

---

**SPECIAL FOCUS-- GRAPPLING WITH GROWTH, PART III**

## THE CASE FOR URBAN VILLAGES

*By Randall Fleming*

**U**rban villages are a contradiction in place, as they blend the intensity of a city with the intimacy of a village. Urban villages work because they resolve this contradiction by balancing public interaction and personal privacy; enriching outdoor living with passive open spaces and intense urban places; and by providing diverse living, working, and playing opportunities. The result brings a lot of people together in an urban setting that can accommodate diverse personal and community needs.

Urban villages may also be one of the key building blocks of sustainable urbanization. Villages can integrate social, environmental, and economic systems and they can produce multiple benefits from individual system functions. They mix land uses, increase urban densities, encourage pedestrian travel, and are a pleasure to visit, work and live in.

Some villages mix uses vertically, such as living units over shops, while others zone uses horizontally. Villages are not *franchised* or monolithic urban complexes. They have uses, public spaces, architectural styles, and overall patterns that reflect local environments, history, culture, and community needs.

---

### Urban villages “are a pleasure to visit, work and live in”

---

As compact urban forms, they use land efficiently and reduce development pressures on agricultural lands, ecosystems, and open spaces. They reduce building and travel energy; and they help mitigate regional air quality by reducing automobile trips. Resources, such as land and energy, and supporting infrastructure are used much more efficiently than those required by sprawling development. Successful urban villages also attract people, and as social places they provide cultural and entertainment amenities that offer alternatives to material consumption.

Villages can serve neighborhoods or regions, local residents and visiting tourists. Villages can exist in rural or urban settings, have small to large populations, and house low to high numbers of people per acre. Structural patterns also vary, and can include:

- linear main streets (St. Helena, CA),
- rectangular grids (Mid Town, Sacramento, CA),
- more organic systems (Nevada City, CA),
- schemes centered on public squares (North Beach, San Francisco, CA).

### Public Opinion and Housing Markets

There appears to be reasonable market interest in aspects of New Urbanism styled, walkable communities. *American LIVES* found that 75% of respondents to a home buyer survey wanted to have the option to walk or bike to work or to shops<sup>1</sup>. Of these respondents, 20% were interested in living in developments that embodied all sustainable principles, including those that increased density and reduced lot size. This response corresponds to a Belden, Russonello and Stewart national focus group study that suggests that renters with no children and empty nesters are more likely to choose a smaller lot in a livable community area where they can walk to stores, etc<sup>2</sup>. A Fannie Mae survey also found that people believe that a great neighborhood is more important than a great house. (to page 3)

#### Inside this Issue.

News from IEH	p . 2
Transylvanian Agro-Cities	p. 5
News from Around the Nation	p. 6
Column - Planning for Quality of Life	p. 8
Restoring Main Street	p. 8
Water Supply and Growth	p. 10
Information Resources	p. 10

# News from IEH

## IEH and Urban Development

Much of this issue focuses on urban development, which may seem a far cry from IEH's fundamental interest in the conservation of our rural landscape of farm, range and other natural lands. But the history and likely future of urban/suburban growth in California and other states tells us that a strong focus on urban development is an essential component of land conservation. We must make cities attractive places to live, revitalize declining neighborhoods, and achieve a great deal of our future growth through infill development if we are to conserve land for farming, nature and recreation.

IEH is proud to be one of the founding affiliates of the California Futures Network (CFN), whose Smart Growth Summit drew nearly 700 leaders to Sacramento in January. CFN focuses on legislative solutions to land use, on infrastructure reform, on refocusing our investments to existing developed areas, and on promotion of Smart Growth principles (see *Linkages* # 6.). IEH looks forward to playing a very active role in the California Futures Network.

## A Resources for Community Collaboration Grant

awarded to IEH provides generous funding to assist our involvement in the development of the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). HCPs are very controversial (see *Linkages* # 5). But a well done multispecies HCP addressing conservation in a large area has the potential to provide effective long term protection of endangered species and their habitat. The South Sacramento HCP is unique in that it has four environmental organization members on the Steering Committee and has aiding recovery of listed species as one of its fundamental goals. A future *Linkages* will explore this HCP.

## Growth Maps Contract for the Sacramento Valley and Foothills Region.

IEH, in collaboration with scientists and designers at the University of California Davis, just produced these maps for the Capitol Region Institute, an academic think tank for the regional leadership organization Valley Vision. One set of maps shows historic urbanization in the region from 1850 to the present. Another map shows current development, potential development by the year 2020, and areas that are permanently protected.

## Great Valley Center Grant Underwrites *Linkages*.

This issue of *Linkages* that is partially underwritten by a generous LEGACI grant from the Great Valley Center.

