda	Contra Costa	San Joaquin	Santa Clara	California	United States
Population 2001 Estimate	1,458,420	975,532	595,324	1,668,309	34,501,130	284,796,887
% Change April 1, 2000 -July 1, 2001	1.0%	2.8%	5.6%	-0.8%	1.9%	1.2%
Population 2000	1,443,741	948,816	563,598	1,682,585	33,871,648	281,421,906
Population, % Change, 1990-2000	10.7%	18.1%	17.3%	12.4%	13.6%	13.1%
Land Area, 2000 (Square Miles)	738	720	1399	1,291	155,959	3,537,441
Person Per Square Mile, 2000	1,957.4	1,317.9	402.9	1,303.6	217.2	79.6
Poverty Rate	11.0%	7.6%	17.7%	7.5%	14.2%	12.4%
Median Housing Price	\$303,100	\$267,800	\$142,400	\$446,400	\$211,500	\$119,600
Median Income	\$55,946	\$63,675	\$41,282	\$74,335	\$47,493	\$41,994

Source: US Census

prices have accelerated across San Joaquin County. With a median price of roughly \$110,000 in 1997, the same homes are now going for about \$232, 000.³ New Home prices in this county have escalated from \$135,000 in 1997, to \$256,510 in 2002.⁴ This has affected the greater San Joaquin County area in myriad ways. To put this into perspective, the typical County resident is a great example. In 1997, approximately 67 percent of the residents could afford to buy a house. That has plummeted to approximately some 32 percent in the present day. In the space of just five years, the number of residents in San Joaquin County that can afford to buy a house has dropped by more than half.

In looking at further economic indicators, we can see that the level of poverty has increased as well in San Joaquin County from 1990 to 2000, with a marked 2 percent increase from 15.7 percent to 17.7 percent.⁵ With a median household income of some \$15,000 less (SJC = \$41,282, Alameda = \$55,946⁶) than neighboring Alameda County, it is no surprise that the influx of Bay Area residents has inadvertently hurt those that have resided in San Joaquin County during the pre-boom era. The heightened demand in housing, with the newcomers' ability to afford higher cost housing, has combined to propel prices

upward and out of reach for many pre-boom residents. This, in a sense, disproportionately displaced those poorer residents in San Joaquin County who were hoping to purchase a home of their own.

An interesting equation to this is also the current San Joaquin county job market, and further, how county residents will be affected by potential changes of industry. If San Joaquin County's job market shifts to information age industries—which is inevitable, due to the current boom of residents and loss of agricultural industry land—the county will then find itself in a situation where pre-boom residents find themselves in further competition for resources on many levels. The current workings of this phenomenon can already be seen in the fact that poverty levels have increased, while median incomes rise, and the cost of living soars. A pattern shown in the accompanying 2000 Census chart is alarming considering that San Joaquin County is above average on median housing prices, poverty level, and population change percents, but trails below the average for both state and country median incomes. It will become necessary for the current San Joaquin County job market to shift itself into support of multiple job markets, so there will be ample opportuni-

ties for self-sufficiency and upward mobility.

The effects of the population boom in San Joaquin County not only have economic strings attached, but also bring about environmental concerns. Already a pollution rich county, the increasing reliance on the automobile for frequent trips such as commutes over the Altamont will bring about adverse effects. Combine this with the suburban auto-dependent development model, which continues to burden the county, and you have an area afflicted with even more choking air pollution.

So, with a picture this dismal, is it a lost cause for those in San Joaquin County? Surely, this is not the case, but it is important to look at other areas that have gone through this same path and faced with this dilemma. It was not long ago that Santa Clara County was paved over for Silicon Valley, and it is those same pro-growth principles that have shaped the current San Joaquin atmosphere. For the most part, San Joaquin County is developing through trends typical of urban sprawl, characterized by low density housing with an emphasis on strip commercial developments. With heavy reliance on the car, and little to no regard to implementation of mass transit, they are creating a county with no major spatial aspects of community or qualitative living.