## Individual & Business Memberships - the Financial Basis of *Linkages*.

Thank you to all who have donated in the past. You represent a wide range of interests, including farmers, ranchers, business people, planners, scientists and conservationists. Your generous donations ensure that *Linkages* reaches a wide array of decision makers, newspaper reporters and community leaders, many of whom use *Linkages* as a valuable reference tool. **We need the support of you, our readers, in order to produce *Linkages*. Please send your contribution today (see form, page 12)**

### Institute for Ecological Health

#### Directors and County of Residence

Ron Bottorff	É	Ventura
Glenda Edwards	É	Tuolumne
Dave Forrest	É	Stanislaus
John Hopkins	É	Yolo
Mike Vasey	É	San Mateo
Joanie Weber	É	Fresno

#### Officers

President	É	John Hopkins
Vice president	É	Glenda Edwards
Secretary	É	Ron Bottorff
Treasurer	É	Virginia Bottorff

#### Advisory Committee

Tyler Ahlgren  
Barry Boulton  
Janet Cobb  
Judy Corbett  
Michele Perrault  
Kus Porter

#### Linkages

Providing information on California land issues, including conservation biology, planning and economics, development, urban design, and agriculture. We explore the needs of different interests and creative solutions. We welcome articles, story ideas, and letters.

#### IEH Web Site

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

#### Contacting IEH

409 Jardin Place, Davis, CA 95616  
(530) 756-6455 (phone and FAX)  
E-mail: [ieh@cal.net](mailto:ieh@cal.net)

## Urban Villages, *continued from page 1.*

Public opinion surveys also imply that people value urban village styled development as important places in the urban fabric<sup>3</sup>. In a study of treasured places in the Sacramento region, downtown areas received the highest important urban neighborhood related response (17%), while shopping malls were of much less interest (6%)<sup>4</sup>.

In the same study, people were also asked what they would want improved to make living in the Sacramento region more enjoyable. Of all improvement responses, 58% focused on providing safe and pedestrian oriented environments that were served by public transit, 38% sought to limit sprawl and improve core areas, and only 6% wanted to build better suburbs and improve vehicular access.

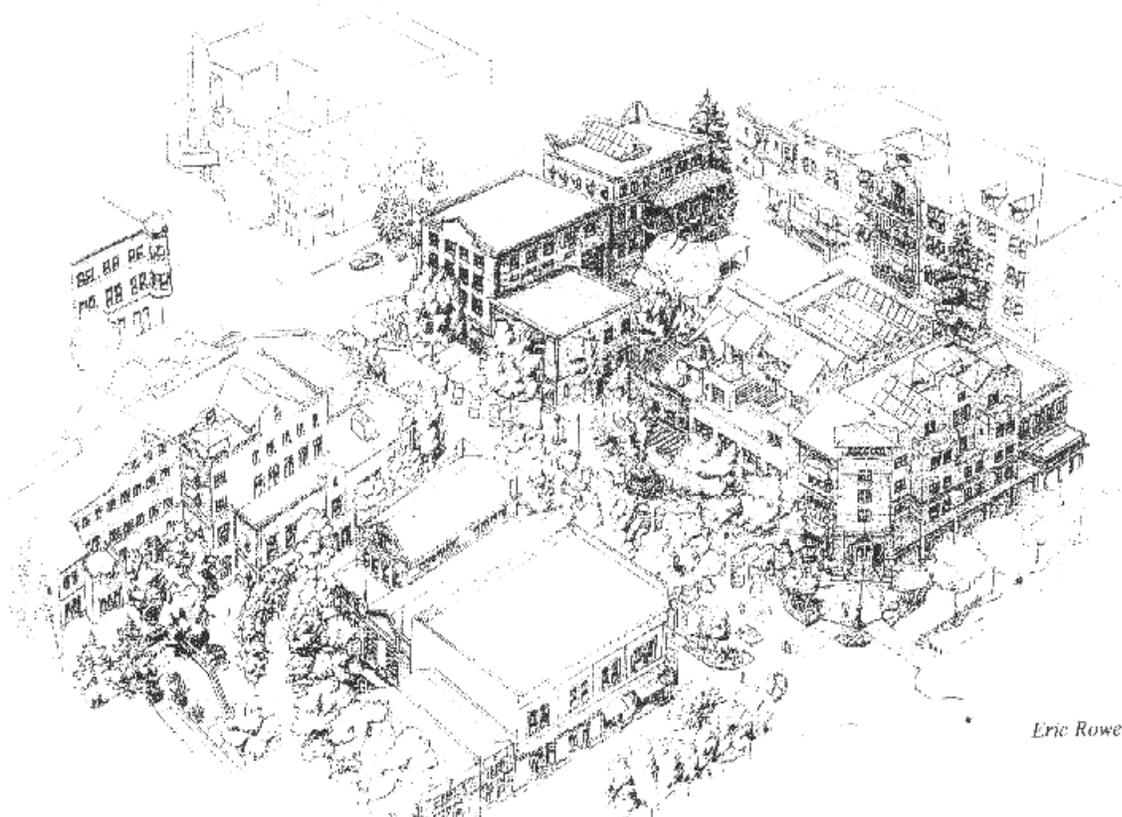
More dense, transit served urban projects have often attracted a younger market. In the SF Bay Area, 65% of the residents near light rail stations are 17 to 34 years of age<sup>18</sup>. *Suburban flight*, however, may be a new trend that is attracting empty nesters back to higher density, more active urban areas<sup>5</sup>. Demographers and real estate specialists contend that their numbers - just a trickle now - may surge dramatically through the next decade. These people are seeking cultural and entertainment amenities,

desirable residential neighborhoods, convenient shopping, a strong entrepreneurial spirit, excellent public transportation, and relative safety. High-density urban villages, such as the West End in Vancouver, Canada, attract the elderly along with the young.