'Smart growth' measures will have to be used to counteract the inevitable growth. A new focus on the current zoning in San Joaquin County is also important to seek counteraction by encouraging invaluable better planned growth with mixed-use environments.

Further steps to be undertaken include better emphasis on preservation of open space, the introduction of higher-density/mixed use housing, modernization of zoning practices and an end to sphere of influence outgrowth and the re-mapping of speculative city boundaries. The Bay Area transplant boom effects are in full force. This is why it is essential for the county to address not only land issues, but economic, environmental, and quality of life concerns. As the greater San Joaquin County area develops further, these forces will come to light from all angles. Now is the time for the goals and measures of current growth to be evaluated, in hopes of ensuring a more strategically planned environment emphasizing more dense communities and other 'smart growth' initiatives. It is in San Joaquin County's benefit to approach growth in this form, as the benefits of a well-planned model can contribute to the area aligning itself as an "iron-triangle" which includes the Bay Area to the West, and the Sacramento region to the north. ■

Endnotes

¹ USDA Agricultural Census. www.nass.usda.gov/census

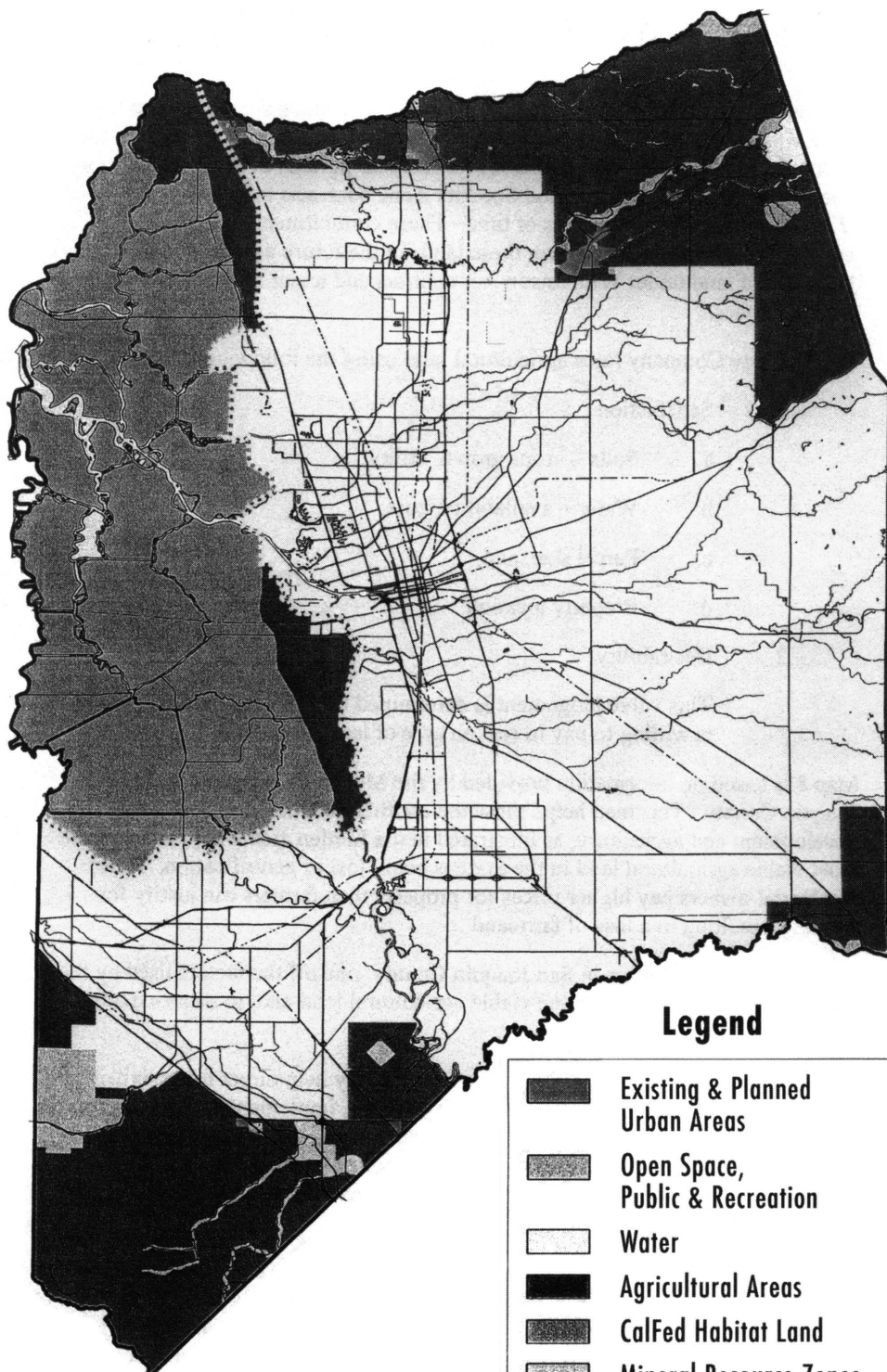
² Data Quick real estate news. <http://www.dqnews.com/RRBay0101.shtm>