Given that niche markets appear to exist for village living, the data suggests that the most suitable market may be younger households without children and empty nesters. In Sacramento County, for example, 27% of the population is between 20 and 35 years of age and 16% between 50 and 70 years<sup>6</sup>. This implies that the approximate market is 43% of the County's population and that some in this market could be attracted to village style living.

## Environmental Benefits

Long term environmental protection by urban villages is primarily due to reduced vehicular transit and land use efficiencies. When compared with low density development, vehicle trips can be reduced up to 28%<sup>7</sup> and up to 43% less energy can be used for travel<sup>8</sup>. With mixed uses involving 1 to 1 job/housing ratios, up to 68% less energy can be used and average commute distances have been reduced by 28%<sup>8</sup>.



Eric Rowell

Part of making sustainable places is building to sufficient densities to make transit feasible and providing sufficient neighborhood level jobs, services, and shops to make the village district serve all daily needs. With densities beginning at 16 dwelling units per acre, public transit increases significantly and auto usage drops. Villages with adequate jobs, housing, shops, and entertainment that are serviced by good transit appear to be most effective in reducing automobile dependent leisure trips<sup>9</sup>. In 11 US metropolitan areas, mid to high rise neighborhoods with employment centers, retail, and service areas and 1.5 mile commute distances have at least 25% of the population walking or biking to work<sup>7</sup>.



Eric Rowell

## The Potential of Urban Villages - California's Central Valley as an Example

Land use is also much more efficient in urban villages. From a historical perspective, villages and urban places in history have had high people per acre densities. Renaissance Florence, Italy was a compact urban village, about 1,200 acres or 3 times the size of the UC Berkeley campus. From Florence's center, one could walk to the city edge in 15.5 minutes. The town was the work place and home to 54,000 souls<sup>10</sup> and had a density of 45 people per gross acre<sup>11</sup>. Jericho, the world's first city, had a year round population of 166 people per gross acre. Ancient Rome had 150, Pompeii 65, and 97 people per gross acre lived in medieval Venice<sup>12</sup>.

In comparison, the current average density for communities in California's Central Valley is 4.5 people per acre<sup>13</sup>. The City of Sacramento has 5.2 people per acre. Davis, one of the denser cities in the Sacramento region, has 8.3. Laguna West south of Sacramento, a recently built community designed to new urbanism principles, is similar to Davis at 8.4<sup>14</sup>.

With creative planning and design, density can be increased without radically changing the housing options available in the Central Valley. If towns are planned with a diversity in living and neighborhood types, achieving an overall gross density of 16 people per acre with urban

villages is quite feasible. Assuming 25 dwelling units per acre, a mixed use urban village serving 25% of the local population and occupying between 5% to 10% of a city's urbanized area, creates citywide urban systems that are 35% more land use efficient than most Central Valley communities in California<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

While not all elements of sustainable urban village theory are substantiated by rigorous research, the literature contains a convergence of ideas that identify the importance of preserving habitat and open space;

- building communities that are more land use efficient;
- developing low impact personal and public transportation systems;
- geographically relating jobs and housing;
- balancing resource use with ecological capacity to supply resources;
- improving quality of human life.

Public opinion indicates concern with existing development patterns as well as limited interest in new alternatives that explore alternatives to low density single family living. Studies suggest that:

- preserving habitat and green space is very important;
- maintaining personal safety is one of the highest community objectives;
- interest in improving existing cities and managing the negative aspects of sprawl;
- access to nearby nature is sought;
- youth and empty nesters are currently the most likely market to seek alternatives to low density, single family living.

The considerable growth forecasted for California during the next 30 to 40 years can be an opportunity for positive change. With proper planning, growth can help heal existing central cities and their surrounding low density districts. A more vibrant and diverse urbanization would help increase the quality of life, and help provide for a sustainable future.

Adapted from *Integrated Sustainable Design : The Urban Village for the Central Valley*. By Randall Fleming and Eric Rowell. Sustainable Communities Consortium, UC Davis. You may reach Randall Fleming at [rffleming@ucdavis.edu](mailto:rffleming@ucdavis.edu).

## References

1. *American LIVES*. Survey of 1,650 homebuyers in Florida, Texas, California, Michigan, Colorado, and Washington State.

2. Information presented at a national conference, 1998.
3. A national poll by Beldon, Russonello, and Stewart found that only 9% of respondents wanted to live in a large city.
4. *Living in the Region: Survey of Resident's Treasured Places*. (Interviews with 88 residents) Randall Fleming and Chris Weiss.
5. San Francisco Examiner, *Suburban Flight*. January, 1998.
6. 1990 US Census Data.
7. *Transit Villages in the 21st Century*. Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero. McGraw-Hill. (1997).
8. *The Energy Yardstick: Using "Places3" to Create More Sustainable Communities*. Eliot Allen and Michael McKeever. Center for Excellence for Sustainable Development. (1996).
9. Preliminary regional modeling studies by Professor Robert Johnston, UC Davis.