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
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Legend

-  Existing & Planned Urban Areas
-  Open Space, Public & Recreation
-  Water
-  Agricultural Areas
-  CalFed Habitat Land
-  Mineral Resource Zones
-  City Limits
-  Delta Primary Zone

San Joaquin County Urban Growth 2080



Photo: Laura M. Ajello

Housing Profile: The Presidio

Is it possible to undo the past?

By Michael Profant

San Francisco, like most cities, is defined largely by the character of its neighborhoods and their individual histories. The Presidio is no exception. Serving as a military installation for nearly the duration of the city's settlement by non-natives, this part of town is certainly unique. The following author has undertaken the fascinating task of looking at housing in today's Presidio through the double lens of both the past and the future.

The Presidio is a particularly unique San Francisco neighborhood due to its military history and previous federal ownership. Located in the northwest part of the city, on the bay shore just south of the Golden Gate Bridge, the Presidio represents a sizable and decidedly underutilized portion of San Francisco. Due to this singular disposition, there is much to consider when pondering the many potential outcomes for tomorrow's Presidio. While it is important to look at the myriad concerns inherent to the site, housing is the primary issue, whether discussing how much there should be or preserving the character of the housing which already exists.

The Presidio Trust

The land occupied by the Presidio was transferred from the U.S. Army to the National Park Service in 1994. At that time, the housing formerly occupied by military personnel became available to anyone willing to pay fair market rent for it.¹ The Presidio Trust, now responsible for managing the park, is not restricted in terms of charging for residential rents; because the Presidio is federally-owned land, San Francisco's rent control laws do not apply there.² According to an article appearing in the San Francisco Chronicle in January 2002, rents at the time of publication ranged from \$475 per month for small studios with shared kitchens to \$6,600 per month for large homes.³ One of the factors impeding the Presidio Trust's ability to manage the park is the mandate imposed by Congress that the Presidio

be financially self-sufficient by 2013.⁴ The Presidio is the only national park being held to this standard, and this federal expectation means that the Trust is under significant pressure to examine other forms of economic development.⁵

Growth Concerns

Not surprisingly, many San Franciscans are concerned with various notions of future development in the Presidio. Activists and residents are worried that luxury hotels, high-rise condominiums or office parks might come to dominate the landscape, overtaking the historic structures and pristine open spaces.⁶ However, the Presidio Trust has released a plan for the park's growth over the next thirty years, which shows that most of these fears are unfounded.⁷ The plan states that overall commercial building space in the park will decline from 6 million to 5.6 million square feet within twenty years.⁸ Moreover, efforts will be made to preserve and reuse existing structures, and any new construction will be small in scale, complying with height limits of 45 to 60 feet.⁹ Thus, even though development in the federally-owned Presidio is not restricted by municipal zoning regulations, it would appear that the Trust is attempting to create an environment which will reflect some of the aesthetic preferences of the surrounding city (i.e. density/height limitations, building design, open space, etc.).