10. *Public Transportation and Land Use Policy*. Boris Pushkarev & Jeffrey Zupan. Indiana Univ. Press. (1977).
11. The people per acre figures are calculated on gross densities, including all urban lands such as roads, housing, parks, schools, open spaces, retail, commercial, manufacturing, and cultural uses. This approach allows a system basis to compare densities.
12. *Smithsonian Timelines of the Ancient World*. Chris Scarre. Dorling Kindersley, Inc. (1993).
13. *Municipal Density and Farmland Protection: An Exploratory Study of Central Valley Patterns*. Alvin Sokolow. Agricultural Issues Center, UC Davis (1996).
14. *The Next American Metropolis*. Peter Calthorpe. Princeton Architectural Press. (1993).
15. Mathematical land use modeling studies by Randall Fleming.

# THE TRANSYLVANIAN AGRO-CITY: DESIGN IDEAS FOR URBAN HOUSING IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

*By Suzanne Ise*

What on earth can Central Valley homebuilders learn from Dracula's storybook home? is the probable reaction of many reading the above title. The answer: Transylvanian cities can provide us with ideas for creating a more compact urban form in the Central Valley. We can learn from this region, and others around the world, to rethink our deep-set notions of what housing, and cities, can and should be.

Transylvania is a large region in Romania. It has much in common with California's Central Valley, although there are also sharp differences. Despite these differences, Transylvanian cities can provide Central Valley planners and developers with ideas for creating more functional and efficient dwellings.

## Commonalities of the Two Regions

Transylvania and the Central Valley are both multi-ethnic and multi-lingual regions where several large groups form the majority. In Transylvania the major groups are Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons, and Roma (Gypsies). Both regions have economies driven by agriculture, which is also the predominant land use. Large mountain ranges, valleys, forests, and an internationally significant Delta can be found in or near each region.

## Differences Between California's Central Valley and Transylvania

The political economies of these two regions are very different. Transylvania is emerging from a half-century

of Communist rule under the notorious dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaucescu. Until 1990, private business was virtually non-existent, goods were difficult to obtain, and urban development, including housing and transportation, was conducted entirely by state agencies. Often such development was used to implement ethnic policies in violation of the human rights of minority groups. These difficulties caused the Transylvanians to become highly self-sufficient and resourceful people. This resourcefulness resulted in many innovative design solutions, some of which might be successfully applied to the Central Valley.

## What are Agro-Cities and What Can We Learn from Them?

Most of Transylvania's cities are Agro-Cities because they are directly integrated with regional agriculture. The landscape of these cities is often dominated by Soviet prefabricated housing blocks and mixed-use buildings, although many have beautiful historic cores. Some village-style houses are also found within the city limits.

---

**“Many residents continue to produce much of the food and other products that they need”**

---

These cities remain important in the agricultural realm because many residents of apartments and of detached

housing continue to produce much of the food and other products that they need, from vegetables to sausage to wool. This is possible because the cities tend to be compact enough so that travel to the surrounding farming villages is not overly time-consuming and is usually accessible by bus. Many residents of these apartments were moved from rural villages into cities, and they continue to farm small parcels of land they own or lease. Interestingly, the word for “suburb” in Hungarian is literally “garden city”, because of the small, compact homes with large garden plots (rather than lawns) which form the outer urban rings.

Downtown public markets are the main mode of produce distribution. At such markets, villagers sell their goods directly to the public, and provide seedlings, young livestock, and other support for city-dwelling farmers.

## Design Features

An important factor in the agrarian role of these cities is that the prefab apartments, despite their often desolate appearance, have been constructed with spaces for food processing and year-round storage of bulk goods. Although all buildings are not identical, many contain basement storage spaces for each apartment. These are used to store homemade wine, smoked meats, and root vegetables. Another important feature is that each unit has a balcony large enough to allow room for drying clothes, herbs and other produce, and storing dry goods such as beans. Balconies are used by some families as a site of additional food production, with potted tomatoes, etc. In wine-growing regions, grapevines are often trained up outer walls, putting fresh grapes within reach of even fourth-floor balconies. Onions, tomatoes and other useful plants can be found growing outside ground-floor units.

These practical spaces maintain even temperatures without the use of artificial energy sources. Basements maintain cool temperatures with thick outer walls. Balconies take advantage of the sun for drying purposes, while from fall to spring they keep goods cool. Inside the apartments, a pantry or “kamra” is usually connected to an inner air shaft, which keeps its temperature lower than inside the heated apartment - cool enough to store eggs, dairy, smoked meats, and preserves without risk of spoilage.