While there will be additional commercial development (i.e. shops, museums, and hotels),

new housing construction is planned as well.¹⁰ The number of available housing units is expected to increase from 1,100 to 1,600 once the plan has been fully implemented.¹¹ Two-thirds of this rental housing will be reserved for park employees, public safety workers, and students.¹² Nonetheless, some housing activists are infuriated by the fact that the Trust is planning to tear down an apartment complex on Presidio land.¹³ Considering the anticipated increase in Presidio

“ The distinctive military characteristics present in the design elements of many residential structures are what set the Presidio apart from the rest of the city. ”

workers from the current 2,000 to 7,200 by the year 2013, the limited emphasis being placed on new, and particularly affordable, housing construction is rather disconcerting.¹⁴ Moreover, residents of surrounding neighborhoods, including the Marina, Pacific Heights, and Presidio Heights, have concerns over the impact of growth in the Presidio on traffic congestion and the delivery of city services.¹⁵

Existing Conditions

Traveling to the Presidio on February 22, 2003, I recorded systematic observations of the quality and characteristics of housing in that neighborhood. Upon entering the Presidio, one is immediately struck by the amount of pristine, forested open space, as well as the scenic vistas of the bay, the Marin Headlands, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Another distinctive feature of the Presidio is the architectural design and character of many of the structures, including much of the housing. Much of the architecture is completely inconsistent with the Mediterranean, Victorian,

and Edwardian styles that typify numerous homes in other neighborhoods in San Francisco. The distinctive military characteristics present in the design elements of many residential structures aesthetically set the Presidio apart from the rest of the city.

For instance, one of the streets I visited was Liggett Avenue, a one-way street lined with almost identical red brick duplexes. These quaint homes with wood-sided sun porches were not at all in keeping with California's architectural heritage, but were somewhat reminiscent of East Coast "Colonial" architecture. Each of these homes had a small, nicely manicured front lawn with grass and plantings. Another striking aspect of this neighborhood was the complete lack of any fences delineating property lines or enclosing back yards. All of the duplexes appeared to have two floors from the front, but when I later observed the back of the homes, I noticed that they all had basements which led out to small back yards. Thus, from the back, one could observe that the duplexes actually had three levels, including the basement. The presence of basements in these homes was another feature that recalled the East Coast.

The fact that all the duplexes along this street were almost identical, structurally and in terms of landscaping, seemed to reveal the military origin of these homes. In the military, emphasis is placed on consistency, order, functionality, and homogeneity; these units reflected those values in my assessment. Another aspect of the homes that recalled their military origin was the presence of flag holders alongside almost every front door on the street, revealing that attention had been paid during their construction to the need to make an outward show of one's patriotism. One last feature of this street that contributed to its traditional, historic atmosphere is the fact that garages were not located on the main street alongside the duplexes, but instead were in alleyways behind the homes that were not accessible by automobile from the main street. This design element made the neighborhood feel more pedestrian-oriented than most modern neighborhoods.

The duplexes lining Liggett Avenue seemed to be of high quality, a fact that may reflect the quality standards of the late-1920s, the era of

Presidio: Total Population (2000)

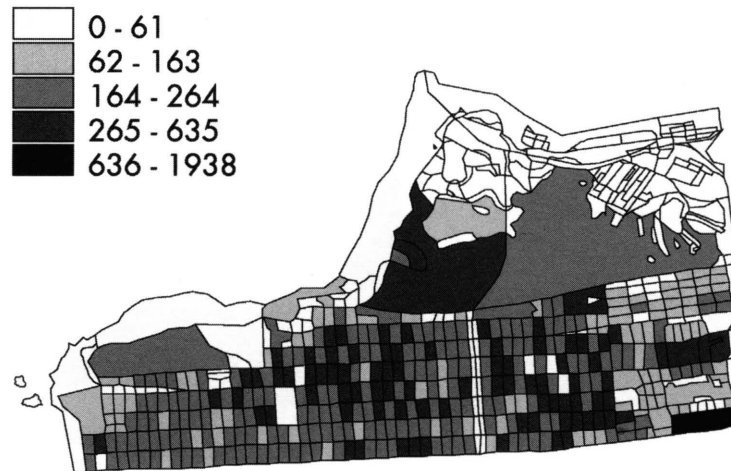


Figure 1: Total population in the Presidio by census block (2000)