## Grappling with Growth News from Around the Nation

### New Jersey - funds to preserve half the state's undeveloped land

Last November New Jersey voters approved Governor Whitman's (R) ambitious bond measure to preserve much of the state's remaining undeveloped land. The billion dollar bond measure will provide funding to protect a million acres of land over the next ten years. Half of this acreage will be farmland, 200,000 acres will be open space for greenways and trails, 200,000 acres for recreation, and 100,000 acres for watershed protection. The farmland acreage is considered the minimum necessary to maintain economically viable agriculture in New Jersey.

—

### Tennessee - joint city/county planning

In 1998 the state government enacted a law requiring cities and counties to develop joint plans for urban growth and open space preservation, including urban boundaries. Joint county-city committees must develop plans by January 1, 2000 and submit them to the state for approval. Each plan will determine growth for the next 20 years, with adjustments allowed once every three years.

—

### Georgia - major developer promotes infill

John Williams, chairman of the leading development company Post Properties Inc, considers New Urbanism “the most refreshing thinking about our industry in decades.” Williams considers that the garden apartments previously built by his company are “a ubiquitous element of modern suburban sprawl” and face the “real risk of economic depreciation.” The company started building infill apartments 11 years ago and is now converting old buildings to apartments in Texas and Colorado. In the future Post Properties will focus on urban infill, higher density housing and mixed uses. Post Properties built Addison Circle north of Dallas - a complex of apartments, offices, stores, hotels and parks. It is building a similar mixed use project in Atlanta, including a town square.

These features prove that it is possible to live in high-density housing yet retain many aspects of an agrarian lifestyle. Most residents of California are not pressed to become as self-sufficient as the people of Transylvania and most of the world. However these features and others could easily be adapted for integration in the design of apartments in the Central Valley. Why would we want such features?

- A closer relationship to farming leads to a greater respect for this land use.
- Higher housing densities leave more land available for agriculture.
- The more functions enabled by multi-unit housing, the greater the demand for such units, by a wider range of family types and income groups.
- The need to reduce home energy use is crucial due to our air quality problems.
- The popularity of homegrown produce has boomed in recent years.

One fourth of California's residents are foreign-born (1997 US Census), and may be more accustomed to producing their own foods (and prefer more functional units). When oil supplies dwindle in the future, as experts predict, self-sufficiency and access to local produce will become critical.

## Lessons We Can Learn from the Transylvanian Example

We can find more useful design ideas abroad and in the U.S. It is important to question why we accept the current very limited range of designs for housing, other buildings, and urban form and to take advantage of the many good design ideas which currently exist, many in the so-called "underdeveloped" countries. The main points to keep in mind are:

**Consider functions as well as size, aesthetics and location of housing.** An example: the garage, considered a necessity by most families, is often used as storage and workshop space rather than for cars. Clustered mid-rise apartment buildings could have built-in community workshops, to be rented out on an hourly basis, for a small fee or membership. These might be used much more than the unheated outdoor pools at most complexes.

**Build up and forget about "transitional zones."** The Central Valley offers gorgeous views of mountains and waterways from a third or fourth story window. Taller buildings with smaller footprints would leave much of the parcel open for garden plots or other open space, rather than the current useless strips of grass and unattractive shrubs found in local "garden apartments". Low-lying buildings built as "transitions" often become surrounded

by miles more of the same, destroying surrounding farms rather than providing a "transition" into them.

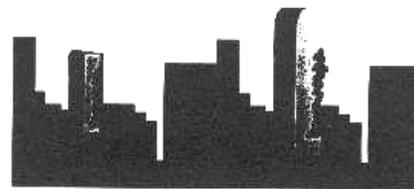
**Don't assume that past buying patterns will continue.** My generation is reaching the homebuying age. Many of us grew up in the suburbs and were miserable there, and would never buy a typical suburban house. Furthermore, many members of my generation are foreign-born, with different ideals, lifestyle preferences, and living habits than those enabled by suburbia.

**Keep housing type separate from housing tenure.** Apartment living and rental tenure are not always a last resort. Functional, attractive, well-built apartments in locations with walking access to civic and other amenities can attract all family types and income groups, as they currently do in great cities like San Francisco, Boston, Budapest, and New York.

**Rethink development of smaller agricultural parcels near urban areas.** Such parcels might be used differently than for the current 1-acre lot subdivisions dictated by many rural counties. Farmers could earn additional income by leasing small plots to urban residents and providing them with springtime plowing and other assistance. There might be a greater market for such ideas than expected, especially considering the agricultural expertise of many Central Valley residents.

Hopefully the above ideas will stimulate more local discussion of these topics, leading to a vibrant future for Central Valley residents and farmers.

*Suzanne Ise, M.R.P., currently works at the San Joaquin County Council of Governments. She has spent more than three years studying and working in Hungary and Romania.*



**Sierra Nevada Alliance  
Sixth Annual Conference**  
*Shaping the Sierra : Strategies to Weave  
Together our Land and our Culture*  
Echo Lake Berkeley Camp, Aug. 7th & 8th  
Info: contact Janet Cohen (530) 265-5961

## PLANNING FOR QUALITY OF LIFE - AN IEH COLUMN

*A new **Linkages** column exploring land use topics and quality of life, beginning with some general points.*

California is moving into another cycle of rapid growth. Steven Levy, of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, sees a strong economy ahead - 5.1 million more jobs and 12.4 million more people by 2020 (page 12).

Past cycles of rapid growth triggered concern over the impacts of poor planning. The early 1970's saw voters establish the California Coastal Commission and oust almost 100 county supervisors. In the early 1990's the governor's Growth Management Task Council declared "California cannot support a population growing past 30 million based on existing housing and transportation patterns without unacceptable economic, social and environmental costs"

But interest has waned after each growth spurt. Says McClatchy Newspapers' Dan Walters "it would take years, and perhaps decades, of sustained interest to have a material impact on how and how fast California grows, but the brief cycle of political and media interest tolerates only the most superficial swipes."

Perhaps this time it will be different. The formation of the California Futures Network, a Smart Growth coalition effort is an encouraging sign. The growing interest of the business community in quality of life is another positive change.

We do not need a lot of brand new ideas. The solutions for providing high quality communities and conserving valuable farmland, wildlife habitat and recreation areas

are now well known. We do need persistence, a willingness to make major changes in arenas from growth management to local government financing, and real leadership at the state, regional and local levels.

These solutions are not simply required to grapple with increasing population. Across the nation we have seen even regions with little or no total population growth undergo massive increases in developed land areas, together with depopulation of inner cities and older suburbs. This trend can create an expanding doughnut hole of run-down housing, abandoned shopping malls, and poor job and educational opportunities for remaining residents. Metropolitan regions must learn to focus resources on existing development and infrastructure, and kick the habit of letting neighborhoods decline as they age. We must make cities vibrant places where people want to live.

Recent infill projects in Sacramento provide an example of the pent-up demand for compact, single family housing in existing urban areas. A pattern of urban renewal is evident across the country, from Chicago to Dallas, as conversion of old office buildings and warehouses into dwellings becomes a thriving business.

These approaches help provide the full range of housing choices people need. This is also an issue for "Edge Cities", new components of metropolitan areas with their own jobs centers. The suburbs need a full range of housing choices and mixed use developments, not just subdivisions with 2 to 4 houses per acre, in order to provide the choices and amenities employees need.

*- John Hopkins, IEH*

## RESTORING MAIN STREET

The traditional main streets are in trouble in cities and towns across the county. One problem is movement of people away from older cities and into newer suburbs - a flow that is starting to reverse. A second is the development of shopping malls, the new generation of huge regional shopping centers, and chain retailers. There are now about 16,000 chains in the U.S. from giants like Walmart to speciality stores.

The malls and chains often suck the life out of main streets, and their individually owned businesses. As well as attracting people with cheaper prices and larger selections, they have increased the number of square feet of retail per person. In 1960, there was 4 square feet of retail space per person. By 1998 this was up to 20 square feet. The National Society for Historic Preservation estimates that the retail buying capacity provides for 8 square feet per capita. So we have enormously overbuilt

the nation's retail stores. Individually owned stores in older Main Street areas often bear the brunt of the oversupply impact.

## Why Care About Main Street?

It is easy to say "who cares, those regional shopping malls obviously provide what people want and we should allow change, directed by market forces, to happen." There are a range of problems with that viewpoint.

Firstly, it is not only Main Streets that are in trouble. Older shopping malls are also decaying in many places. Across the U.S. 5,500 malls are empty. Sometimes this is because the neighborhoods they serve have deteriorated as people move away to newer areas. Sometimes it is competition from newer malls. In California, we see small areas of auto dealerships fade away, as the dealers move to new auto malls. In the multi-county Sacramento region, where there is already 21 square feet of retail capacity per person, three huge regional shopping malls are in the pipeline, as well as several new "big-box" retail centers. If these are all built, they will put tremendous pressure on existing malls, as well as local Main Streets.

---

## Across the U.S. 5,500 malls are empty.

---

And even the new regional malls might have a fleeting existence. The Internet, coupled with mail order retail, is expanding rapidly. The Borders chain stores of today could vanish within a few years, replaced by the likes of Amazon.com.

Secondly, the huge proliferation of chains has major undesirable impacts on local economies. They have big impacts on the long-term economic well being of cities small and large, providing mainly low wage jobs and taking the profits away from the community. Economists estimate that only 5 to 8 percent of every dollar spent at a major discount chain store stays in the community. With a regular chain store, 20 % of the money remains in the community. Locally owned stores keep 60% of their customers' spending in the community. These figures have huge impacts on the long-term economic well being of cities small and large.

Locally owned businesses also provide local leadership, from city councils to philanthropic organizations. They can be the mainstay of small town culture and of vibrant urban neighborhoods.

Main Streets also provide a social ambience and opportunities for interaction, for people getting to know each other. If we live in a world where people either shop

at a distant regional mall or on the Internet, we lose one of the vital pieces of our social fabric, local contacts centered on shops that have helped make cities work for thousands of years.

## The National Main Street Program

The National Society for Historic Preservation recognizes that the economic health of older communities and neighbors is key to preservation of historic areas and buildings. Its National Main Street Center seeks to vitalize Main Streets in towns across the nation and has aided over 1400 communities in the past 16 years.