their construction. It would appear that they have been well maintained over the years; the only sign of deterioration on the outside was the peeling and chipping of paint on window frames. Of course, the high level of quality and the unique character of duplexes on this street come at a high cost to those wishing to rent here. According to San Francisco Chronicle Magazine, market rents in this neighborhood vary from \$3,200 to \$3,800 per month.¹⁶ And with no rent control, tenants are at the total mercy of market forces.

The streets behind Liggett Avenue, Vista Court and Sibley Road, had housing units that provided a dramatic contrast with the traditional, red brick duplexes described above. The housing on these streets consisted of large, low-quality apartment complexes lacking in any architectural value whatsoever. The complexes appeared to have been constructed in the 1960s or 1970s. The lack of quality was apparent in the gravel-covered roofs, metal-encased windows, dirty/stained paint, and the exposed piping running along exterior walls. Large parking lots occupied most of the space in front of the buildings, and no effort at landscaping had been made on the unpaved land. These apartment complexes were somewhat reminiscent of army barracks, once again recalling the military history of the Presidio. As I drove along other nearby streets, I observed the same pattern of traditional, brick duplexes on one or two blocks, followed by more modern,

low-quality apartment complexes in the next few blocks. The Army may have reused the same housing designs to lower construction costs in addition to maintaining consistency.

The Presidio provides a very interesting case study in housing and community design for San Francisco in that much of what is there could not have been built if the land were under municipal, rather than federal, jurisdiction. It is highly unlikely that San Francisco's zoning ordinance would allow for the construction of barracks-style apartments with large parking lots in front of them, especially in an area bordered by exclusive neighborhoods. Moreover, red brick, Colonial-designed duplexes might not comply with the city's aesthetic/architectural requirements. Finally, the Presidio neighborhoods are laid out in an unusual, almost organic way, not at all following the gridiron pattern that characterizes streets in neighboring communities such as the Richmond, Presidio Heights, Pacific Heights, and the Marina Districts. Residential streets in the Presidio are sometimes quite narrow and do not consistently have sidewalks, other features which would most likely be illegal under municipal land use regulations.

Sparse Housing

Using ArcView GIS and data from the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2000, two maps shown on the following page illustrate the distribution of population and housing in San

Presidio: Total Housing Units (2000)

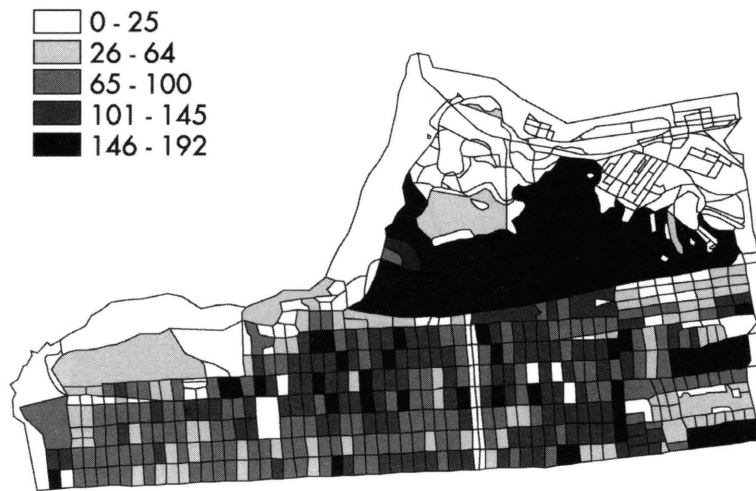


Figure 2: Total housing units in the Presidio by census block (2000)