The Center stresses four basic points: design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring. It recognizes that Main Street revitalization requires a number of key approaches. While small projects are essential and each one makes a difference, communities need comprehensive plans with a variety of initiatives. Local leadership, coupled with private-public partnerships, are vital ingredients. Changing public attitudes and behavior is often important.

### Three National Main Street Center strategies for business development

- Provide the infrastructure to support independent business.
- Existing businesses are good for starting new businesses.
- Look at other towns in the region and see what businesses you like. Then see if they'd open in your town and what their needs would be.

Main Street revitalization is an economically sound proposition. On average, each dollar of community spending on the downtown area produces \$35 of additional investment. There has been \$10.9 billion of investment in main streets across the country through this program. For example, in Holland, Michigan, a downtown revitalization program generated \$81 of investment for each dollar spent on the program, even though the effort started at the same time as a new mall and a factory outlet opened just outside the town. The Holland program resulted in near total occupancy of the downtown, with 36 new businesses.

*For more information about the National Main Street Center see their web site: <http://www.mainst.org>. Or contact the Center at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 588-6129.*

# WATER SUPPLY AND GROWTH : A GROUNDSWELL IN THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

Common sense dictates that large new developments in an arid state like California gain approval only if a long-term water supply is assured. But reality is far from common sense and local governments happily approve major projects that do not have any assured water supply. Some projects simply do not identify their supply. Many others, including over half the recent 110 new town or major development proposals, simply identify the State Water Project (SWP) as a water source, even though SWP is already severely oversubscribed.

In 1995 the state legislature took the first step to address this problem, passing Senator Costa's Senate Bill 901, a law requiring local government to obtain information from local water agencies before approving any development of 500 units or greater, and to include this information in the project environmental impact report. But even this "information only" step is avoided most of the time.

The current legislative session has three bills to tighten the link between water supply and new development. Senator Costa's SB1130 addresses loopholes in the 1995 law. It requires that water supply availability be thoroughly assessed when projects are proposed, strengthens the obligation of local water agencies to prepare these



assessments and requires an assessment even if the project's Environmental Impact Report does not identify a water district.

Assemblywoman Helen Thompson's AB1277 requires Local Area Formation Commissions (LAFCO's - see Linkages # 6 for an explanation of their role in growth) to evaluate water supply. It has additional items regarding priority water for affordable housing and expansion of water supply boundaries if they have adequate water.

Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl's AB1219 links water supply with new development approval. It states that a development project may not proceed beyond the subdivision map stage until a water supply is identified. It also promotes infill development through water supply prioritization during drought.

California has limited water, a history of long droughts (including droughts of several decades before European settlement), and conflicting water requirements for urban, agricultural and environmental uses. Past water policies failed to protect the Delta or in-stream flows, while society realizes the damage from simply building more dams. Already agriculture receives insufficient water in most years, even though the state possesses the best farmland in the world. There is no groundwater management system and overdraft of underground aquifers is a common occurrence. While water conservation and storage through aquifer recharge are promising approaches, there is no guarantee that society will make effective decisions in the next few years. These bills take responsible steps to ensure construction of major projects only happens when they have firm water supplies, a prudent action for California.

---

## INFORMATION RESOURCES

### National

---

#### *Alternatives to Sprawl.*

Lincoln Institute for Land Policy (1995).  
Order from the Lincoln Institute, Ph (617) 661-3016.

This 32 page report summarizes a 1995 conference hosted by the Lincoln Institute together with the Brookings Institution and the National Trust for Historic

Preservation. It provides a great deal of information on basic issues, as well as the nature of the convoluted debate about sprawl. Material on the definition of sprawl and arguments for or against continuing reliance on low density development are helpful to those wishing to develop an understanding of key issues and viewpoints. The report examines causes, costs and effects of sprawl and then outlines some of the fundamental alternatives to business as usual. These include three options developed by Anthony Downs, the use of regional coalitions and sharing of future increases in property taxes, Oregon's

statewide planning law, and Andres Duany's use of traditional town planning.

---

***New Directions in Growth Management: Incentives for Land Conservation.***

By Larry Morandi and Phyllis Myers. (1998).  
National Conference of State Legislatures, Denver, CO.  
Ph (303) 830-2200.

This booklet reviews a number of state and local approaches to land conservation, with an emphasis on voluntary measures. Statewide and local conservation easement programs receive major attention, with explanations of Maryland's Rural Legacy program and its land planning leveraging approach. There are also examples of local easement programs from Virginia, Michigan and elsewhere. Other approaches are North Carolina's tax credits for easement donations, Oregon's community based watershed agreements and state or local bond measures.

Localities need state empowerment to act. It is heartening to read that in 1997 the Western Governors' Association held a conference entitled *The Land of Wide Open Spaces: Setting an Open Lands Conservation Agenda for the West*. This event considered state enabling legislation to allow local governments to establish easement programs, adopt real estate transfer fees and other local funding measures, and to authorize programs to purchase development rights or to create transfer of development rights (TDR) programs. (See *Linkages* #7 for a detailed explanation of TDR).