San Francisco's Presidio District. Figure 1 shows the total population of census blocks in the Presidio for the year 2000. This map reveals clearly how sparsely populated the Presidio is in comparison with most parts of San Francisco. Many of the Presidio census blocks have a population of 0-61, and even the darkest-colored block on the map, with the highest population, has a land area vast enough to accommodate many more people. This fact is obvious when one looks at the size of that particular Presidio census block in relation to the significantly smaller size of many blocks that have similar population figures in the neighboring Richmond District. Figure 2 shows the total housing units in the Presidio for the year 2000. This map reveals the relative lack of housing units in most Presidio census blocks. Many blocks have 0-25 total housing units, while three have 146-292 total housing units. Two of these three blocks occupy vast land areas and could reasonably accommodate significant housing growth, while at the same time preserving substantial amounts of open space. Both maps underscore the lack of housing in the Presidio, particularly in relation to the potential for housing development offered by such extensive areas of undeveloped land.

Part of a Larger Issue

Land use debates concerning the Presidio's future are typical of problems facing most urban or urbanizing areas in California. For most municipalities, housing development, especially

for low-income households, is not as profitable as retail/commercial development, due to the sales tax revenue and higher property taxes that flow from the latter. In emphasizing the profit-maximizing solution of commercial development, the Presidio Trust is acting to ensure its short-term financial stability, just as cities and counties across the state have done. However, this approach to urban development is highly problematic at the regional level. Consistently undervaluing the importance of housing, one of the most basic human necessities, has led to a jobs-housing imbalance that will prove untenable in the long-term. The amount and types of housing built should reflect population growth and demographics within a given area in order to ensure that people's quality of life is preserved and that all income groups have the ability to meet their basic needs. The land available in the Presidio presents an unparalleled opportunity to strive toward this goal, yet the current plan envisioned by the Presidio Trust proves once again that the goal of profit maximization can never result in a housing outcome that is equitable for all income groups in society.

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Letters from abroad.....

The following pages highlight specific urban experiences, seen through the eyes of both San Francisco State Urban Studies students and distinguished faculty. Their adventures document "a day in the life" in urban settings all over the world.

See the world from their perspective...

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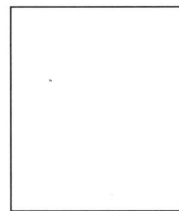


Photo: Laura M. Ajello

Un Postale de Andalusia

From: Professor Richard LeGates
Sotogrande Spain Fall 2002

Half an hour drive east from our house in Sotogrande, Spain the moors swept across from North Africa in 711. Eight hundred years of Moorish culture in Andalusia is evident in the cities around us. We are at the far end of what was the most splendid of the muslim caliphates. Looking west across the

big grove (soto) of cork trees that gives our urbanization its name lies Granada.



The caliph of Granada ruled from a fortified hilltop castle. The Alhambra (red fort) remains one of the architectural treasures of the world; a labyrinth of courtyards, reflecting pools, aromatic gardens, and intricate tilework. It was an Islamic city until 1492 when the triumphant Christians turned all of Granada's mosques into Catholic Churches. The King of Spain built his own architecturally clashing palace within the walls of Alhambra.

Today the costa del sol (sun coast) plays a role for Northern Europe similar to the role Hawaii plays for Californians. Dazed Brits blink in the sunlight and look for the nearest pub. The population of the coast has doubled in the last ten years and will double in the next ten. For a visiting professor of urban studies both the urban problems created by mass tourism and the historic cities around us are endlessly fascinating. We go ten minutes down the road

to Gibraltar for fish and chips and a peek at what the British Empire was like 100 years ago. Fifty minutes by fast ferry in North America we can see life as it was lived in Andalusia before the reconquest. The medina in Tetouan has 5600 streets for 80,000 people. Little Andalusian white towns spatter the hills beyond our house: each with 1,000 year old Moslem and Jewish neighborhoods and its own contemporary specialty: fiery brandy, quince meat candy, leather Gucci bags. This is a splendid place for a sabbatical to rest, think, write and experience different cultures.



The Amsterdam Commute

From: Pete Jordan, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Minutes after I leave for school in the morning, I hear the ringing bells and see the flashing lights of the drawbridge. As I near, the crossing-arms lower across the roadway. I pull up and join a dozen other cyclists on the bridge. Through the canal, a long narrow boat approaches. We wait.