A final section entitled "Observations" has some very enlightening comments. Local governments are giving greater consideration of the costs of servicing new growth, which law professor Ronald Rosenberg calls "a remarkable change in thinking and outlook." There is growing interest in land conservation, including protecting land that remains in private ownership.



VIEW ON SAN JUAN RIVER BY MORGAN.

---

***Open Space Conservation : Investing in your Community's Economic Health.***

By John Tibbets (1998).  
Lincoln Institute for Land Policy . Ph (617) 661-3016.

This 34 page report examines how America's communities have used planning strategies, regulations and public or private funding to protect open space, using examples from various localities and states. It has a very helpful analysis of the economic values of open space, including its enhancement value. For example properties close to greenbelts in Boulder, Colorado, are worth 32% more than those a half mile away. Other economic values are the agricultural production value, the value of ecosystem services, the contingent value (people's willingness to pay) and the real estate market value. It examines various ways to pay for open space conservation, using special districts, tax incentives, bonds and other approaches. Other useful items include a section on floodplain management and an excellent bibliography.

---

***Once There Were Greenfields: How Urban Sprawl Is Undermining America's Environment, Economy and Social Fabric***

By F. Kaid Benfield, Matthew D. Raimi and Donald D.T. Chen. (1999).

The Natural Resources Defense Council and the Surface Transportation Policy Project.  
Order from NRDC at (212) 727-4486.

This book is a readable analysis of the impacts of sprawl, including lost landscapes, traffic congestion, air and water pollution and a potential energy crisis that could make that of the 1970s look mild by comparison. It is about how nearly all of the positive strides that we have taken in improving our environmental quality could be overwhelmed if we do not change the way we grow. The book is also a story about economic waste, rising taxes, and unfair burdens that sprawl places on taxpayers and governments. And it is about the consequences for those left behind as we place more and more of our investment and energy in new places - in our vanishing "greenfields" rather than in the places where people already live.

---

***The Transit Metropolis***

By Robert Cervero (1998)  
Island Press. Ph (800) 828-1302.

Professor Robert Cervero is a renowned transit expert at the University of California, Berkeley. His latest book examines successful transit systems around the world and addresses how to have a workable transit system. He explains that any metropolitan area, whether compact or very dispersed, can have a successful mass transit system using one of five models of a transit metropolis.

## Linkages Needs Your Support

The Institute for Ecological Health relies on contributions from individuals for much of the funding of *Linkages* and our other programs.

We hope you will wish to join us, or make your annual renewal, and ensure your continued receipt of *Linkages*.

Yes, I want to join IEH and support *Linkages* and your other programs. Here's my tax deductible membership contribution:

\$20 (supporter)       \$35 (contributor)  
 \$50 (sponsor)       \$100 (benefactor)  
 \$250 (patron)       \$500 (associate)  
 \$ other.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Ph/E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to IEH, 409 Jardin Place, Davis, CA 95616

**Many thanks for your support! (L8)**

million more people by 2020. He argues that there are not effective ways to reduce this growth rate, and we must address location and impacts of growth. Levy recognizes that the present system of land use planning does not benefit business, the environment nor our quality of life. Current fiscal incentives "encourage sprawl and impede revitalization." The result is a pattern of growth that threatens our quality of life and the future health of businesses located in California. He identifies and clearly explains five principles to developing solutions to land use, growth and quality of life : using regional perspectives, using land more efficiently, making the necessary public investments, fiscal reform, and equity. This is a very valuable document for linking the importance of land conservation with economic health.

---

## Future Issues of Linkages

Our next two issues, in late Summer and Fall 1999, will have a rural focus for much of their content. The summer issue will address the *Future of our Rural Landscapes*, the fall issue *Building a Philosophy of Stewardship*.

Then we plan a Spring 2000 issue on *People, Land and Nature in the 21st Century*. Each of these issues will have a *Planning for Quality of Life* column addressing an urban land use topic. The summer 1999 issue will introduce a second column *The Needs of Nature* and the year 2000 will see the beginning of an *Agriculture and Natural Resources* column.

---

## Back Issues of Linkages Available

Most articles in each issue focus on a single topic: Grappling with Growth (Spring and Fall 1998), Conservation Planning (Fall 1997), Flood Management (Spring 1997), Sierra Foothills (Fall 1996), Central Valley (Spring 1996).

Single copies are \$2, free with payment of a new IEH membership. From: IEH, 409 Jardin Place, Davis, CA 95616.

---

**We welcome copying the text of articles from *Linkages*, including use in other newsletters. Please credit IEH and the author, and let your readers know how to contact us.**

## Information Resources, continued

### California

---

***Land Use and California Economy: Principles for Prosperity and Quality of Life*** by Steven Levy (1998). Obtain from Californians and the Land at (415) 281-0415.

Steven Levy, director of the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy, sees the state's strong economy creating an additional 5.1 million jobs and 12.4



**IEH  
409 Jardin Place  
Davis, CA 95616**

**Non-Profit  
Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 155  
Davis, CA 95616**