With every passing second, our group grows larger. Some of us stand alongside our bicycles. I remain seated on mine. Teens straddle the rear racks of their friends' bikes. Children are tucked into kiddie-seats on the parents' bikes. A woman is perched on her lover's handlebars. There is little talk. Mostly, we just watch the canal boat glide past.

When the bridge opens again to traffic, our pack slowly inches forward. Soon we attain a cruising speed. There are now almost a hundred of us. Where I am from, a group of cyclists this large is viewed by society as a menace that the police must beat and arrest. But here we are simply people going to work, going to school, running errands, living. Here, we are society.

We cross the bridge, skirt the public square, and then fall in line for the upcoming curves. One by one we lean left. Then we lean right. We are a beautiful sight. We snake through the streets as if it were July and we were in the French countryside on racing bikes. Actually it is late autumn and we are in the middle of the city, clad in coats and scarves.

We peddle into a long narrow street lined with hundreds of small shops. Cyclists outnumber motorists twenty to one. Our pack thins as some of us veer off to the newsstands, cafes, grocers. Others zoom ahead. Some lag behind. I fall in with a leisurely-paced group and trail a woman whose toddler passenger stretches out his hands to allow the cool breeze to blow through his fingers. I let go of my handlebars and do the same.

The street ends in an intersection where bikes gracefully come and go in all directions. We do not slow down yet we do not collide. I dangle my right arm in a faint show of intent, then swerve through the intersection and off to the right.

Through another street or two and then I reach school. In front of the building are hundreds of parked bicycles. My bike takes its place among them.

Though my day has not formally begun, my day has already been made.



Photo: Diane Hacker



Photo: Lisa Reynolds



Travels Around Australia

From: Cody Sisco, Australia



Sydney is beautiful: the gentle hills, harbor, and attractive architecture make this city a pleasant outpost on the Pacific. Today is Boxing Day and swarms of people are converging on the plentiful above ground and subterranean malls to go power shopping. These people know how to do retail, but they haven't figured out how to do transportation. Any city of Sydney's size in America would have highways running through it all over the place. Sydney doesn't. It has the sprawl without the transportation infrastructure. The highways have

stoplights, and the train system derails more often than it should. The local government is catching up though. Huge tunneling projects have finished up and more are in the works. From the Harbor Bridge to the airport, from the eastern neighborhoods to the vast western plain of suburbs, it will soon be possible to bypass the entire city center by driving your car underground. In one hundred years expect drive-through underground malls (and bars!) in Sydney; Australians are ingenious people.



Melbourne is the antithesis of Sydney. It reminds me of Los Angeles, except it still has a functioning streetcar system. And I get the same feeling that the heart of Melbourne, like the heart of L.A., is somewhere in the dusty corners, dirty parking lots, and empty spaces. The city is like slices of Swiss cheese strung together along rail lines that end in an interesting block of feta or Muenster. It's the kind of city you need a guide for because the attractions are all underground.

Australia hasn't suffered from the disruptions caused by deindustrialization. They are a remarkably self-sufficient and proud nation. "Australia made" is the label found on most food and industrial products. Despite sprawl and environmental degradation, the destruction of Aboriginal cultures, the imprisonment of refugees from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and the highest per capita emissions of greenhouse gases on the planet, their cities are vibrant centers of activity, unlike some of our hollowed out and tragic hulks in the Northeast. The incentives that many Americans make use of, for example the progressively beneficial mortgage interest tax deduction, mega-freeways, and cheap gasoline, don't exist in Australia. They do sprawl well and it shows.



Beijing: A Metropolis Growing Up or Growing Lost?

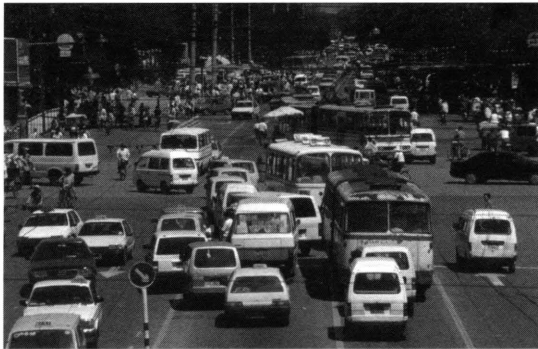
From: Professor Xian Guo, Beijing, China



When I left Beijing for the United States nearly sixteen years ago, I never thought I was actually saying farewell to the city where I was born and grew up during some of the most tumultuous years of Chinese contemporary history.

I have been back to Beijing since then, of course, as frequently as once a year since I started working at full-time college positions. However, the city that I knew, had changed beyond my recollections. Major changes are apparent every time I go back to visit.

The imperial palaces at the center of the city are preserved, and along the central axis all the imperial and quasi-imperial landmarks, such as Tiananmen Square, are still aligned. Going beyond the center of the city, however, reveals a face of Beijing that portrays sharp contrasts with my memories.



The alleyways that characterized the residential areas of the imperial Beijing have mostly given way to new high-rise apartments and shopping centers. No longer could I ride my bicycle through those narrow and aging alleyways, smelling the cooking from the households and feeling the spirits of time hovering over me. Nor could neighbors peek into each others' private lives and hang out under the eaves to gossip. The towering buildings and busy sidewalks are not at all inviting for neighborly gatherings, and residents are insulating themselves behind closed apartment doors, perhaps enjoying the western virtue of privacy for the first time.

I remember enjoying my strolls in Beijing—it was indeed a “walking city.” It was so easy to walk around and gain an intimate sense of the ancient city—the imperial capital for most of the last eight hundred years. I can no longer find such leisure available, for the city has become so busy. Sauntering down the street would block the way of suit-and-tie people who are rushing to work, and one would receive well-deserved dirty looks.

When I was a young teen, there were few buildings that exceeded six stories, and would require the installation of elevators, something the government did not want to provide. I remember standing on our apartment's third-floor balcony and watching the lights at Tiananmen Square three miles away. I also remember being inspired by train whistles echoing in the quietude of the night, and felt as if I were being called on a journey. Now my family still lives in the same apartment, but the view has become the oppressive new apartment build-



ings. The noise of motor engines rumbles day and night in a city that no longer sleeps.

I remember being able to look into the night sky and see the Milky Way. Imagining the magnitude of the universe made me feel melancholy as a young teenager wanting to retreat into the safe embrace of the city. Now kids have to go to the planetarium to see what the Milky Way looks like. Should I blame the city lights or the pollution? Perhaps both, but it is the infamous air pollution that gives the city a tired and filthy appearance.



How much Beijing has changed in such a short period of time! Progress! The media in Beijing bursts with enthusiasm. More modern skyscrapers so we can build a world-class CBD! More freeways so that the white collar types can drive their newly acquired vehicles. In her push for a new identity and the glamour of modernity. Beijing, as the fabled city seems to have lost her character and tradition of humanity. The traditional human scale has been overwhelmed by the glistening skyscrapers and freeway loops, the old patrician lifestyle has been overshadowed by the dire contrast of excessive consumption of the nouveau riche and the destitution of the scrambling rural migrants.

Beijingers appear to be quite happy with the advent of the new and are oblivious to the loss of the old. Alas, do we really have to learn from our own irreversible losses? I know the move toward the metropolis of an emerging economy is unstoppable. And I may feel greater pain witnessing such changes because I have made the old Beijing a spiritual retreat from the typical American city, a status that Beijing may never have qualified for. Unknowingly, I bid farewell to the Beijing as I knew it sixteen years ago, because I shall not be able to return. I can now fully appreciate Thomas Wolfe's warning to all of us, "you cannot go home again," because the home is never the same. With profound sadness, I see my beloved hometown, the imperial capital that withstood adversity for a millennia, fading away into history.



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“Like the body that is made up of different limbs and organs, our cities are comprised of different ideas, structures, places, and people. Without these elements tied together, the city is nothing but an empty shell, waiting to be filled by winds replete with connection and meaning.”

— Anonymous